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ANNEX 2

**ANNEX**

*to the*

**COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION**

**on the financing of the Programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024**

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**ANNEX II**  
**IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES, PARTICULARLY SMEs, AND**  
**SUPPORTING THEIR ACCESS TO MARKETS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The third work programme for the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme continues to focus on implementing the SME strategy in the context of industrial ecosystems and the SME components of the updated Industrial Strategy, with strong emphasis on supporting SMEs' recovery and the green and digital transition while helping them achieve success in an increasingly competitive and fast moving environment. The work programme sets out actions for all SME pillar objectives: facilitating access to markets, fostering entrepreneurship and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, promoting the modernisation of industry and addressing global and societal challenges.

Issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian military aggression in Ukraine have also caused serious challenges for European SMEs' competitiveness, resilience and access to markets. The SME Pillar work programme contains a number of new measures and changes to existing measures to address these challenges:

- In particular, the Enterprise Europe Network Energy Efficiency Action will provide direct support to SMEs across the EU (and in countries associated with the SME pillar) to help them improve the energy efficiency of their facilities and production lines. This will help them to survive the current pressures resulting from the unprecedented increases in energy prices, and also to boost their resilience to future energy market crises.
- The new European Solar Academy will launch a pilot action to educate and train workforce in and for the solar PV manufacturing supply chain in the EU. It responds to the needs of the sector and will provide training and development opportunities for SMEs across the solar value chain.
- There is also a new cluster partnerships action that will inter alia help to tackle escalating prices in the food industry.

Other new measures include support for the tourism ecosystem, and measures to support Ukrainian businesses and displaced entrepreneurs that will also strengthen market access by European businesses to Ukraine. Existing services mentioned in this work programme such as the Enterprise Europe Network have also been adapted to help businesses deal with these unprecedented challenges.

The SME pillar will also seek to support the innovation uptake process by promoting new collaborative business models, networking and the sharing of knowledge and resources in synergy with the European Innovation Council, notably by sharing the same executive agency, EISMEA.

Lack of skills is a major obstacle to enterprise growth in the EU. One specific objective of the SME pillar is to foster entrepreneurship and access to skills, in particular technological, entrepreneurial and managerial skills and to provide mentoring schemes for SMEs, such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs.

The policy objectives of the SME pillar will also be addressed through actions to study and address issues, opportunities and market failures related to access to finance for SMEs, and communication actions on relevant sources of finance for SMEs (in

particular, financial instruments for SMEs provided under the InvestEU Fund)<sup>1</sup>, as well as the advisory services of the InvestEU Advisory Hub. These actions will help create more favourable conditions for access to finance for SMEs, including start-ups and scale-ups, enabling them to play their role as the foundation of the Union's economic competitiveness.

The SME pillar provides effective support for SMEs throughout their life-cycle, notably through the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) as a one-stop-shop to help SMEs to improve their competitiveness and develop their business in the Single Market and beyond, including in the outermost regions. Clusters are a strategic tool for supporting the competitiveness and scaling-up of SMEs as they offer favourable and resilient business environments facilitating the green and digital transition. The Joint Cluster Initiative seeks to connect specialised industrial ecosystems, creating new business opportunities for SMEs and integrating them better in European and global strategic value chains<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, these actions will contribute to jobs and growth creation by strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of European SMEs, hence contributing to economic recovery.

The work programme is subject to a positive opinion by a committee referred to under Article 21 of Regulation (EU) 2021/690<sup>3</sup>.

On the basis of the objectives given in the Article 3(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2021/690, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for years 2023-25 as follows:

- a) for grants (implemented under direct management) (point 2), including the multiannual instalments for the Enterprise Europe Network, Joint Cluster Initiative and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs,
- b) for procurement (implemented under direct management) (point 3),
- c) for actions implemented under indirect management (point 4),
- d) for other actions or expenditure (point 5).

These amounts include appropriations arising from the participation of EEA EFTA States in the programme and are therefore subject to the agreement on their participation.

## Legal basis

Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Programme for single market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and European statistics and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 (the “programme”).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://investeu.europa.eu>

<sup>2</sup> The 2021 work programme introduced multiannual calls, allowing larger budgets and longer duration to be combined. This alleviates some of the administrative burden and ensures that the flagship actions are funded in an efficient way. The calls for the Enterprise Europe Network, the Joint Cluster Initiative, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and the Intellectual Property voucher for post-COVID-19 recovery and green and digital transitions were included in the 2021 work programme. The budget contributions for these calls are included in the 2023 work programme.

<sup>3</sup> [EUR-Lex - 32021R0690 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

## Budget line

03 02 02

## Objectives pursued

The **specific objectives** of the Programme laid down in Article 3(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2021/690 are to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs and achieve additionality at Union level through measures that:

- provide various forms of support to SMEs as well as clusters and other business network organisations, including in the tourism sector, thereby fostering the growth, scale-up and creation of SMEs;
- facilitate access to markets including the internationalisation of SMEs;
- promote entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills;
- promote a favourable business environment for SMEs, support digital transformation and promote new business opportunities for SMEs, including for social economy enterprises and those with innovative business models;
- support the competitiveness of industrial ecosystems and sectors as well as the development of industrial value chains; and
- promote the modernisation of industry, contributing to a green, digital and resilient economy.

## Expected results

The progress in implementing the specific objectives of Article 3(2)(b) will be measured with the following indicators:

- Number of SMEs, clusters and business network organisations, and business support organisations receiving support from the programme, in particular for internationalisation, digitalisation and sustainability.
- Number of companies supported having concluded business partnerships.
- Number of entrepreneurs benefitting from mentoring and mobility schemes, including young, new and female entrepreneurs, as well as other specific target groups.

## Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming

Many SME pillar actions that include support for climate (or more rarely biodiversity) focus on several objectives, set in the wider context of supporting SME competitiveness and resilience.

A key element of the SME pillar contribution to the mainstreaming objectives is the work done by the networks. The Enterprise Europe Network's services for SMEs include advisory and partnership services to support these businesses with their transition to sustainability and circularity. One key part of the service is the EEN sustainability advisors.

The European Solar Academy will provide training to SMEs in the solar PV manufacturing value chain, boosting their critical skills and competencies, resilience and competitiveness. It will contribute to EU climate goals by leading to better availability of competitive domestically produced solar PV components.

There are also a number of actions targeted at specific eco-systems and value chains such as the European Agrifood Sustainability Cluster Partnership that will foster the uptake of resource efficient technologies by SMEs in this sector. Several actions aim to help SMEs boost their knowledge and capacity in the areas of sustainability and digitalisation and put in place sustainable business models, and process innovations for achieving these goals. Inter alia, this type of action has been put in place to support the proximity and social economy, and the tourism ecosystems.

One action that will contribute directly to the biodiversity goal is the SME fund which includes support towards the costs of IP protection of new plant variety rights.

## 2. GRANTS

The global budgetary envelope reserved for grants under this work programme for 2023 is EUR 101 650 000.

The actions (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) were adopted in annex 2 of the 2021 work programme<sup>4</sup> and are included here for information purposes only. The multiannual instalment for 2023 for these three actions is included in the total budget allocation for 2023.

### 2.1. Enterprise Europe Network<sup>5</sup>

#### Budget

Indicative total amount call for proposals (2023 appropriations only): EUR 42 500 000

Table of multiannual commitment budget for this action

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Budget EUR	47 000 000	51 500 000	42 500 000	23 500 000	164 500 000

### 2.2. Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe's recovery<sup>6</sup>

#### Budget

Indicative total amount (2023 appropriations only): EUR 13 200 000

Table of multiannual commitment budget for this action

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Budget EUR	16 800 000	9 000 000	13 200 000	3 000 000	42 000 000

### 2.3. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

#### Budget

Indicative total amount (2023 appropriations only): EUR 5 000 000

Table of multiannual commitment budget for this action

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
BUDGET EUR	10 700 000	10 000 000	5 000 000	9 300 000	5 000 000	40 000 000

<sup>4</sup> [Commission Implementing Decision of 6 May 2021 on the financing of the Programme for Single Market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises, and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2024 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

## 2.4. Enterprise Europe Network – annual conference

**Type of applicants** targeted by the grant awarded without a call for proposals

An ad-hoc grant will be awarded without an open call for proposals under Article 195(c) of the Financial Regulation to the government (or its representative) of the country that will hold the 2023 EEN annual conference to cover part of the tasks related to the organisation of the event. The host country (Spain) holds the EU Council Presidency in the second half of the year 2023.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the grant awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation

The Enterprise Europe Network provides business support services to SMEs and startups by offering information, advisory services, feedback and partnering services, innovation, technology and knowledge transfer services. The Network provides services encouraging the participation of SMEs in the SMP and Horizon Europe programmes as well as internationalisation services beyond the Single Market and informs SMEs on access to finance and funding opportunities, including those under the European Structural and Investment Funds. The Enterprise Europe Network activities directly contribute to the SME Strategy and play an important role to help SMEs recover from the crisis as part of the COVID-19 exit strategy. At the same time, the Network is a sounding board and a link between the Commission and the SME community in the implementation of the SME Strategy, the Industrial Strategy and the Small Business Act.

Each year, the Commission and the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union organise a conference with over 800 participants to link together EU institutions with SME support organisations on the ground and to allow EEN members to network and exchange knowledge, know-how and useful contacts. For the year 2023, the aim is to organise a hybrid Annual Conference for the Network with strong presence onsite (possibly up to 800 people) and the possibility to connect the rest of the Network members virtually through a dedicated conferencing platform.

The required budget is needed for all practical aspects of the conference (logistics of physical and virtual meetings, opening session, parallel workshops, closing session, catering etc.).

The expected results are:

- Increased networking between EEN partners to improve access to knowledge and know-how;
- Increased number of SMEs linked with other entities across Europe and beyond through EEN members;
- Increased cross-border business cooperation, technology and knowledge transfer and technology and innovation partnership opportunities;
- Increased number of stakeholders aware of SMEs challenges and opportunities;
- Better understanding from European SME support organisations of EU legislation and of opportunities offered by EU programmes and EU access to finance;
- Better visibility of the EEN by promoting success stories;
- Better knowledge in EU institutions of SMEs feedback, difficulties and expectations.

Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action:

- Number of participants onsite and online;
- Number of sessions and workshops organised;
- Satisfaction rate of virtual and physical participants.

### **Implementation**

EISMEA

### **Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: EUR 150 000
- Rate of co-financing: Up to 90%
- Indicative implementation timetable: Q2/2023

## **2.5. Enterprise Europe Network Energy Efficiency Action**

**Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

Restricted call for proposals for Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) partner organisations, according to exceptions granted under Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation. Eligible entities must be established in countries associated to the Single Market Programme.

Once selected, the EEN partner organisations will benefit from a grant of which 90% must be spent on direct financial support to third parties for energy efficiency audits and small-scale technological investments for energy efficiency by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The recipients of the financial support to third parties are the SMEs carrying out the energy efficiency audits/investments. The remaining grant amount is intended to cover the operating and administrative cost of the consortium.

**Description of the activities** to be funded under the call for proposals

**Objective:** In line with the objectives of the Commission's winter energy package of July 2022 and the forthcoming SME Relief package announced in President von der Leyen's State of the European Union speech, DG GROW proposes a new action to support SMEs with their efforts to improve the energy efficiency of their facilities and production lines. This will help them survive the current pressures from increased energy prices.

This action will increase the long-term sustainability of European SMEs, by reducing their environmental impact and increasing their resilience to current or future energy market crises.

It will also lead to new commercial opportunities for SMEs offering technological or non-technological solutions to energy-efficiency related issues, inter alia by giving these SMEs the possibility to test, commercialise and deploy such innovative solutions, and connect with other SMEs needing their solutions.

This action is compatible with the following specific objectives of the SMP that aim at strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs and achieving additionally at Union level through measures to:

- provide energy efficiency support to SMEs thereby fostering their sustainable growth and resilience;
- facilitate commercialisation and deployment of innovative technologies for energy reduction in the Single Market;
- promote a favourable business environment for SMEs, support their transition to more energy efficient and digital business models and promote new business opportunities for SMEs, especially those offering innovative business models and solutions;
- support the competitiveness and resilience of industrial ecosystems and sectors, particularly the ones that are more energy intensive;
- promote the modernisation of industry, contributing to a green, digital and resilient economy.

This action builds upon successful initiatives taken by the existing and consolidated Enterprise Europe Network and its new Sustainability Advisors, introduced in January 2022.

**Implementation:** Consortia of organisations that are members of the Enterprise Europe Network, with whom EISMEA has an existing contractual relationship and who have a proven track record of providing services to SMEs, will be invited to apply to this call for proposals.

The designated consortium will need to select SMEs among the Enterprise Europe Network's client-base or new clients that can benefit from direct financial support to third parties of up to EUR 10 000 through a dedicated open and transparent call open to eligible companies. The financial support may be used to cover costs such as: specific energy efficiency audits, contribution to the adoption of energy efficient technologies in production lines, and contribution to investments to increase the energy efficiency of company facilities in view of reducing energy demand and consumption.

