# Call LOOK-EU-NET to select SMEs and support pilot European SME networks

The call for European SMEs is open **from** **18thJune to 31st July 2019**

**Objective**: *to select and support European SMEs interested in improving their internationalization readiness and export capacity collaborating together in network on the basis of common development goals on international markets expressed in a formalized cooperation agreement*.

The present call is developed within the project LOOK-EU-NET, supported by the European Commission (EC) Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs. The objective of the present call is therefore the identification of the potential European SME candidates and the matching of SMEs having a common interest in internationalization development to form a transnational network.

European SMEs will be selected on the basis of key elements described below (e.g.: dimension, productive sector, export capacity, etc.) with the final aim of creating small international pilot networks of SMEs joined by potential synergies and common goals of development, innovation and competition on domestic and international markets with the support by the European co-financing.

In a first phase, the selected SMEs that decide to participate and joint to a European business network will be informed and trained by international business experts about international business planning in order to increase their skills and capacity to exploit international markets and to define an action plan of business internationalization.

Then, international business experts will support SME pilot networks in the implementation of the concrete action plans of business internationalization (e.g.: participation in international B2B or commercial events, find new business opportunities, partners and clients, boost their commercial penetration in foreign markets, support strategic actions to increase sales and improve promotion marketing initiatives, etc.).

The implementation of the SME networks action plan will be financed. The European Commission will co-finance the action plan with grant of maximum € 25.000,00 (up to 90% of eligible costs of the action). The Project Partner will co-finance the 10% of the pilot action. The costs of the activity can be higher but they have to be covered by the SME network.

***Documents***

A. Call for expressions of interest.

B. Application Form.

***A. Call for expressions of interest***

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# INTRODUCTION

The pilot project **LOOK-EU-NET**, co-financed by the COSME Programme of the European Commission, aims to support European SMEs to help them develop, further expand or improve their international business by creating small networks of 4-8 SMEs belonging to at least three Member States aimed at enhancing SME's capacity to exploit foreign markets for export purposes.

Operating in network, European SMEs will be able to increase their capacity to go international by easing cooperation among them and to improve their competitiveness.

This initiative is therefore meant to implement a pilot project that can identify elements, processes and obstacles in the path that SMEs of different EU Countries need to follow and overcome to start or improve their export capacities within their businesses through the setting up of transnational cooperation networks bringing together potential common interests and fostering potential synergies. Concrete experience in business collaboration and aggregation on the basis of shared internationalization projects have shown that participating SMEs improved their internationalization readiness and capacity to export to new markets.

Business networks can improve connections, enhance their capacity to identify new business and new partners for purposes other than strictly linked to selling and buying. For instance, supply chain links can indeed be improved by networking that provides enterprises with better possibilities to identify the right manufacturers, suppliers or retailers.

The activities of the **LOOK-EU-NET** project will be focused with priority on the economic sectors corresponding to the *Smart Specialisation Strategy* main trajectories (S3) drawn by the Regional Administration the Partners belong to:

* Mechatronics: Industrial Automation; Machineries and Equipments (different fields of application, e.g. with regard to agricultural mechanics); Industry 4.0 applications (among the others: virtualization, IoT, Robotics), machining and subcontracting;
* Sustainable Living: furniture; domotics; new efficient and sustainable materials;
* Agri-food industry: bio-products, gluten free products; food processing and packaging; horizontal services (labelling and circular economy);
* Cultural and digital tourism: tourism based on gastronomy (e.g. wine tourism), sustainability, cultural heritage (e.g. religion), through the exploitation of digital technologies;
* Smart Health: innovative solutions for well-being, healthy and autonomous life.

As target markets, the project **LOOK-EU-NET** will focus on:

* Partners respective Countries of origin: Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland and Bulgaria;
* Northern European Countries: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Baltics;
* Extra-EU Target Markets: Kazakhstan, Russia and Azerbaijan.

These markets represent some of the most important current markets in the Single Market and **\_** the most promising extra-EU markets in the future, in terms of market size and market growth.

Project WEBSITE: <http://www.projects-informest.eu/look-eu-net>

#  OBJECT OF THE CALL

The present call is aimed at European SMEs interested in bringing together common goals in international development and fostering potential synergies in small transnational SME pilot networks of 4-8 SMEs belonging to at least three Member States.

The target SMEs should have the potential to start or further expand abroad, exploiting cooperation with other companies. SMEs with international experience or participating in clusters or international partnerships can be also relevant as they tend to be already cooperative, innovative and keen to jointly develop activities in these SME networks. Including SMEs with solid experience in internationalization together with those who are less experienced can bring added value and lead to more successful overall networking activities.

European SMEs that internationalize successfully are in most cases the ones of greater dimensions; SMEs are those who most need and would most benefit from the support that this pilot project can provide and should therefore be considered as well. The SME networks typically consist of 4-8 SMEs belonging to at least three Member States. The objective of the present call is to identify the potential candidate SMEs and to match SMEs with a common interest and strategy to form a network.

OBJECTIVE OF THE **PRESENT CALL LAUNCHED AND MANAGED BY FREE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ASSOCIATION** (INDICATED IN THE FOLLOWING ALSO AS **PROMOTER PROJECT PARTNER**) IS THEREFORE THE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF **4-8** EUROPEAN SMES WITH THE CHARACTERISTICS AND POTENTIAL TO BE MATCHED ON THE BASIS OF BUSINESS SYNERGIES AND A COMMON INTEREST TO FORM UP TO **ONE** FORMALIZED NETWORKS AIMING TO EXPAND THE SMES' BUSINESSES AND PARTNERSHIPS ON INTERNATIONAL MARKETS.