The project is expected to carry out dedicated activities such as:

- The preparation of open and transparent calls to select the SME recipients of direct financial support;
- The selection of SMEs that will receive direct support in the form of financial support to third parties;
- The provision of accompanying services linked to energy efficiency through the EEN Sustainability Advisors in the region of the recipients, that are additional to the services provided under the EEN Network grant.
- Support for access to complementary sources of funding for energy-efficiency investments, either private or public at European, national or local level;
- The provision of additional services that may be considered as appropriate and complementary to the services already listed above. Ensure a strong operational link with and involvement of members of the Enterprise Europe Network (in particular the sustainability advisers), for example via an advisory board of EEN organisations and/or other methodologies outlined by the applicant
- The project is also expected to generate a number of success stories both from those SMEs developing solutions and those SMEs taking them up.

Calls issued by the beneficiary must be open to SMEs established in all countries associated to the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme. However, to ease the implementation of the action the beneficiary might issue successive calls restricted to certain geographical areas as long as the entire range of countries covered by the SMP is covered by at least one call at the end of the action. An adequate geographical balance of the recipients of financial support must be ensured.

The activities supported via the direct financial support to SMEs must be part of an action plan devised by the SME in cooperation with a sustainability advisor of the Enterprise Europe Network consortium in the potential applicant's region.

**Timing of the launch of the call:** as early as possible in Q2 2023

**Eligible entities:** Organisations taking part in the Enterprise Europe Network. Eligible entities must be established in countries associated to the Single Market Programme.

## **Implementation**

EISMEA

## **Additional information**

**Total amount of the action:** EUR 8 000 000

**Rate of co-financing:** The co-financing rate may reach up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties and up to 90% of the eligible costs for other cost categories

### **Essential characteristics of the call:**

The call will be restricted to organisations taking part in the Enterprise Europe Network. Eligible entities must be established in the European Union/EEA or be associated to the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme at the time of grant signature.

One consortium will be selected under this call for proposals. The consortium is expected to consist of at least five organisations in at least three different EU/EEA countries and/or countries associated to the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme.

### **Justification for launching a restricted call:**

- This action makes use of and capitalises on existing networks and infrastructures set up under European funding programmes and therefore ensures that the proposed action is delivered in the fastest and most cost-efficient possible way. The identified organisations (EEN partners) are the only structures that have the necessary competences to implement the action at the required scale since no other actors have a similar outreach into and tailor-made service for the SME-relevant communities.
- They have a proven capacity to select suitable third party beneficiaries and can provide a tailor-made service to each company from the beginning to the end.
- In view of the urgency of the action, the use of existing networks and European SME support infrastructures is the most effective way of implementing the action. An open procedure and the possible creation of new structures or networks would divert valuable time as well as financial resources away from supporting companies.

**Indicative duration of the projects:** approximately 24 months

### **Indicative implementation timetable:**

- Indicative timeframe for launching the procedure: Q2 2023

### **Qualitative and quantitative indicators:**

- Number of SMEs benefitting from direct support of up to EUR 10 000 to increase their energy efficiency;
- Percentage of SMEs in energy intensive industries benefitting from the direct

support;

- Indicative impact on reduction of energy consumption (number of kW/h);
- Number of SMEs benefiting from direct support that enhanced their digital skills within the period of implementation of the EU-funded action;
- Number of SMEs benefiting from direct support that enhanced their skills for implementing sustainable business models and practices within the period of implementation of the EU funded action.
- Additional indicators may be added in the call, notably in relation to the number of SMEs undertaking business process innovation tied to technological adoption leading to higher sustainability and/or digitalisation.

## 2.6. Support to Ukrainian entrepreneurs – Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

**Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

Applicants can be public or private entities whose core activity is in the field of business support. This includes entities based in Ukraine.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the call for proposals

The economic damage in Ukraine in the wake of Russia's invasion is on a scale not seen in Europe since World War II. Rebuilding the economy will require large investments in both human capital and physical infrastructure, with external aid. Given that Entrepreneurship is the driving force of the economy, the provision of EU support for training the existing and future Ukrainian workforce, can make a meaningful contribution to the recovery process.

The objective of this action is to select intermediary organisations based on their project proposals for supporting Ukrainian new entrepreneurs. The projects cover activities such as:

- giving training on doing business in the Single Market and first information on further business support initiatives
- developing other relevant skills and boost their entrepreneurship capacities, and supporting them with contacts and building networks
- matching them with experienced European entrepreneurs and supporting them for participation in Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs business exchanges.

**See also additional information below.**

The selected projects will help both Ukrainian entrepreneurs who are based in their home country and displaced Ukrainian entrepreneurs who are based in the participating countries. They will help Ukrainian new entrepreneurs to prepare for their entrepreneurship journey by acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge, and establishing international business contacts and networks. They will also help those with some business experience to benefit from training, contacts and the expertise of an experienced entrepreneur to help them continue their business activities or realise their dream to start a business, create jobs, strengthen relations with businesses in the Single

Market, and prepare for post-war recovery of Ukraine.

This action also helps the experienced entrepreneurs gain better market knowledge and access to Ukraine.

In order to reach a broad range of potential new entrepreneurs of Ukrainian nationality, based in Ukraine or displaced, there is also a separate action in this work programme (section 3.9) to provide support with promotion, especially on social media.

### **Implementation**

EISMEA

### **Additional information**

- Specific objectives of the action:
  - Helping Ukrainian new entrepreneurs acquire and build managerial skills and further develop their business plan/activity by learning from experienced entrepreneurs;
  - This will also enable host entrepreneurs to enhance their knowledge about Ukraine and facilitate their access to Ukrainian markets;
  - Allowing Ukrainian new entrepreneurs to learn by working with the host entrepreneur on concrete business projects;
  - Supporting entrepreneurs in researching, developing, testing or piloting new business concepts, products or services with a new entrepreneur bringing in fresh ideas from another market, sectors and/or business environment;
  - Raising Ukrainian entrepreneurs' knowledge about the Single Market, exploiting the potential of the Single Market and benefitting from going international;
  - Intensifying the networking and business relationships between Ukrainian and EU entrepreneurs, laying the ground for further internationalisation of SMEs;
  - Facilitating contacts between Ukrainian and European entrepreneurs to strengthen potential future business partnerships and investments.
- Total amount of the action: EUR 3 000 000
- The co-financing rate may be up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties (i.e. new entrepreneurs) and up to 90% of the eligible costs for other cost categories.
- Financial assistance to new entrepreneurs (Financial Support to Third Parties) shall take the form of unit cost per month of exchange, for a maximum duration of 6 months.
- Approximate number of projects to be funded: 5
- Expected duration of the projects to be funded: maximum 36 months
- Indicative timeframe for launching the procedure: Q1 2023

The expected results of the action are:

- Around 430 entrepreneurs matched;

- Around 1 000 entrepreneurs registered;
- Between 20 and 30 Intermediary Organisations involved in the implementation of the programme;
- Rate of successful exchanges above 90% (entrepreneurs' feedback).
- *More details on the separate promotion action can be found in point 3.9.*

## **2.7. Support to Ukrainian companies to integrate into the Single Market**

### **Type of applicants targeted by the call for proposals**

Restricted call for proposals for Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) partners, European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) members that are profiled as “national cluster associations” or “metaclusters and cluster networks” and the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance as well as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) Intermediary Organisations.

Eligible entities must be established in countries associated to the Single Market Programme or in Ukraine.

### **Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals**

This action will facilitate the integration into the single market of Ukrainian SMEs (businesses based in Ukraine, and displaced Ukrainian-registered companies currently operating from the EU. This in turn will support the recovery and development of the Ukrainian economy. It will also bring new opportunities for EU businesses to access markets in Ukraine and/or find alternative suppliers in Ukraine to compensate for the loss of Russian and Belarussian market opportunities.

The role of the consortium is to select up to 1 500 Ukrainian companies that can benefit from direct support, and to help them integrate into the single market. The key tasks will be to:

- Set up a common secretariat to manage the implementation of this action (calls for SMEs from a dedicated website, selection of SMEs, disbursement of the third party support to SMEs and publication of success stories). The common secretariat will be invited to seek cooperation with other Ukrainian business support and export promotion organisations.
- The selection, via dedicated calls, of the Ukrainian companies that will receive the direct support, focusing on companies with good potential to facilitate market access to Ukraine for EU businesses and/or bring value to the EU supply chains.

Once selected, the Ukrainian SMEs will benefit from a grant of maximum EUR 2 500 allowing them to cover expenses such as administrative costs to set up joint ventures or adapt existing companies, produce brochures, cover costs linked to translation or legal advice on Intellectual Property Rights before signing a contract.

- Provision of other dedicated services to the Ukrainian entrepreneurs such as:
  - The selection of trade fairs based in the EU in which they could take part;
  - The provision of accompanying services linked to the presence at trade fairs such as travel and accommodation costs, translation costs, insurance costs, renting of IT facilities (computers, printers, scanners, video conferencing) and registration fees if not waived by the fair organisers;

- The possibility to exchange with fellow entrepreneurs and pool services (e.g. logistics);
- Networking opportunities with former EYE participants, EEN partners and clusters organisations in the EU that are used to organising or participating in matchmaking events;
- The follow-up services upon return from a trade mission;
- Other services where appropriate and complementary to those listed above such as training to increase digital skills, or specific legal and advisory services for engaging in a cooperation agreement with an EU company that will promote their products or services.

This action complements successful initiatives undertaken by the existing and consolidated networks – including their Ukrainian members - of the Enterprise Europe Network, ECCP, the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance and the EYE Intermediary Organisations since the start of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine. The members of these networks have a proven track record of providing high quality services to SMEs. This action will also raise the visibility of the Supply Chain Resilience Platform<sup>7</sup> and the Solidarity Lanes Platform<sup>8</sup> by offering complementary services to companies registered.

A special focus will be provided to support women and social economy entrepreneurs.

The consortium will furthermore monitor the achievements of the action through a feedback mechanism that will systematically gather data from participating companies by the intermediary organisations involved.

## Implementation

EISMEA

### Additional information:

- **Total amount of the action:** EUR 4 500 000. This will be distributed as follows:
  - Up to EUR 750 000 may be allocated to the consortium partners to implement the action
  - A minimum of EUR 3 750 000 must be dedicated to provide direct support to SMEs established in Ukraine and displaced Ukrainian SMEs currently operating from the EU. The method of selecting the SMEs must be transparent, open and in line with applicable legislation for public support of economic operators while covering a fair distribution among the regions of Ukraine and ensuring that no Ukrainian SME gets a double financing.
- **Co-financing rate:** up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties and up to 90% of the eligible costs for other cost categories.

<sup>7</sup> [The Supply Chain Resilience \(SCR\) platform - Welcome \(b2match.io\)](https://www.b2match.io/)

<sup>8</sup> [EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes Business Matchmaking Platform - The Platform \(b2match.io\)](https://www.b2match.io/)

The Ukrainian SMEs will benefit from a grant of maximum EUR 2,500 (**third party support**) allowing them to cover expenses like administrative costs to set up new companies or adapt existing ones, translation costs for participating in physical or virtual trade fairs in Europe, cost for legal advice on IPR before signing a contract.

- **Indicative implementation timetable:**

- launch of the call: Q1 2023
- evaluation of the call and grant signature in Q2 2023
- start of the action in Q3 2023
- expected duration of the action: 18-24 months

- **Expected results:**

- 1 500 Ukrainian SMEs benefit from direct support of up to EUR 2,500 to enter the single market, participate in trade fairs and develop their business and/or online services;
- Special attention will be given to women entrepreneurs and social economy companies;
- Higher participation and diversity on the Supply Chain Resilience Platform and Solidarity Lanes Platform;
- Modernisation of EU and Ukrainian industry by contributing to a green, digital and resilient economy;
- This action is aimed at gaining experience with the single market, helping Ukrainian companies to go back home and providing new opportunities to all those that have the capacity to go international, hence contributing to the reconstruction efforts of this Accession Country. It should not contribute to any brain drain from Ukraine to the European Union;
- This closer integration with the EU will also lead to improved access for European businesses to markets in Ukraine and/or help European businesses to seek alternative supplies in Ukraine.

- **Justification for launching a restricted call:**

- This action makes use of and capitalises on existing networks and infrastructures set up under European funding programmes and therefore ensures that the proposed action is delivered in the fastest and most cost-efficient possible way. The identified organisations (EEN partners, European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) members that are profiled as “national cluster associations” or “metaclusters and cluster networks” and the Ukrainian Cluster Alliance, as well as EYE Intermediary Organisations) are the only structures that have the necessary competences to implement the action on the required scale since no other actors have a similar outreach into the SME relevant communities, cluster landscape and EYE participants.
- They have a proven capacity to select suitable entrepreneurs, promote entrepreneurship, help Ukrainian companies enter the EU market, promote new business opportunities and support the development of industrial value chains. They have the capacity to promote the modernisation of industry, contributing to a green, digital and resilient economy and can provide a tailor-made service to each company from the beginning to the end.
- There is an overarching need and a high political priority to provide support to European and Ukrainian companies affected by the Russian military aggression in Ukraine as quickly as possible. In view of the urgency of the action, the use of

**existing networks and European SME support structures** is the most effective way of implementing the action. The option of creating new structures or networks is excluded as it would divert valuable time as well as financial resources away from supporting companies.

- Similarly, implementation of a restricted procedure will be considerably quicker than an open procedure.
- EEN, the ECCP and EYE can develop synergies between this action and other actions they have put in place to help companies mitigate the effects of the crisis in Ukraine and its impact on the European economy, such as the Supply Chain Resilience Platform or the Solidarity Lanes platform.

## 2.8. European Agrifood Sustainability Cluster Partnerships

**Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

Agrifood Clusters and business support organisations from SMP participating countries.

**Description of the activities** to be funded under the call for proposals

The objective is to support both preparatory and implementation actions for the establishment and development of new 'European Agrifood Sustainability Cluster Partnerships' supporting the implementation of the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices by SMEs and the uptake of resource-efficiency technologies to limit food inflation:

1. The partnerships will support the development of new agrifood cluster organisations in EU regions where none are registered on the European Cluster collaboration Platform, in collaboration with local business support organisations (which should be part of the consortium), with a view to improving the resource-efficiency and supporting the sustainability transition of SMEs in those other regions.
2. The Partnerships shall develop a common strategic agenda and roadmap with KPIs for the implementation of the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices, and especially the uptake of resource-efficiency technologies to limit the impact of inflation, with defined priorities and collaborative activities between all their members.
3. The partnerships and their members will mobilise and support their SMEs to engage into resource-efficiency and sustainability improvements, first individual and second collective. Each partnership will try to support at least 100 SMEs. For that purpose, they will use the resources of the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Center<sup>9</sup>, liaise where appropriate with EEN sustainability advisors, their respective technology centres, as well as the Greentech cluster organisations on the ECCP<sup>10</sup>, to:
  - a. identify and provide the most competitive and efficient sustainability solutions for their SMEs;

<sup>9</sup> [Home | EREK - European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Center \(resourceefficient.eu\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Green Policy | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)

- b. identify SMEs with similar needs, across the partnership, and facilitate the pooling of their needs and the deployment of collective investments, e.g. in renewable energy, with a view to improving the cost-efficiency of the projects and enabling complementarity of renewable energy projects.
4. The partnerships will share their case studies and best practices through the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Center hosted on the ECCP.

The measure will build on the experience and positive results of the 'European Strategic Cluster Partnerships'<sup>11</sup> of the COSME programme, as well as on the Low Carbon Business Action funded by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)<sup>12</sup>.

The funded activities could include:

- Support services for the identification and partnership building between established agrifood cluster organisations and other agrifood actors across Europe, notably building upon EEN, chambers of commerce and other business support organisations in the targeted regions;
- The preparation of surveys among SME members to:
  - assess their needs in terms of sustainability transition, on the basis of the 2021 Agrifood Code of Conduct;
  - assess their needs and potential to deploy renewable energy solutions and uptake resource-efficiency technologies;
- The preparation of a joint sustainability strategy and a roadmap for cooperation that will have to result in concrete activities supporting cooperation between them and with strategic sustainability partners, such as the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Center (EREK) members and Greentech clusters;
- Tailored technical analysis and assistance for coordinated sustainability investments between SME members of the partnership organisations.

Expected results of the action: The 'European Agrifood Sustainability Cluster Partnerships' will support the implementation of the Agrifood Code of Conduct by SMEs and boost the overall sustainability transition of the EU Agrifood ecosystem.

The expected duration of the agreement is 36 months. The consortia can propose a longer duration when it is justified by their needs to achieve the objectives.

### **Implementation**

EISMEA

### **Additional information**

Total amount of the action: EUR 3 000 000

Number of partnerships envisaged: approximately 3-5

Rate of co-financing: The maximum co-financing rate shall be up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties (i.e. SMEs) and up to 90% of eligible costs for all other cost categories.

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<sup>11</sup> [European Cluster Partnerships | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)

<sup>12</sup> [EU solutions in low carbon technologies and circular economy for markets in the Americas \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Publication of the call: Q1 2023
- Award: Q4 2023
- Signature of grant agreement: Q1 2024

Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action:

1. Number of cluster organisations or business network organisations from different SMP participating countries having benefited from the supported actions;
2. Number of sustainability investment projects resulting from the supported actions;
3. Number of SMEs having directly or indirectly benefited from the supported actions;
4. KPIs for the implementation of the Code of Conduct by the SMEs in the members of the consortium.

## 2.9. Promoting trans-European tourism products in third countries

**Type of applicants** targeted by direct award

An ad hoc grant will be awarded to the European Travel Commission (ETC) under article 195(f) of the financial regulation. This is due to the activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers.

ETC was set up in 1948 by European countries' National Tourism Offices (NTO). These countries have mandated ETC with promoting Europe as a tourist destination in non-European countries. Its membership now comprises 35 NTOs from 34 member countries in Europe.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the grant awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation

The overall objective of the grant is to contribute to:

- (i) rebuild and reinforce the image of Europe as a safe and secure tourist destination for all travellers, being families or individuals, people of different ages, gender, ethnic origin, religious, abilities or sexual orientation (including in the context of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine and the pandemic),
- (ii) support the recovery of the EU tourism,
- (iii) Maintain the share of EU tourism in the world market and better disperse and diversify (in terms of geography and seasons) travellers flows while taking into account residents' aspirations.

Its specific objective is to contribute to a large transnational marketing campaign, carried out by ETC in cooperation and with contributions from national/regional tourism promotion bodies. This may be done in particular in the context of supporting the "Joint Promotion Platform for Destination Europe" (JPP) set up by ETC, with EU support<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The JPP is designed as a 'marketplace' to develop cooperative marketing programmes initiated at a European level to be jointly funded by public authorities, destinations and private partners

This large and visible campaign will combine among others, several traditional media and digital campaigns on the web and social media, broad outreach and public relations through cooperation with media, participation in travel trade exhibitions and familiarisation trips. Onsite communication activities may also be considered to promote Destination Europe.

The action will in addition support the production of market intelligence reports pointing at opportunities for the recovery of the European tourism ecosystem and contributing to training EU actors on how to enter new markets or increase their presence in traditional markets.

*Expected results:* contribute to reinforce and rebuild the image of Europe as safe and attractive destination in the long-haul market, contribute to the recovery of the EU tourism ecosystem by attracting non-EU travellers back to Europe (including its outermost regions) and by emphasising possibilities offered by off-season destinations and off the beaten track.

### **Implementation**

DG GROW

### **Additional information**

Total amount of the action: EUR 1 600 000

Rate of co-financing: maximum co-financing rate of 75 %

Indicative duration of the project to be funded: 18 Months

Indicative implementation timetable; implementation starting date : Q3 2023

Qualitative and quantitative indicators:

- Number of promotion/marketing events;
- Potential number of travellers targeted by the activities;
- Number of web pages referencing promotion/marketing materials / Number of portal hits;
- Media coverage;
- Increased number of travellers from targeted long-haul markets;
- Increased awareness of Europe as a unique, safe and secure destination in targeted long-haul markets;
- Increased awareness about and visibility of lesser known/emerging destinations and cross-border and transnational thematic tourism offers.

## **2.10. Transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient ecosystem – empowering tourism SMEs**

**Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

Tourism SMEs or consortia of organisations directly involved in the tourism ecosystem: industry stakeholders, associations, innovation hubs, incubators, accelerators, data collecting and managing bodies, universities, as well as destination management organisations and competent public authorities and public bodies at local, regional or national level.

**Description of the activities** to be funded under the call for proposals

This call for proposals will aim at equipping and empowering SMEs to transition towards more sustainable and resilient practices as prioritised in the Tourism Transition Pathway (under the Industrial Strategy Update (COM(2021)350 final).

The action will contribute to the transition of the European tourism ecosystem by providing direct and indirect support, be it financial or consultative, including with the intermediary of consortia of organisations of the relevant tourism industry stakeholders, to SMEs, including start-ups and entrepreneurs, who wish to develop innovative concepts and projects contributing to the transition of EU tourism. This may also include further development and transfer of best practices and solutions identified through previous calls.

The activity will aim to provide:

- Direct support to innovative projects presented by third parties, e.g. SMEs
- Technical support, advice and capacity building to the highest possible number of SMEs based on their needs, attempting to cover a wide geographical scope
- Collection of best practices with the purpose of providing policy makers with updated, empirical evidence of the implementation of the priorities set out in the Transition Pathway for Tourism.

***Expected results***

1. enhanced resilience and competitiveness of tourism SMEs through better uptake of sustainability principles, accessibility aspects, innovation, and digitalisation (i.e. use of new technologies, greening, data) and through increased capacity to track the footprints;
2. new business models in tourism building on digitalisation, new technologies, sustainability, accessibility, services for all types of customers, circularity, involvement of local communities and long-term visitors;
3. enhanced cooperation along the tourism value chain;
4. improved transnational and cross-border cooperation, knowledge transfer and peer learning;
5. support to recovery of the tourism ecosystem from the shocks caused by COVID-19 and the Russian military aggression in Ukraine by developing and providing best practices for recovery investments with long-term effects for green and digital transition.

**Implementation**

EISMEA

**Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: EUR 7 500 000
- Rate of co-financing: Up to 90%
- Indicative duration of the project(s) to be funded: 18 to 36 months

- Indicative number of proposals supported (by consortia): from 2 to 4
- Indicative implementation timetable: Publication of the call : Q2 2023; Signature of agreements: Q1 2024
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action:
  - Number of countries and partners participating in transnational cooperation projects;
  - Replicability of projects supported, as assessed by the consortia under supervision of EISMEA, and their relevance to the policy priorities as detailed in the Transition Pathway for Tourism;
  - Quality and impact of the dissemination by the consortia of the results, best practices and developed solutions;
  - Number of SMEs directly supported.
- The approach planned for monitoring this action and collecting impact data; involvement of EISMEA as an observer at key steps (identification and selection of SMEs receiving direct support, if appropriate / evaluation of the dissemination strategy / compendium of best practices).
- Longer-term durability: applicants will be required to support initiatives with a clear potential for sustainability over time, and replicability in similar contexts. Applicants will also be required to design a compendium of lessons learnt and good practices.

## 2.11. Support to organisations for actions in the context of the EU Pact for Skills for the Textiles Ecosystem

**Type of applicants** targeted by direct award

Consortium composed of the European Apparel and Textile Confederation (EURATEX), the European Footwear Confederation (CEC) and the Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community (COTANCE). This is due to the activities with specific characteristics that require particular types of bodies on account of their technical competence, high degree of specialisation or administrative powers.

EURATEX, COTANCE and CEC are the representative bodies of the European textile, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) industry. Through their members they jointly represent the majority of all the TCLF SMEs in Europe. They are the coordinating organisations for the implementation of the EU TCLF Pact for Skills launched in December 2022.

The EU Pact for Skills initiative is the first of the flagship actions under the European Skills Agenda launched by the Commission with the aim to establish skills partnerships in European industrial ecosystems.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the grant awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation

The overall objective of the grant is to support actions carried out by these organisations

in developing and implementing the EU TCLF Pact for Skills. A strong alliance has been built at EU level under the TCLF Pact for Skills between industry, educational providers and public authorities (125 organisations have endorsed the Pact, most of them companies and national employers' associations), with commitments that now need to be decentralised. With the support and coordination of the EURATEX, COTANCE and CEC, effective skills partnerships will now be set up at regional/local level between signatories of the EU TCLF Pact for Skills to implement specific actions and targets agreed under the Pact. The partnerships will also contribute to the actions, targets and commitments on skills part of the Textiles Transition Pathway.

More specifically, the grant will support TCLF companies in their efforts for upskilling (to improve existing skills) and reskilling (training in new skills) their workforce (especially in areas such as sustainability and digitalisation), taking into account that women make up the majority of the low-wage and unskilled textile workforce<sup>14</sup>, increasing the use of apprenticeship programmes and developing coaching and mentorship schemes to ensure generational knowledge transfer.

The grant will in particular fund the following activities carried out by the consortium:

- Establishing regional/local partnerships to deliver the EU TCLF Pact for Skills commitments, with a focus on at least the nine countries relevant for the textiles ecosystem, covered by the Skills4SmartTCLF Blueprint and for which national sectoral skills strategies have been developed (BE, BG, ES, FR, GR, IT, PL, PT, RO). The consortium will identify among Pact signatories organisations that would partner up at regional/local level and will help reaching out to relevant national and regional funding authorities. The consortium will prepare the meetings between potential partners of a specific skills partnership, provide contacts of the relevant authorities, prepare the content and facilitate the exchange of information;
- Providing guidance and helping partnerships to develop an efficient governance structure of the partnership; developing missing expertise, advising on how to manage a partnership; supporting the partnerships in identifying/anticipating specific skills needs, as well as in working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities, defining clear objectives and developing efficient work programmes, structured review processes to monitor progress; identifying relevant skills national/regional initiatives in view of supporting the partnerships in building viable specific actions and commitments; identifying potential financing resources available through existing EU/national/regional funds and instruments that could support the implementation of the specific actions and commitments; supporting the partnerships in building financial capacity by identifying relevant EU/national funding opportunities and facilitating contacts and meeting with relevant private investors;
- Establishing a user-friendly visual tracking of progress on actions and commitments for each partnership;
- Facilitating contacts and exchanges between partnerships in order to avoid duplication of efforts, establish fruitful synergies and strengthen the partnerships. Regular and structured discussions with the partnership coordinators will be organised via webinars, seminars and peer learning activities;

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<sup>14</sup> [Textiles strategy \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/infographic_textiles_strategy_2020.pdf)

- Ensuring active content updates and community activity support and facilitation on skills as part of the stakeholder collaboration platform developed by the Commission (DG GROW) as support for the implementation of some of the specific actions for the Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem (including actions under the EU TCLF Pact for Skills).

### **Implementation**

DG GROW

### **Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: EUR 1 200 000
- Rate of co-financing: maximum co-financing up to 90% of the eligible costs.
- Indicative duration of the project to be funded: from 24 to 36 months
- Indicative implementation timetable:  
Publication of the call: Q1 2023.
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:  
Number of skills partnerships established at regional/local level; number of apprenticeships and mentorships schemes offered; number of new educational processes and tools responding to green and digital skills.

## **2.12. Proximity and social economy industrial ecosystem: boosting the digital transition of social economy enterprises and SMEs**

### **Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

Applicants must be legal persons forming a consortium. The following is a non-exhaustive list of types of legal persons that may apply:

- SMEs, including social economy entities, social enterprises operating in the proximity and social economy ecosystem;
- Public authorities and their networks or associations at European, international, national, regional and local level, or organisations acting on behalf of a public authority, responsible for or active in the fields of social economy, economic affairs, industry, business support or related fields;
- European federations and associations supporting proximity and social economy actors;
- Training and educational institutions, including universities and research centres active in the social economy field;
- Education, research and training organisations.

### **Description of the activities** to be funded under the call for proposals

The action supports the implementation of the Transition Pathway of this ecosystem<sup>15</sup>. The action will support transnational partnerships to boost the digital capacity of social economy enterprises and SMEs that are part of the **proximity & social economy ecosystem**.

The aim will be to enable social economy enterprises to turn digital challenges into opportunities, ensuring a digital transition that is fair and inclusive. Digitalisation can offer significant benefits, but many social economy enterprises active in this ecosystem still face barriers regarding the digitalisation of their production processes, business practices and services. Such barriers are mainly related to skills, know-how, access to technology, an enabling environment for social digital business models and data management capacity.

Activities will be carried out via training, coaching, capacity building, peer learning, or awareness raising events.

Expertise support or project proposals could fall under at least one of the following themes (not exhaustive):

- Improving digital and technological capacity of social economy enterprises and SMEs;
- Scaling up innovative digital solutions amongst SMEs in the ecosystem, including shared technologies and digital commons;
- Fostering digital social innovation<sup>16</sup>;
- Developing digital capacity addressing basic digital skills and applications for employees, management and middle management as well as volunteers engaged in the organisation;
- Enabling social tech start-ups and pioneering SMEs in the ecosystem as well as specific social economy rooted technologies (e.g. tech4good) to scale;
- Assessing, monitoring and helping to increase the digital maturity of SMEs in the ecosystem;
- Fostering the capacity of SMEs in the ecosystem as well as intermediaries supporting SMEs to develop new business models driven by new technologies and data;

Crucial elements will be:

- Consortia shall develop support adapted to the degree of the SMEs' maturity in terms of digitisation;
- Consortia shall foster transnational business support schemes and peer learning regarding digitalisation of the social economy.
- Given the digital nature of support, instruments used and developed shall have an advanced degree of transferability and openness to strengthen European open source communities.

## **Implementation**

EISMEA

<sup>15</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/transition-pathway-proximity-and-social-economy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/transition-pathway-proximity-and-social-economy_en)

<sup>16</sup> Meaning the use of digital technologies in the development and implementation of innovative products, services, processes and business models that seek to improve the well-being and agency of socially disadvantaged groups or address social problems related to marginality, inequality and social exclusion - [Transition Pathway for Proximity and Social Economy](#) p.34

### **Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: EUR 7 500 000
- Rate of co-financing: up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties and up to 90% of the eligible costs for other cost categories
- Approximate number of projects to be funded: it is expected to fund between 6 and 8 proposals under this call.
- Indicative duration of the project(s) to be funded: 24-36 Months
- Indicative implementation timetable: publication of the call Q3/2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:  
Each consortia will have to propose a monitoring approach allowing sectoral, regional, SME size and SME digital maturity comparability, and measurable indicators will be proposed in the call.

### **2.13. Boosting SMEs' and stakeholders' capacities to participate in construction and renovation projects through the Affordable Housing Initiative European Partnership**

**Type of applicants** targeted by the call for proposals

SMEs and relevant stakeholders from e.g. the construction ecosystem (including housing industries), proximity & social economy ecosystem, creative industries ecosystem and renewable energy ecosystem, as well as investment bodies, financial intermediaries and business associations:

SMEs and representatives of SMEs active in the area of social and affordable housing such as construction, electronics, renewables, housing associations and cooperatives, social rental agencies and companies, creative industries together with public authorities, public private partnerships and financial institutions should be the core of the consortium. Other associated organisations can be scaling-up support organisations (such as technology centres, research institutes and universities, fab labs, (digital) innovation hubs, creative hubs, social service providers and recognised architects), SME intermediaries, and social economy stakeholders, associations of tenants, residents and homeowners, and New European Bauhaus associated actors.

**Description of the activities** to be funded under the call for proposals

This action will contribute in particular to the green and digital transition of the construction and proximity and social economy industrial ecosystems. It will provide SMEs and relevant stakeholders from these ecosystems with opportunities to participate in lighthouse renovation projects (for existing building stock). This, in view of ensuring the roll-out of the “Affordable Housing Initiative” (AHI) as set in the Renovation Wave<sup>17</sup>, that

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<sup>17</sup> **Renovation Wave for Europe** of 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2020: This document specifies that the AHI will be implemented following a smart neighbourhood approach and provide blueprints for replication, setting livability and latest innovations at the forefront. It will mobilise cross-sectoral project partnerships linking them to local actors, including from the social economy, to promote efficient, circular and modular

aims to pilot 100 lighthouse renovation districts by 2030, in line with the principles and objectives of the New European Bauhaus.

Under this action the Commission will support a European level cross-sectorial partnership (consortium), which will act as a central coordination, networking and capacity building hub between the lighthouse districts and SMEs active at local/regional level. This consortium will enhance and facilitate local public-private partnerships and SME engagement in the lighthouse renovation districts as a lever to boost their green, technological, and economic potential.

The concept of ‘lighthouse districts’ provides significant opportunities to exchange expertise across the EU that will benefit directly and indirectly SMEs in different industrial ecosystems.

A first call (SMP-COSME-2021-HOUS) targeted a preparatory approach to identify and support SMEs in the different stages of local district renovations. Key steps in the project development are identified and to be followed by tailored support (i.e. from design to construction, including technical, financial and regulatory aspects), each translated into guiding blueprints and mentor programmes to support and to further engage SMEs in large social and affordable housing renovation projects.

The new action aims to allow the European Partnership to:

- (i) exploit the full potential of the technical assistance methods developed (e.g. blueprints, mentoring programmes, but also training modules and specific skills support),
- (ii) deepen technical modules, where necessary adapted to the local context such as specific technology applications, circular/green approaches as well as the needed skills upgrade, access to technologies and shared investments schemes,
- (iii) increase the outreach to **35 new lighthouse districts**. A targeted outreach in terms of support and capacity building of **2000 SMEs** directly and indirectly involved in the renovation process of social and affordable housing districts, covering relevant industrial ecosystems. As a reference, under the first phase of the action, 20 lighthouse districts are being supported.

The European Partnership will implement the following activities:

- Set-up new Local Industrial Partnerships” (LIPs) to facilitate and engage SMEs in social and affordable housing renovation projects at district level;
- Roll-out technical capacity support for SMEs by training, mentorship programmes, boot camps, trainings, advisory (technical, financial, and project implementation) and communication support;
- Foster collaboration and networking between SMEs, SME intermediaries from a variety of ecosystems together with public private partnerships, public authorities and financial institutions and intermediaries for delivery of social and affordable housing renovations;
- Share expertise and act as a knowledge hub for investment and project pipelines in affordable housing construction and renovation by:
  - Exploring financing options through an optimum mix of private funding (e.g. residents co-investing) and public funding, considering cost neutrality

for the tenant and affordability of renovated units.

- Use advanced technologies, practices, innovations and smart solutions<sup>18</sup> related to the construction aspects to improve residents' needs in social and affordable housing units.
  - Innovative and performance-based procurement, including fostering partnerships of SMEs for participation to tenders, supporting the use of social clauses and sustainability criteria.
  - Developing blueprints supporting SMEs in the different stages of the process and fostering the replication of the best district renovation approaches.
  - Setup a helpdesk function and tailored project support.
- Set up an overall communication AHI strategy.
  - Liaise with relevant EU policy actions, instruments, initiatives and projects relevant for the lighthouse districts<sup>19</sup>.
  - Keep on building interlinkages between the New European Bauhaus and AHI.

## **Implementation**

EISMEA

## **Additional information**

- *Expected results*
  - Engage 35 new social and affordable housing districts in this project that are committed to providing opportunities to SMEs and other relevant stakeholders to participate in their renovation projects (as a reference, 20 districts are being supported in the first action).
  - Provide support and capacity building to 2000 SMEs in the construction ecosystem (including housing industries), proximity and social economy ecosystem that are directly and indirectly involved in the renovation process of the districts.
  - Support newly created project pipelines building on collaboration between SMEs and social and affordable housing sector (e.g. through public-private partnerships).
  - Support SMEs providing Green, Digital and Social Service technologies adaptable for social/affordable housing sector applications (e.g. improving accessibility).
  - Set-up of an efficient replication method (through blueprints) for the renovation of new lighthouse districts considering financial, regulatory, technical and participatory elements.
  - Accelerate the twin (green and digital) transition of SMEs active in housing both in the construction ecosystem and in the proximity and social economy ecosystem, but also in

<sup>18</sup> Such as: resource efficiency, smart home equipment, smart mobility, modular renovation tool-kits, eco/green architecture, horticulture, collective energy generation and district batteries system, sustainable renovations, and construction, proposed by European SMEs, and their uptake in the lighthouse districts;

<sup>19</sup> Such as ELENA facility (setup by the Commission and EIB), energy poverty observatory, energy communities, Urban Agenda Partnership on Housing, New European Bauhaus, URBACT, URBIS, Intelligent Cities Challenge, High level forum on construction, EEN and ECCP as well as actions in other programs supportive for the delivery of district renovations, such as Horizon Europe, Cohesion funds, and with national, regional, local and private initiatives in the field.

the creative industries and renewable energy ecosystems. As depicted in the Flash Eurobarometer 498 on SMEs, green markets and resource efficiency of March 2022, 89% of SMEs are taking measures to be more resource-efficient although significant work remains to be done, notably in the proximity and social economy ecosystem.

- Accelerate the use of the newest technologies related to renovation and make these accessible for local SME's from a skills and investment point of view.
- Total amount of the action: EUR 1 000 000
- Rate of co-financing: up to 100% of the eligible costs for financial support to third parties and up to 90% of the eligible costs for other cost categories
- Indicative duration of the project to be funded: 24 months
- Indicative implementation timetable:
  - Launch of the call: Q2 2023
  - Signature of the agreements: Q2 2024
- *Qualitative and quantitative indicators:*
  - Number of SMEs supported (objective is 2000)
  - Number of districts supported (objective is 35)
  - Diversity of partners within local partnerships (LIPs) established by the project
  - Diversity of partners from different industrial ecosystems
  - Access and application of technologies, skills and innovative techniques of SMEs in renovation projects

## 2.14. European Industry Days 2023

**Type of applicants** targeted by direct award

An ad-hoc grant will be awarded without a call for proposals under Article 195(c) of the Financial Regulation to the government (or its representative) of the country that will hold the EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2023 (Spain) to cover the tasks related to the organisation of the event.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the grant awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195(c) of the Financial Regulation

EU Industry Days is Europe's flagship annual event on industry. It serves as the main platform to discuss industrial challenges and co-develop opportunities and policy responses in an inclusive dialogue with a wide range of partners. It also helps to ensure that our policies at European, national, regional and local levels work together to enable European industry to deliver jobs, growth and innovation in Europe. The Commission Communication: A New Industrial Strategy for Europe<sup>20</sup> recognises its role towards having recurrent dialogue with industrial stakeholders, social partners and civil society.

<sup>20</sup> [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0102 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#) COM/2020/102 final

The main event of the EU Industry Days will be a conference organised by the EU Presidency in Spain within its official programme. It will consist of high-level plenary sessions and expert workshops to showcase progress of EU industrial ecosystems on their way to green, digital and resilient transition as well as to discuss existing challenges related to implementation of EU Industrial Strategy in a co-creative and inclusive manner. Special session(s) for young Europeans will be integrated into the programme. In parallel, events will take place all over Europe under the brand "EU Industry Week", such as workshops, seminars, open doors events in companies and factories etc. The event will provide a forum for stakeholders from different areas contributing to European industrial competitiveness, covering all industrial ecosystems, finance, research and innovation, public government and administration, to showcase their activities, learn from each other, discuss cross-cutting issues and develop joint visions for the future.

Expected results:

EU Industry Days 2023 will build on the success of the previous editions to engage in a strategic manner with industrial stakeholders and with citizens in general. EU Industry Days are an essential part of the dialogue between the EU, Member States and stakeholders to develop a common vision for the industry of the future and to identify further actions needed to strengthen industrial competitiveness.

### **Implementation**

EISMEA

### **Additional information**

Total amount of the action: EUR 1 000 000

Rate of co-financing: up to 90 %

Indicators:

- Number of participants in the main conference
- Number of live web-streaming viewers
- Number of events organised in Europe under the EU Industry Days (workshops, seminars, Open doors events, etc.)
- Social media/web indicators
- Press coverage
- Final report summarising the discussions during the main Conference

## **2.15. European Solar Academy**

**Type of applicants** targeted by direct award

An ad hoc grant will be awarded to EIT Innoenergy under Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation. This is due to the activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers.

EIT Innoenergy is a Knowledge and Innovation Community set up by the European Institute of Technology under Horizon rules. It has a rich experience in establishing industrial partnerships, alliances and in managing forward looking investment portfolios in the area of renewables and energy. Its particular strength lies in the fact that EIT

Innoenergy is already implementing the European Battery Academy, as a leading organisation of the European Battery Alliance. In addition, EIT Innoenergy is also a leading organisation of the EU Solar PV Industry Alliance (“Solar Alliance”) and a founding member of the Solar Alliance. The European Solar Academy will be a major deliverable of the Solar Alliance and it is expected that EIT Innoenergy will be able to adapt already existing infrastructure and expertise from the Battery Academy in developing the European Solar Academy.

**Description of the activities** to be funded by the grant awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation

We propose an activity to establish a large scale trainings and skills pilot for the “European Solar Academy”:

- The European Solar Academy would aim to provide direct support to SMEs by educating and training the workforce in and for the solar PV manufacturing supply chain in the EU. The Academy would operate under the umbrella of the new EU Solar PV Industry Alliance.
- The Academy would aim to train workforce primarily in SMEs and large businesses operating in the area of solar PV manufacturing in Europe. It will address critical needs of the sector, responding to the needs and objectives outlined in the Solar Strategy and the EU Solar PV Industry Alliance’s terms of reference.
- The Academy would develop and implement a comprehensive training programme providing training and development opportunities across the solar value chain, focused on manufacturing and ancillary supply side activities.
- The primary focus of the programme would be SMEs. According to some estimates, a 20 GW increase of manufacturing capacity across the solar value chain in Europe would create up to 400 000 new jobs across the EU.
- Large businesses would be entitled to participate but with a reduced funding rate (if for the purposes of staff training) and always in cooperation with SMEs relevant for the value chain component. Otherwise, they could also participate as training providers.

### **Implementation**

DG GROW

### **Additional information**

SMEs are a vital part of the solar PV value chain. A healthy and competitive solar PV value chain in Europe will require numerous SMEs to scale up their manufacturing capacities and to engage with large industry leaders. Skills, especially in the area of sustainable and circular design and next generation solar PV technologies are a critical factor of success. Lack of qualified workforce has been identified as a major barrier to scale up this sector in Europe, and boosting skills is one of the priority areas of the SME pillar.

Participating SMEs will have an opportunity to directly train their staff on critical skills and competencies needed for solar PV manufacturing. The focus will be on interdisciplinarity and skills needs for manufacturing competitive products in this supply

chain. In addition, SMEs will be able to engage with larger industry leaders in Europe in order to better adapt their outputs to the overall solar value chain. This will result in more resilient, competitive and agile SMEs in the solar value chain.

- Total amount of the action: EUR 2 500 000
- Rate of co-financing: up to 90% of the eligible costs
- Indicative duration of the project to be funded: approximately 24 months
- Indicative implementation timetable:
  - Launch of the call: Q2/2023
  - Q3/2023–start of the action and development of the first batch of training material
  - Q4/2023 – Q4/2024–implementation of the first training material
  - Q1/2025–final trainings delivered under the pilot and design of follow up actions
- *Qualitative and quantitative indicators:*
  - Number of SMEs trained (including number of staff and geographical distribution);
  - Number of training programs established (including the qualification of training topics with a focus on interdisciplinary trainings);
  - Increase of staff in participating companies (qualitative impact indicator).

### 3. PROCUREMENT

The global budgetary envelope reserved for procurement contracts in 2023 is EUR 27 486 982.

#### 3.1. SME Policy - SME Performance Review

General description of the contracts envisaged

The purpose of the action is to provide key data related to SMEs and priority policy issues related to the EU SME strategy, including industrial ecosystems, and to support the preparation of the SME Performance Review reports: The Eurobarometer is expected to be used to contribute additional evidence on SMEs mastering the critical transition challenges of digitalisation, sustainability and resilience.

Implementation

DG GROW

#### Additional information

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 656 000:**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call): Q4 2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Report(s) completed according to the specifications and database(s) provided with the results.
  - Timely dissemination of the results.

#### 3.2. SME POLICY - Outreach (SME Assembly/SME Envoys, IT tools)

General description of the contracts envisaged

The aim of the action is to select contractors to assist the Commission (technical assistance) in implementing and monitoring SME Policy at European and national level.

The following activities will be performed:

- the organisation of the annual SME Assembly including the European Enterprise Promotion Award ceremony,
- the organisation of the meetings of the SME Envoys network and any other relevant event/meeting including the expert groups meetings.

#### Implementation

DG GROW (SME Envoys Network and other meetings, IT tools) and EISMEA (SME Assembly)

### **Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 2 484 000**
  - EUR 2 200 000 for SME Assembly (two year contract)
  - EUR 284 000 for SME Envoys, Assembly delegates, and participation in other events (eg Web Summit).
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call); Q1/2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Number of participants in the events/meetings;
  - Timely dissemination of the results;
  - Progress achieved in the implementation of the measures in the SME Policy areas.

### **3.3. SME Policy – Credit management training and financial literacy for SMEs**

General description of the contracts envisaged

Call for tenders for the implementation of an action on credit management training and financial literacy for SMEs.

Implementation

EISMEA

### **Additional information**

The action will contribute to the follow-up of the SME Strategy by supporting a better implementation of the Late Payment Directive (Directive 2011/7/EU).

Available evidence concurs that most payment delays occurring in commercial transactions are intentional. With adequate credit management and financial literacy, SMEs could prevent, to a large extent, being paid late. While a well-established credit information/credit management training offer is in place in the EU<sup>21</sup>, it benefits mostly larger companies and larger SMEs. Smaller and micro SMEs (who are also the most vulnerable to the risk and the effects of late payments) do not access these trainings because of lack of time, lack of awareness or costs.

Lack of financial management skills is an issue of great concern for SMEs, especially in the current economic context. According to the European Payment Report 2022<sup>22</sup>, 70% of businesses indicated that lack of skills and in-house “know how” are preventing them

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<sup>21</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cb4bc1bd-1467-11ed-8fa0-01aa75ed71a1> Section 11.4 and onwards

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/82e27754-19e8-11ed-8fa0-01aa75ed71a1> point 6

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.intrum.com/publications/european-payment-report/european-payment-report-2022/>

from improving the management of payment delays.

This pilot action will be tailored to the specific needs of SMEs. It will embed a train-the-trainer element, to ensure future sustainability, and will be designed to be included in dedicated business training platforms (e.g EU Academy)<sup>23</sup>.

- Expected results and potential impact of this action on SMEs

The action targets exclusively SMEs and is expected to lead to:

- 1) Increased awareness about trade credit management, financial literacy, credit information tools, including those provided digitally;
- 2) Increased provision of training material for SMEs and trainers, including material provided digitally;
- 3) Increased awareness of EU programmes and initiatives to support SMEs and of the good practices in the area.

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 200 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call): Q3/2023, (award of the contract) Q2/2024
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Number of participants in the trainings
  - Number of training materials developed
  - Timely production of IT-related tools and impact on the target public (number of visits for websites etc.)

### 3.4. Support to women entrepreneurs

General description of the contracts envisaged

Call for Tenders for collecting data on women's entrepreneurship and organizing a media campaign and events on promoting girls and women in ESTEAM (STEM+Arts+Entrepreneurship)

Implementation

EISMEA

#### **Additional information**

This action will support the follow-up of the Commission's SME Strategy, Gender Equality Strategy, New Skills Agenda and Digital Education Action Plan by providing data on the challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and promoting women entrepreneurship via a media campaign and ESTEAM events.

There is very little data available on women's entrepreneurship, especially on the

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<sup>23</sup> <https://academy.europa.eu/>

challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, as well as on the actions needed to overcome these. Similarly, there are very few actions promoting women's entrepreneurship, especially in areas that are male dominated such as science, technology and engineering. This action has strong synergies with the ongoing action "Enhancing the entrepreneurial and digital competences of girls and women through ESTEAM Fests". While the Fests focus on learning and acquiring competences, the current proposed action will focus on data collection and promoting role models in ESTEAM areas.

- Expected results and potential impact of this action on SMEs

Almost all women entrepreneurs run smaller businesses, so this action targets mostly SMEs. We expect:

- By collecting data, to achieve increased awareness on the challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, as well as on the actions that can be put in place to overcome these;
- Through ESTEAM media campaign and events, increased awareness on role models and successful actions that promote and support women entrepreneurs;
- Increase in the number of women entrepreneurs and girls that are considering careers in science, technology and engineering.

This action has strong synergies with the ongoing action "Enhancing the entrepreneurial and digital competences of girls and women through ESTEAM Fests". While the Fests focus on learning and acquiring competences, the current proposed action will focus on data collection and promoting role models in ESTEAM areas.

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 400 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call): Q3/2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Number of participants in the ESTEAM events;
  - Number of role models used and outreach of the media campaign (number of TV channels, number of views/likes on social media).

### 3.5. SME friendly training for Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs)

General description of the contracts envisaged

Organisation of several editions of the training programme for staff working for Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs), or staff working in regulatory or policy making departments in charge of public procurement in Member States.

The objective of this initiative is to improve the administrative capacity of the staff with key procurement functions in the Member States. The initiative is expected to generate a significant impact, given the procurement volume of CPBs operating in Europe at national, regional or local level (the annual purchasing budget of these bodies can be up to a few billion euros). Increasing the administrative capacity of staff will also facilitate access of SMEs to public procurement and foster the use of strategic procurement (procurement of innovation, green procurement and social procurement), providing SMEs that participate in these procurement markets with greater opportunities for growth and scale up. The training, inter alia, will have to cover techniques and practices

aiming at facilitating access for SMEs and startups to procurement markets.

This initiative follows the successful implementation of the pilot training course in 2018-2019 and its follow up in the 2020 workprogramme (currently being completed)<sup>24</sup>. The results of the ongoing programme are excellent as indicated by participants and in terms of the knowledge gained (tested at the beginning and at the end of the training). So far, demand has also largely exceeded the number of places available (3-4 times).

## Implementation

EISMEA

## Additional information

- This action is horizontal and it would greatly benefit all industrial ecosystems whose output is purchased by public administration. For instance, it includes construction works and services, IT, health, education, defence etc.
- Indicative implementation timetable: 2024-2028
- The objective of this project is to scale up the current ongoing projects, which will end in May 2023. The aim of this project is to train more than 170 people over a period of five years.
- Total amount of the action: **EUR 2 500 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call): Q2/2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action:
  - number of applications received for the training course, per country and year
  - evaluation of the quality of the training course by participants
  - number of participants in the training course
- The durability of the impact of the project is ensured via the Alumni network which will facilitate the continuation of exchanges and contacts between former participants to the training course, and with the future ones. The contractor will have to animate the Alumni network. Another project will provide a digital platform hosting the activity of the Alumni network.

### 3.6. Sustainable procurement hubs

#### General description of the contract envisaged

The contractor will be required to set up sustainable procurement hubs on behalf of the Commission services. These will serve as laboratories (living labs and incubators) in which the actual challenges and needs of public bodies are confronted and challenged with

<sup>24</sup> The call included in the 2021 work programme did not have any applicants. Given the nature of the costs included in the project, and stakeholder feedback, it has been decided to relaunch this action as a call for tenders.

possible innovative solutions coming from start-ups and entrepreneurs. The objective is to set a strong link between innovators and public administration in areas like mobility, green and digital transition, health, education (...), but also to develop new purchasing practices that will help the creation of future markets for SMEs and start-ups. Therefore, the hubs will greatly facilitate access of start-ups and SMEs to public procurement markets, closing the gap between innovators and public procurement. Support for this action is also included in the New Innovation Agenda<sup>25</sup> of July 2022.

This project builds on the successful experience developed in France (Ecolab at the Ministère de la Transition Ecologique), and in the programme of the city of Amsterdam called “Start Up in Residence”.

This project may also support the development of the Digital Public Buyers Community platform and the creation of new communities of practice in the field of public procurement. The hub may potentially also provide support for activities carried out by public buyers in the field of social procurement, for instance to ensure the respect of sustainability Due Diligence in their supply chains.

## Implementation

EISMEA

## **Additional information**

Public procurement counts for 14% of the EU GPD. Public authorities are the main buyers in a number of sectors (education, health, mobility, construction, IT, defence etc). Public procurement is very relevant for SMEs for several reasons: in many cases, public buyers are the ‘first customer’ for SMEs and start-ups; they provide a secure payment; public authorities are a buyer of innovative, green, and social solutions developed by SMEs.

In the field of green and social innovation, there is an important ecosystem mainly structured around start-ups and SMEs. This will be the main focus of the sustainable hubs project. The ambition is to bring public buyers closer to these actors who produce new solutions that will allow public entities to face challenges such as climate change, energy and digital transition, and social inclusion. The creation of the hubs will provide a space in which public buyers and SMEs and start-ups can develop new ways of working together to foster innovative and sustainable procurement.

- Expected results and potential impact of this action on SMEs

The expected results are the creation of new business opportunities for SMEs and start-ups through contracts awarded by the public purchasers involved in the hubs. But also, it is expected that the project will help to define new markets and thus give opportunities to SMEs and start-ups to sell the solutions developed by participating in the hubs' activities, to other customers in Europe. We assume that the project will have an impact on the whole value chain: how demand side can contribute to form new markets and have an impact on industrial strategies in Europe.

<sup>25</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0332&from=EN>

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 4 500 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call): Q2/2023
- Expected duration of contract: up to 48 months
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Number of participating public buyers, type (hospitals, cities, ministries ...) and size (purchasing volume in Euros)
  - Number of SMEs and Start-ups involved in the hubs
  - Number of innovation and sustainable calls for tenders published and number of public or private contracts won by the SMEs and start-ups that participated in the hubs
  - Evaluation of the performance impact of innovative and sustainable solutions purchased: e.g. carbon footprint, impact on social inclusion, etc.

### 3.7. European Cluster Collaboration Platform

General description of the contracts envisaged

Contract renewal or call for tenders<sup>26</sup>

Implementation

EISMEA

#### **Additional information**

The objective of this action is to promote the development of more world-class clusters in Europe, with a view to implementing updated the industrial strategy objectives of green and digital transition and resilience building, fostering the competitiveness, sustainability and resource-efficiency of enterprises, notably SMEs. It aims at intensifying cluster collaboration across regional and sectoral boundaries and facilitating SMEs' access to clusters and internationalisation activities.

The ultimate goal is to better connect clusters and ecosystems across Europe in order to accelerate industrial modernisation and boost entrepreneurship in emerging industries with growth potential. It will facilitate more strategic inter-regional collaboration and internationalisation activities of SMEs as well as the implementation of smart specialisation strategies and cluster policies by linking up and supporting cluster stakeholders across Europe;

The action shall accelerate the implementation of transition pathways in the EU industrial ecosystems and the development of more world-class clusters in SMP participating countries by maintaining a one-stop-shop for cluster collaboration and evidence-based policy-making in Europe. It will reinforce cluster cooperation within and beyond Europe and boost SMEs internationalisation and innovation efforts, including on resource-efficiency and innovation, and thus boost their growth and create high-value jobs.

The action shall contribute to the development of better evidence-based cluster policies

<sup>26</sup> The procedure decision will be taken based on the progress and quality of results in the current contract.

and cluster initiatives that should assist enterprises, particularly SMEs, in developing new, globally competitive advantages in new industrial value chains that cut across sectors and competences, thereby being well positioned to adjust to industrial change and to reap growth opportunities. It will therefore support policies and actions for the modernisation of industry and the implementation and linking of industrial strategy and national and regional smart specialisation strategies.

The action intends to create concrete opportunities and incentives to engage in strategic inter-regional collaboration, such as through the organisation of intra-European and international cluster matchmaking events, the Clusters talks and Clusters meet regions, supporting stronger connections among regional stakeholders and across industrial ecosystems.

The action will further contribute to the long-term sustainable competitiveness of European SMEs by encouraging and widening the uptake and implementation of resource efficiency measures across value chains, including targeted outreach through cluster organisations.

The action is expected to significantly raise the extent and level of strategic inter-regional collaboration and facilitate investments across borders. It will not only continue to map and profile more than 1000 cluster organisations and their ecosystems across Europe to facilitate networking, but also concretely support the collaboration efforts of cluster organisations and their SMEs within and across industrial ecosystems.

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 5 000 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call or contract renewal)
  - Signature of the contract renewal Q4 2023
  - or Publication of new call for tenders: Q1 2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  1. Quality, impact and visibility of the supported actions on raising cluster collaboration, to be measured by the number of cluster organisations, their businesses – notably SMEs – and cluster policy-makers from different SMP participating countries having benefited from the supported actions; the number of SMEs directly supported; the number of cluster matchmaking meetings, the number of policy learning events organised and the number of participants; the number and impact of partnership agreements and collaborative projects resulting from the supported action within Europe and beyond;
  2. Quality, impact and visibility of analysis, policy recommendations and good practices identified as well as of the services and events organised to facilitate mutual policy learning, to be measured by the number, coverage and level of regional and national policy makers having actively participated; the number, coverage and level of references to the Platform's work in policy discussions, events and policy documents; the number and scale of follow-up measures for the implementation of the updated industrial strategy, industrial modernisation, internationalisation and resource-efficiency policies;
  3. Quality, impact and visibility of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform web sections, to be measured by key performance indicators for its web sections, the use of the consolidated cluster mapping and networking tool, the European Resource Efficiency Self-Assessment Tool for SMEs and other tools such as policy toolkit, the number of downloads of deliverables and reports on clusters, in particular Cluster Panorama and cluster policy factsheets, and the number, coverage and level of references to the platform and its work.

- The approach expected for monitoring this action and collecting impact data is through website analytics and surveys.

The European Cluster Panorama and the Cluster policy toolkit will give updated information on cluster policy developments across SMP participating countries.

### 3.8. Monitoring the performance of EU industry and industrial ecosystems

General description of the contracts envisaged

Renewal of the service contract EISMEA/2021 /OP/0013 Monitoring the performance of EU industry and industrial ecosystems (GRO-SME-21-12081).

Implementation

EISMEA

Additional information

The project started in June 2022.

In line with the new industrial strategy and in order to support this strategy<sup>27</sup> and the monitoring of its implementation, this action includes tasks related to:

- 1) Analysing EU industry and EU industrial ecosystems, covering all relevant actors, including SMEs.
- 2) Monitoring the performance of EU Industry, EU industrial ecosystems and transition pathways. The monitoring will be underpinned by an analytical framework based on a robust methodology with specific KPIs (as included in the contract).
- 3) Secretarial support for the Industrial Forum (support on the organisation of Industrial Forum meetings, drafting minutes and doing the maintenance of the Industrial Forum wiki) among other activities.
- 4) Consolidating at least two of the outcomes of the Advanced Technologies for Industry (ATI) project.

Expected results and qualitative indicators

- 1) Analysis on EU Industry and its different industrial ecosystems. The deliverables will be reports as well as statistical data.
- 2) Analytical framework (including the methodology) for monitoring the performance of ecosystems as well as of EU Industry. The deliverables will be reports as well as data (including key performance indicators) collected and delivered in structured format (where necessary).
- 3) Analytical work and technical/IT assistance to support industrial ecosystems and alliances in support of the Industrial Forum. The deliverables will be reports, the organisation of online meetings and delivering minutes of onsite and online meetings.
- 4) Analytical framework (including the methodology) for measuring uptake of technologies by industrial ecosystems as well as the level of industrial modernisation

<sup>27</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0102>

in general and how this fits with the overall framework explained under point 2. The deliverables will be reports as well as data (including key performance indicators) collected and delivered in structured format.

Budget: **EUR 1 739 430**

Indicative timetable: Q4/2023 (contract renewal)

### **3.9. Erasmus for young entrepreneurs – support to Ukrainian entrepreneurs (promotion)**

General description of the contract envisaged

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) is a mobility scheme that allows potential or newly established entrepreneurs to spend a period of time collaborating with an experienced entrepreneur in another participating country.

A dedicated Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) call for proposals to support exclusively Ukrainian new entrepreneurs will be launched in 2023 (see details in point 2.6). To complement this dedicated call, an additional action in relation to its promotion shall be launched in 2023.

Objectives of this promotion action:

Firstly, to design/deliver promotion on the opportunity to participate in the EYE exchange and trainings on doing business in the Single Market, in order to reach a broad range of Ukrainian entrepreneurs (based in Ukraine and refugees/displaced Ukrainian entrepreneurs based in the participating countries).

Secondly, to design online training courses addressing a wide range of topics on entrepreneurship. This will offer Ukrainians wishing to be entrepreneurs a pre-incubation possibility. Training modules would include topics such as: becoming an entrepreneur, entrepreneurial skills, basic economics, the concept of a business plan, information on Single Market, etc.

*As the EYE for Ukrainian entrepreneurs action will enable the Ukrainian new entrepreneurs to share their experience with their host entrepreneurs, it will also help the EU host entrepreneurs to strengthen their access to the Ukrainian market, and take better advantage of opportunities to source supplies from this country.*

Implementation

EISMEA

#### Additional information

This will facilitate implementation of an action that aims to improve the competitiveness of Ukrainian and European businesses (especially SMEs), foster a favourable international business environment and promote entrepreneurial culture in Europe (action 2.6 in this work programme).

The selected contractor will proactively search for potential Ukrainians who wish to be entrepreneurs or who are new entrepreneurs (in Ukraine or displaced). By participating

in the EYE programme they would learn from experienced host entrepreneurs how business is done in Europe, what it entails to be an entrepreneur, and to discover the Single Market, and promote the action.

- Total amount of the action: EUR 500 000
- Number of projects to be funded: 1
- Expected length of the project: 24 months
- Indicative timeframe for launching the procedure: Q1 2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Adequate communication strategy
  - Number of post and communication activities targeting new entrepreneurs
  - Number of post and communication activities targeting host entrepreneurs
  - Reach of the posts and communication activities
  - Number of designed courses

### **3.10. Enterprise Europe Network – animation tasks**

General description of the contracts envisaged

This action provides the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) partners with the necessary tools and support to implement their work programmes. This includes IT hosting, maintenance, development of the IT tools and databases, the intranet and community-building tools. It also includes the budget needed for communication activities, training and governance, organisation of working groups, steering groups, events etc. Part of this budget will be used to organise the EEN annual conference.

Implementation

EISMEA

Additional information

## Description of action or actions

The specific objectives of the Network animation tasks include:

- EEN governance, in particular by organising the annual conference, Steering Groups, Working Group meetings and/or Network stakeholder meetings;
- IT tools and databases, in particular by operating, maintaining, improving and developing new IT tools and databases, ensuring data quality, and maintaining an IT helpdesk;
- Helping the Network to provide its services in an efficient and effective manner and at the highest quality possible;
- Enabling Network partners to provide their services to European SMEs based on the "no wrong door principle" through the Client Journey;
- Network communication, information and support, implementation of the communication plan, preparation and delivery of promotional material and other activities to increase the Network's visibility, making available of infrastructure, and facilitating networking;
- Dissemination of information on Commission priorities and actions relevant for SMEs throughout the Network;
- Training and capacity building: implementation of the training plan paying special attention to new priority areas (training, capacity building and possibly creating assessment tools to help EEN members provide sustainability, digitalisation and innovation services);
- Services to the Network, in particular managing knowledge contents, the forums system, valorising practices and running thematic and sector groups;
- Assistance to and mentoring of Network partners where quality of activities and services needs to be raised;
- Report on Network achievements and performance indicators on a regular basis, as defined in the monitoring and reporting guidelines, using an automated (IT developed) reporting system to avoid administrative burden where possible.

The budget for Network animation may also include the budget needed to facilitate the integration of EEN members in third countries (travel and subsistence costs for training, working groups, steering groups, annual conference, thematic or sector groups).

Each year, the Commission and the rotating Presidency of the European Union organise a conference with over 800 participants to link together EU Institutions with SME support organisations on the ground and to allow EEN members to network and exchange knowledge, know-how and useful contacts. For the year 2023, the aim is to organise a hybrid Annual Conference for the Network with strong presence onsite (possibly up to 800 people) and the possibility to connect the rest of the Network members virtually through a dedicated conferencing platform. The budget required under the EEN animation action is needed for all practical aspects of the conference (logistics of physical and virtual meetings, opening session, parallel workshops, closing session, catering etc.)<sup>28</sup>.

- Expected results
  - EEN members are aware of new Commission priorities and ready to provide relevant services to SMEs, for example on sustainability, digitalisation and

<sup>28</sup> There is also a separate ad hoc grant action in point 2.4 of this annual work programme for the contribution made by the national organisers in Spain (the country that will host the EU presidency at the time of this event).

resilience.

- Reliable and well-performing IT tools are available to the EEN members to help them implement their activities;
- The visibility of the EEN is increased as a result of the communication activities;
- The annual conference and training activities help EEN staff to increase their skills, knowledge and efficiency.

- Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action

For the animation contracts:

- Number of Network staff trained (centralised, de-centralised and e-learning);
- Number of Network staff having participated in staff exchanges and mentoring activities;
- Number of visits to the public website of the Network and social media followers;
- Efficient management of the Network intranet, IT tools and databases.
- For the annual conference:
  - Number of participants onsite and online;
  - Number of sessions and workshops organised;
  - Satisfaction rate of virtual and physical participants.

- Budget : **EUR 2 400 000** (to be implemented using a variety of direct contracts or specific contracts using framework contracts).

The exact budget distribution between the different actions will be known at a later stage.

- Indicative implementation timetable:

Specific contracts using diverse framework contracts (including IT, communication, rooms, and catering): Starting date **Q1-Q4 2023**.

### 3.11. Stakeholder online community for the textiles ecosystem

General description of the contracts envisaged

The objective of the action is to create an online community for the textiles ecosystem using the stakeholder support platform for transition pathways which is being developed in the context of the tourism ecosystem. The platform will be used by all the interested industrial ecosystems as they would be able to plug in and use the different functionalities developed. The textiles section of the platform will give stakeholders **an easy access to the knowledge, resources and connections** that **support them** in their transition to make their operations more green, digital and resilient.

The textile section of the platform will offer an integrated access point and a user-friendly entry point:

- 1) to access actively updated information and links to official and community resources relevant for the transition pathway actions;
- 2) to find constantly updated knowledge on ongoing projects, activities and events

relevant for the transition pathway actions, as well as the state of play of the commitments and pledges;

- 3) to provide means to connect with and work together with the members of the stakeholder community, and
- 4) to search or be alerted about topical current funding and learning opportunities or other developments.

The content will be actively built and updated by the contractor, linking with national, regional and stakeholder community providers, strategically designed to support the identified transition pathway priorities. As one of the transition pathway strategic actions, the platform will also function as key resource, information and networking hub for the Pact for Skills partnerships.

The contractor will be responsible for designing, setting up, maintaining and moderating the online textiles community on the dedicated section for textiles of the platform for three years. The contractor will actively update the content, propose and execute improvements, and facilitate thematic stakeholder interactions to support developing the ecosystem in a sustainable and innovative manner. The IT structure to be used for the textiles section of the platform (web application) will be adapted from the solution developed by the tourism ecosystem as part of Action 3.9 in the SMP Work Programme of 2022.

The services may also include yearly reporting on the progress of the transition pathway co-implementation based on thematic meetings and surveys implemented with the stakeholders.

Further to stakeholder community management and engagement, the services will cover communication, outreach and promotion to further extend the community.

Expected results:

- Active stakeholder community with online support facilities which integrates resources in particular from ongoing EU actions and initiatives, and from relevant networks and resources on member state, regional and sectoral levels, which will support the ecosystem stakeholders
- Actively supported and facilitated thematic discussions and forums to support stakeholders on key themes for the green and digital transitions towards more resilient practices
- Reports on the progress with transition and the key challenges.

## **Implementation**

EISMEA

## **Additional information**

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 1 500 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call); Q3/2023 for an estimated duration of up to 36 months
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - The number of active participants in the stakeholders community; diversity of the

- participating stakeholders (geography, sectors, levels of actors)
- Stakeholders mobilised and actively share their events and information
  - A large share of the stakeholders community uses the information sharing platform regularly
  - The approach for monitoring this action and collecting impact data.

### 3.12. Fit for future

General description of the contracts envisaged

The Commission's policy on better regulation guides the overall burden reduction and simplification efforts under the regulatory fitness and performance ('REFIT') programme. To support the REFIT programme, a REFIT Platform was established by Commission Decision C(2015) 3261 of 19 May 2015 to support the Commission in those efforts to improve legislation. That Decision applied until 31 October 2019.

Tasked by President Von der Leyen to continue the work of the Platform, Vice-President Šefčovič chairs a new high-level group. The Fit for Future Platform advises the Commission on how to simplify and reduce burden stemming from existing EU legislation and make the EU legislation fit for future, while achieving the policy objectives and maintaining the high social, economic and environmental standards. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would benefit from reducing red tape, easing their access to the market and enabling them to make the most of digitalisation. The SME Envoys Network has the role of promoting the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises in this context by contributing to the annual work programme of the Platform.

Contracts include those for studies to support platform's work, technical assistance, IT development, communication services and contracts for event organisation.

Implementation

Secretariat-General (SG)

Additional information

This action falls within the scope of Headline Ambition 3 'an economy that works for people', as well as Headline Ambitions 1 'A European Green Deal' and 2, 'A Europe fit for Digital Age'. It concerns promoting online public consultations and other feedback opportunities via the "[Have Your Say](#)" portal on the new Commission policy and legal initiatives as well as reviews and evaluations of existing policies and laws. By promoting online public consultations and other feedback opportunities among citizens and stakeholders, the action further contributes to Headline Ambition 6 'a new push for democracy' and corresponds to the outcome of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and its call to enhance citizens' information and participation.

Furthermore, the action promotes the opportunity to propose ways to simplify existing policies and laws through the Fit for Future platform ("[Have Your Say: Simplify](#)" platform). Communication under this action includes informing citizens and stakeholders about key developments and Commission achievements on the Better Regulation Agenda,

including the Annual Burden Survey Report, Regulatory Scrutiny Board Report and results of major events such as Fit for Future Platform meetings or conferences and reports on the Commission performance on Better Regulation.

- **Expected results and potential impact of this action on SMEs:**

- A further improvement in stakeholder (i.e. mainly citizen and SMEs / business corporate) participation in the Better Regulation Consultations via Have your Say (namely further increasing the number of unique visitors per year and overall number of received contributions, as well as the number of unique visitors and contributions from under-represented Member States).
- The same applies for promoted consultations. Targeting consultation-relevant audiences and inviting them to contribute greatly improves response rates compared to non-targetted communication which can produce very limited response.

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 807 000**

Indicative budget allocated to each action:

Action	Amount (EUR)
- Fit for Future Platform	150 000
- Support action for platform	110 000
- IT and Digital working tools	247 000
- Fit for Future communication	300 000

- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call):

Use of existing Framework contracts starting from Q1 to Q4

- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:

Fit for Future Platform:

- Timely set up of the Platform including its rules of procedure
- Timely delivery of the annual work programme
- Number of plenary sessions, subgroup and preparatory meetings
- Number of opinions adopted
- Number of events

IT and Digital working tools

- Timely development of the tools
- Annual Burden Survey
- REFIT Scoreboard
- Number of visits for websites
- Timely publication of factual summary report
- Satisfaction survey on the possibilities to contribute to better law making
- Effective use and dissemination of tools
- Development and maintenance of web sites.
- Timely dissemination of communication materials
- Organisation of targeted events

Fit for Future communication

- Number of unique visitors to the Have Your Say portal
- Number of contributions

- Number of contributions for promoted public consultations, and – where relevant – that it is balanced across member states or targeted audience sections;
- For social media communication: number of clicks, number of people reached and impressions;
- Other indicators specific for communication actions about Fit For Future milestones.
- Any follow-up action is envisaged (e.g. design and delivery of training– pending a decision on budget availability).
  - On the communication aspects, an evaluation of the action is planned for 2023, to assess effectiveness, and relevance.

### 3.13. Supporting actions

#### **General description** of the contracts envisaged

These actions include:

- Sectoral studies and reports, analytical work, studies analysing cross-sectoral issues and policy areas affecting European competitiveness. Impact assessments and ex-post evaluations will assess policy actions.
- Conferences, workshops and expert meetings that will be organised with participation of various stakeholders (national authorities, consumer organisations, SME representatives, non-governmental organisations, etc.) to discuss challenges for access to the single market, resilience, green and digital transformation of SMEs. This also includes dedicated training to boost the administrative capacity of SOLVIT centres to handle business cases, as well as the organisation of the European Cluster Conference. Particular attention will be devoted to recommendations on how to better address SMEs’ needs, how to support socially inclusive business models, how to support re-/upskilling of the workforce and how to further foster European competitiveness. Information actions will be carried out. This includes access to finance communication activities.
- The promotion, technical support and hosting of integrated and user-friendly online systems that provide information on programmes and measures relevant for SMEs whilst ensuring that they do not duplicate existing portals, including support for the Single Digital Gateway.
- An IT support tool for EU Industry days.

#### **Implementation**

DG GROW, DG DIGIT, EISMEA

#### **Additional information**

The studies covering the policy priorities outlined in the Single Market Strategy should lead to an enhanced understanding of European entrepreneurship and competitiveness, and should enable the Commission to identify the main trends.

Furthermore, studies will combine analytical work of high academic standard with a policy outlook for the medium term. They will provide the analytical basis for the debate

on economic reforms. Other studies will analyse cross-sectoral issues and policy areas affecting European competitiveness.

Impact assessments will focus on the analysis of possible reviews of existing legislation and impacts they might have on competitiveness and in particular on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Recommendations for possible new legislative proposals will also be assessed, taking into account their economic and societal added value.

Ex-post evaluations will assess Union policy actions, in particular their overall economic impact, efficiency and effectiveness as well as their impact on reducing obstacles in the market.

Conferences, workshops and expert meetings will be organised with participation of various stakeholders (national authorities, consumer organisations, SME representatives, non-governmental organisations, etc.) to discuss challenges for access to the single market.

Technical support and IT hosting will also be included.

**Budget: EUR 4 800 552**

#### 4. ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED IN INDIRECT MANAGEMENT

##### 4.1. European Union Chemicals Legislation Finder (EUCLEF)

###### Implementing entity

The action is implemented by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) via a Contribution Agreement.

###### Description

ECHA develops and maintains the EUCLEF database according to the Contribution Agreement concluded with the Commission, represented by DG GROW. Every year, a transfer of funds agreement needs to be signed for the EUCLEF tasks that ECHA needs to complete within 18 months from the transfer of funds (Article 2 of the Contribution Agreement).

###### Additional information

- Total amount of the action: **EUR 1 053 400**
- One procurement action: (data service provider)
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call);
  - Signature of the Transfer of funds agreement: Q4 2023.
  - Full requested sum (EUR 1 053 400) is provided as pre-financing.
  - Tasks need to be completed within 18 months from the transfer of funds.
  - A final financial report is expected early in 2025 and may lead to the recovery of any unspent part of the 2023 allocation.
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Maintenance and improvement of EUCLEF; potential integration of elements covering on-going policy developments (e.g. originating from the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability)
  - Availability of information clearly going beyond currently available cost-free tools
  - Clarity and user-friendliness of EUCLEF interface and information provided
  - Number of hits on the website

##### 4.2. European Union Observatory for Nanomaterials (EUON)

###### Implementing entity

The action is implemented by ECHA via a Contribution agreement with the EC.

###### Description

ECHA operates the EUON based on a Contribution Agreement concluded with the Commission, represented by DG GROW. Every year, a transfer of funds agreement needs to be signed for the EUON tasks that ECHA needs to complete within 18 months from the transfer of funds (Article 2 of the Contribution Agreement).

### **Additional information**

- The European Union Observatory on Nanomaterials provides SMEs, but also other businesses, workers and consumers with relevant information concerning nanomaterials on the EU market, by collecting data from both existing sources and new market studies.
- Nanotechnology is one of the recognised Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) indicated in the 2020 New Industrial Strategy for Europe (COM(2020)102). Nanotechnology applications will be increasingly essential for the competitiveness of a wide range of EU products in the global market, including those that are needed to improve sustainability, fight climate change, enhance and upgrade the hardware that is at the core of our digital infrastructure, and diversify our portfolio of solutions to systemic (lack of critical raw materials, pandemic...) or isolated challenges so as to increase our economy's resilience. Therefore, it is important to improve the quality and transparency of the information on nanomaterials, that is a prerequisite for ensuring confidence in the application of nanotechnology among users, consumers and the general public. This is a crucial element in order to create an environment favourable to a sustainable development of the nanotechnology field. In turn, the growing use of nanotechnology can unlock potential innovations, thereby contributing to the competitiveness of EU businesses across sectors and ecosystems.
- Publicly available information on nanomaterials on the market can help SMEs and other businesses identify market trends across Europe. This will enhance market access for companies, in particular SMEs, who do not have the capacity to search for and gather and select the most reliable information from the wealth of information that is available about nanomaterials and nanotechnology.
- In addition, the European Union Observatory on Nanomaterials constitutes an industry-friendly alternative (particularly for SMEs) compared to other legislative measures to increase transparency, which could introduce burdensome reporting obligations to industry.
- Total amount of the action: **EUR 614 000**
- Indicative implementation timetable (launch of the call);
  - Signature of the Transfer of funds agreement: Q4 2023.
  - Full requested sum (€ 614 000) is provided as pre-financing.
  - Tasks need to be completed within 18 months from the transfer of funds. (Payments within 24 months.)
  - A final financial report is expected early in 2025 and may lead to the recovery of any unspent part of the 2023 allocation.
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Maintenance and improvement of the European Union Observatory on Nanomaterials judged on the basis of the annual EUON reports.

- Publication of information clearly going beyond currently available tools.
- Clarity and user-friendliness of websites and information for SMEs, workers and consumers.
- Number of hits on the website.

### **4.3. SME Fund – Intellectual property voucher for post-COVID-19 recovery and green and digital transition**

#### **Implementing entity**

The action is implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) via a contribution agreement and a transfer of funds agreement.

#### **Description**

The action aims at improving the capacity of EU-based SMEs to leverage intellectual property as part of their business growth plans, in order to promote innovation in the EU and ensure economic recovery. The action will do this by providing financial relief to SMEs on IP-related costs. The financial relief will ensure that SMEs do not have to renounce managing and protecting their intangible assets when faced with the need to cut costs due to the economic crisis.

EU SMEs are the backbone of innovation. If they are forced to cut costs for managing intangible assets this risks weakening their competitive position. Such forced, but justified, short-term decision-making of SMEs would have a negative medium-term impact on their economic recovery from issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian military aggression in Ukraine.

The action will help SMEs to continue deploying their IP strategies in order to maintain and reinforce their competitiveness by providing them with financial support towards costs related to protection of IP.

The action is a multi-annual action, which started in 2022 and will last until the end of 2024. This is the second generation of the action, because its first generation was implemented in 2021.

The action will target EU-based SMEs primarily, but if the EU and the EUIPO agree in the course of the action, the scope may be extended also to Ukrainian SMEs and/or SMEs from other Associated Countries.

#### Additional information

With the first generation of the SME Fund, 28,065 services were provided to the benefit of 12 989 SMEs from all 27 Member States. The results of the SME Fund up to now reinforce the case for additional SMP SME pillar resources to tackle key challenges that EU SMEs are facing for managing their intellectual property portfolio. This will also reinforce their innovation and growth potential in the medium-term to develop new green and digital technologies.

In order to help SMEs to better manage their intellectual assets (which in turn will boost innovation and scaling-up), the Commission and the EUIPO will provide financial support towards costs relating to IP advice, IP services and the partial reimbursement of costs paid to protect and/or enforce intellectual property (IP) rights in national, EU and international markets. The assistance will be in the form of a reimbursement (this may be in the form of lump sums) of up to EUR 7 000 per SME (for the duration of the action), to be requested in 2022-24, in particular, to cover expenses related to the following costs:

- Financing or co-financing of costs of IP Scan services (also known as IP pre-diagnostic) or costs of initial assistance given to SMEs for planning the use of the IP voucher in relation to all types of IP rights (trade marks, designs, patents, plant varieties, etc.) (Percentage of co-financing up to 100% to be fixed in the contribution agreement).
- Co-financing of costs of certain IP services in particular in relation to registration, management or enforcement of IP, charged by IP attorneys, IP lawyers, IP consultants, business advisors or European, national or regional IP offices also including also prior art search and potentially services outside the EU (Percentage of cofinancing up to 90% of costs. This percentage and the scope of services shall be fixed in the contribution agreement).
- Co-financing of fees charged by IP offices relating to obtaining any IP rights protection in the Union or any of its Member States, also including European and unitary patents managed by the European Patent Office (application/registration fees of any IP right, also including plant variety rights). Percentage of cofinancing up to 90% of fees. This percentage shall be fixed in the contribution agreement.
- Co-financing of fees charged relating to obtaining IP right protection using an international registration system administered by the WIPO or directly to non-EU IP offices (application/registration fees for any IP right). Percentage of cofinancing up to 90% of fees. This percentage shall be fixed in the contribution agreement.

The EUIPO will apply the criteria agreed in advance with the Commission services, based on economic and non-discriminatory conditions, for the selection of eligible countries. This action will target SMEs seeking to further exploit their intangible assets, and that may be considering not investing in IP because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or because of issues related to the Russian military aggression in Ukraine. It will also prioritise SMEs contributing to the green and digital transition.

This action will be complementary to the support provided by national and Benelux IP offices or by partners who cooperate with them. The action will also rely on the future European IP Information Centre, linked with the Your Europe Portal. In providing support to SMEs, the action, in cooperation with IP offices, will work with various SME intermediaries, including the Enterprise Europe Network, clusters and/or incubators. The action will also cooperate with other IP support providers such as EU IP Helpdesks and, if possible, with patent information centres and the EUIPO Observatory.

This action aims to provide support over a longer term. The applications for vouchers/grants must be submitted before the end of 2024 (the Commission and the EUIPO can agree to extend this time limit by up to 1 year), but the costs can occur from the moment an SME applies for a grant under this action till 2026, provided that the applicant can demonstrate the need for starting the action prior to signature of the grant agreement. The general time-limit for submission of subsequent invoices or proofs of costs can take place until the end of the action (end of 2026).

This action should reach at least 40 000 SMEs.

## Budget, indicators

The total amount for the EU contribution in 2023 is up to EUR 2 100 000.

The total amount of the multiannual action is up to EUR 60 100 000 with an EU contribution up to EUR 5 100 000 for the years 2021-2024. EUIPO's contribution of up to EUR 55 000 000 will be provided from its legacy surplus outside its operational budget. The EUIPO may, in agreement with the Commission, add up to EUR 20 000 000 more in the event additional services (compatible with the scope of this action) are included in the course of the action and/or if the scope is also extended to Ukrainian SMEs. This action requires the approval of the EUIPO governing bodies and will be implemented by EUIPO in compliance with its financial rules. The EU contribution will finance exclusively patent and plant variety related costs.

- Indicative implementation timetable:
  - Signature of the Contribution Agreement with EUIPO: Q1/2023
  - Transfer of funds: Q1/2023
  - Evaluation of impact: as of 2024
  - End of action: 2026
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action
  - Number of requests/SMEs funded.
  - SME demographics (size, country, industrial sector)
  - Number of IP rights, fees and services by types and geographical scope applied by SMEs
  - Rate of deficiencies per type
  - Change of IP protection/management practices by SMEs (self-reported)
  - Satisfaction of SMEs, and, if possible, of other stakeholders, with the action
  - Change of economic performance potentially related to this action

Multiannual call – 2021-2024

Budget line	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total commitment appropriations (EUR) 2021-2024
030202					
Action 4.3	1 000 000	0	2 100 000	2 000 000	<b>5 100 000</b>

Only EU SMEs may benefit from this action, but if the Commission and the EUIPO agree in the course of the action, it may be extended to Ukrainian SMEs and/or SMEs from other Associated Countries.

No follow-up action is envisaged. Trainings and awareness-raising campaigns are organised regularly by the EUIPO, outside of the budget of the action.

The results of the action will serve as useful input for future EU policies designing the fee structure and fee levels for the registration of different IP rights at EU level.

The EUIPO will regularly (monthly) provide data per service type on the number of SMEs that benefited from the action and the amount committed and awarded to these SMEs. Further more detailed reports will be provided regularly which will also include data on the SME demographics, their size, country and industry sector and the average amount granted per service type.

A report on the expenditure incurred in the implementation of the action will also be provided

by the EUIPO to the Commission. Where applicable, a summary of final audit reports or controls carried out will also be provided by the EUIPO. A control opinion by the EUIPO will also accompany these documents.

Change of IP protection/management practices by SMEs will be measured by self-reporting and through satisfaction-surveys prepared by the EUIPO.

#### **4.4. Improving socio-economic knowledge of the EU tourism ecosystem**

##### **Implementing entity**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) under article 62(1)c of the financial regulation using a contribution agreement.

##### Description

The main objective of this action is to benchmark the socio-economic performance of the EU tourism ecosystem in a global context. The OECD is the only organisation dedicated to this kind of benchmarking and encompassing all EU strategic partners and competing travel markets.

The grant will support the OECD for the preparation of the next edition of the Tourism Trends and Policies report. This will:

- increase the knowledge base, in order to enrich the public policy debate on tourism;
- bring forward-looking analysis and provide new ideas to support the development of better public policies for tourism;
- monitor tourism's recovery from COVID-19 pandemic in the full geographical scope of the EU (i.e. including the EU outermost regions) and the consequences of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, possibly including an OECD tourism dashboard;
- benchmark EU transition to sustainable and resilient tourism in comparison to its main competitors, thanks to the development of sustainability indicators.

The activities will therefore consist of:

- formulating clear research questions;
- developing sound and specific methodological approaches;
- securing the participation of relevant stakeholders and experts (Member States' tourism administrations, central statistical offices, and other governmental agencies active in tourism; industry federations at international and national levels; researchers and experts);
- analysing submissions and the result of desk research;
- drafting concrete and transposable policy recommendations, to be presented in the 'OECD Tourism Trends and Policies' biennial publication as well as ad hoc reports;
- advertising and disseminating research results and recommendations.

### Additional information

- Total amount of the action: EUR 400 000
- Indicative duration of the project to be funded: 24 Months
- Indicative implementation timetable; implementation starting date: Q2 2023
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators:
  - Timely delivery of quality Reports
  - Sound and transparent methodological approach for data collection
  - Concrete and applicable recommendations for a more resilient, sustainable and digital tourism ecosystem
  - Awareness and use by (EU) stakeholders of the OECD ‘Tourism Trends and Policies’ Report”

## **5. OTHER ACTIONS OR EXPENDITURE**

### **5.1. Circular plastics products and materials in a resilient economy – Administrative arrangement**

#### **General description of the contracts envisaged**

Administrative Arrangement with JRC to provide analytical inputs for policy making related to circular plastics products and materials, in particular regarding the enabling conditions for a sustainable economic model for plastics production, conversion and recycling in Europe. Plastics converters and recyclers include a large number of SMEs.

#### **Implementation**

DG GROW

### Additional information

- This action will contribute to the Green transition/Sustainability priority of the SMP/SME pillar.
- The plastics value chain, including many SMEs, will need to adapt to new, multiple regulatory requirements, involving significant short-term costs. Transition to circularity is a prerequisite for this value chain, but an overview of the interconnected economic implications is missing (e.g. costs, investment needs, business case, import dependencies).
- This action should deliver better analysis of economic impacts and opportunities for SMES related to the transition to circular plastics.
- While plastics production belongs to the energy intensive industries ecosystem, plastics conversion and recycling belong to a number of other ecosystems

including e.g. agri-food, construction, automotive, electronics, and health.

- This action will be implemented through an inter-DG Administrative Arrangement on “circular products and materials”, with a view to ensuring a consolidated analysis across Commission services, serving as input into several relevant policy and regulatory areas.
- Budget: EUR 300 000

## 5.2. Remunerated experts; reimbursement of experts

Amount

EUR 700 000

Description

**Remunerated experts:** to provide expertise in the evaluation of larger calls for proposals, and for which no separate budget is included.

**Reimbursement of experts:** support to the conferences and expert meetings (including European Business Organisation meetings; meetings and conferences, dialogue with stakeholders).

## 6. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

**Please note that the following multiannual calls have been launched under the 2021 Work Programme. This section is for information only.**

The budget included in the 2023 work programme is as follows:

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Date of publication</b>	<b>Indicative 2023 amount (EUR)</b>
Enterprise Europe Network	11/05/2021	42 500 000
Joint Cluster Initiative	30/09/2021	13 200 000
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	16/03/2022	5 000 000

The above breakdown is indicative; therefore budget transfer between priorities, under the same budget line, is allowed (provided it is announced in the call for proposals)

## List of Projects

Action	Title	Budget	TOTAL
<b>Grants</b>			<b>Sub-total</b>
2.1	Enterprise Europe Network	42 500 000	
2.2	Joint Cluster Initiatives	13 200 000	
2.3	Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	5 000 000	
2.4	EEN annual conference	150 000	
2.5	Enterprise Europe Network – Energy Efficiency Action	8 000 000	
2.6	Support to Ukrainian entrepreneurs – Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs	3 000 000	
2.7	Support to Ukrainian companies to integrate into the single market	4 500 000	
2.8	European AgriFood Sustainability Cluster Partnerships	3 000 000	
2.9	Promoting trans-European tourism products in third countries - grant to ETC	1 600 000	
2.10	Transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient ecosystem – empowering tourism SMEs	7 500 000	
2.11	Support to organisations for actions in the context of the EU Pact for Skills for the textiles ecosystem	1 200 000	
2.12	Proximity and social economy industrial ecosystem: boosting the digital transition of social economy enterprises and SMEs	7 500 000	
2.13	Boosting SMEs’ and stakeholders’ capacities to participate in construction and renovation projects through the Affordable Housing Initiative European Partnership	1 000 000	
2.14	European Industry Days 2023	1 000 000	
2.15	European Solar Academy	2 500 000	101 650 000
<b>Procurement</b>			
3.1	SME policy - SME Performance Review	656 000	
3.2	SME Outreach	2 484 000	
3.3	Credit management training and financial literacy for SMEs	200 000	
3.4	Support to women entrepreneurs	400 000	
3.5	SME friendly training for central purchasing bodies	2 500 000	
3.6	Sustainable procurement hubs	4 500 000	
3.7	European Cluster Collaboration Platform	5 000 000	
3.8	Monitoring the performance of EU industry and industrial ecosystems (RENEWAL)	1 739 430	

3.9	Erasmus for young entrepreneurs – support to Ukrainian entrepreneurs (promotion) (support for action 2.6)	500 000	
3.10	Enterprise Europe Network animation	2 400 000	
3.11	Stakeholder collaboration platform for the textiles ecosystem	1 500 000	
3.12	Fit for Future	807 000	
3.13	Supporting actions	4 800 552	27 486 982
<b>Indirect management</b>			
4.1	European Chemicals Legislation Finder	1 053 400	
4.2	European Union Observatory for Nanomaterials	614 000	
4.3	SME Fund – Intellectual property voucher for post-COVID-19 recovery and green and digital transition	2 100 000	
4.4	Improving socio-economic knowledge of the EU tourism ecosystem	400 000	4 167 400
<b>Other actions</b>			
5.1	Circular plastics (technical and analytical support)	300 000	
5.2	Remunerated experts; reimbursement of experts	700 000	1 000 000

TOTAL - EUR 134 304 382

## **Eligibility criteria and Selection and award criteria for grants**

### **Eligibility criteria**

Applicant organisations must be established:

- in EU Member States;
- or in third countries participating in the programme under Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2021/690.

Specific eligibility criteria may be set out in the call for proposals or invitation.

Given the particular circumstances of the geopolitical situation in Ukraine and its impact on the EU economy, legal entities established in Ukraine may participate in accordance with conditions laid down in Article 9(3)(a) of the Single Market Programme Regulation.

It is essential to preserve the continuity of the actions provided under the SME objective of the programme to support EU businesses that are faced with market access and trade issues related to Ukraine. The participation of local partner organisations, businesses and entrepreneurs based in Ukraine is essential for delivery and continuity of support actions to address this goal, due to the important value-added country-related information, advice and contacts that they provide.

It is therefore essential to ensure that the local partner organisations, businesses and entrepreneurs in Ukraine can benefit from funding from the programme.

### **Selection and award criteria**

**As regards all grants envisaged in this work programme, each proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the selection criteria specified in the respective calls for proposals. Indicatively, these criteria are based on the following:**

- Financial capacity to complete the proposed operation;
- Stable and sufficient sources of finance to ensure the continuity of the organisation throughout the project and to play a part in financing it;
- Operational (technical and management) capacity to complete the operation;
- Capacity to manage activities corresponding to the size of the project for which a grant is requested;
- Adequate professional qualifications and experience of the team responsible for the project/operation.

An evaluation of the quality of proposals, including the proposed budget, will be based on the following award criteria:

- Relevance of the actions proposed in view of the objectives established in the call;
- Quality (including operational quality) of the proposed actions;
- Project design and implementation;
- Project team and cooperation arrangements;
- Impact.