The selected SMEs that will decide to participate and will be matched to form a European SME network, will be supported by experts in defining of a target action plan for internationalization of their business and in implementing concretely the planned actions, with the EU co-financing within the **LOOK-EU-NET** project.

In the first part of the project, the SMEs will be informed and optionally trained oninternational business planning and marketing tools and will work on the development of the *action plan of the network*, supported by the expert of the **LOOK-EU-NET** project. The *action plan of the network* will identify the promotional and business activities and implementation methodology (more effective at network level) to expand SMEs business and partnership on international markets.

Then, in the second part of the project, the activities will be carried out, as previously planned and defined by each SME network in the single *action plan of the network*, with the support of the experts of the **LOOK-EU-NET** project.

The implementation of the SME networks action plan will be financed. The European Commission will co-finance the action plan with grant of maximum € 25.000,00 (up to 90% of eligible costs of the action). The Project Partner will co-finance the 10% of the pilot action. The grant will be awarded to each SMES network and based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred and defined in the action plan. The costs of the activity can be higher but they have to be covered by the SME network.

The eligible costs may include professional and /or consultancy services for:

* selection of target markets; identification and selection of the customer profiles;
* scouting of new potential distribution channels and clients;
* participation in international fairs and related B2B meetings,
* common brand, common catalogues, e-commerce.

# REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE

The present call addresses to all European SMEs meeting the requirements described below and interested in bringing together common strategy and goals in international development and fostering potential synergies in small transnational SME pilot networks of 4-8 SMEs belonging to at least three Member States.

The main requested eligibility criteria are the following (detailed administrative requirements are also listed in the application form):

* To be a SME according to the definition of Recommendation CE 2003/361;
* To be located in a European Country;
* To belong to the following RIS3 *Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization* priorities:

1) Mechatronics;

2) Sustainable Living;

3) Agri-food industry;

 4) Cultural and digital tourism

5) Health Care.

Will constitute evaluation criteria in the selection of SMEs the following:

* Level of export orientation;
* Level of complementarity of products / processes within a sector/industry/network in order to establish the European SME network;
* Level of preparation and availability of SME staff to dedicate to the European SME network;
* Existence of a realistic business plan of internationalization program, level of integration of this plan in a European business network;
* Capacity of the SME to continue the network project after the end of the present project.

Administrative requirements:

* To be a Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) according to the definition of the EU recommendation 2003/361;
* To be established in a EU Member State;
* To be active in one of the target sectors of the Call;
* To be active, not in liquidation or bankruptcy and not have been subject of bankruptcy proceedings or in the pre-settlement procedure;
* not be in receipt of an outstanding recovery order following a European Commission decision declaring the aid received illegal and incompatible with the common market;
* fulfill obligations related to payment of tax liabilities and liabilities for pension and health insurance in accordance with the legal provisions in the applicant’s Country;
* comply with the rules concerning accidents at work and occupational diseases, safety in the workplaces, the collective labor agreements and regulations relating to environmental protection, in accordance with the legal provisions in the applicant’s Country;

The general criteria described above will be applied in the evaluation procedure on the basis of direct interviews with those SMEs satisfying the eligibility criteria.

# SELECTION PROCEDURE

All the European SMEs that have expressed interest in the participation and that meet the eligibility criteria will be interviewed to collect information about SME position towards internationalization, with a view to establish European SME pilot networks of 4-8 SMEs belonging to at least 3 Member States.

The final objective of the evaluation step is the identification and selection of all those European SMEs that have the characteristics and tools to be potentially matched and join a European network.

European SMEs will be informed of the result of the evaluation and their **eligibility with the possibility to participate actively in an SME transnational network** and activities or not.

After a subsequent in-depth comparison of European SMEswith a view to setting up the SME networks (profiles, parameters, economic sectors, goals, product complementarity, development programs, Countries, etc.), **experts will propose to each SME to join one or more networks, and the SMEs can finally decide whether to participate or not.**

The pilot SMEs network will be considered as **formalized once the relative agreement has been defined and signed by the participating European SMEs**. Then SMEs will start the operative activities of the network within the LOOK-EU-NET project.

The selection process consists, in two Phases detailed in the following and will be supervised by an Evaluation Committee that will be appointed by the Project Partner.

**Phase 1. Formal and Administrative Evaluation**

* + Applicants have completed and submitted the application form, including the self- declaration, in full conformity, and have undersigned it.
	+ Applicant is an SME established under its National Law and based in an EU Member State
	+ Applicants operate in a sector belonging to the RIS3 *Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization* priorities.

 **Phase 2. Qualitative evaluation** will be carried out in two partsrelated between them: the first focused on **the individual SME**, the second focused on the **SME with the view of the forming/being set up EU Network**).

The evaluation will be based on the macro-criteria described in the following; for each macro-criteria is indicated maximum of assignable points (max. total 100 points):

**Individual SME:**

* + Internal capacity of the SME as potential partner in the EU Network (i.e. in terms of products, documentation, knowledge of foreign markets, level of orientation to export, self-motivation), as individual (max. 50)
	+ Organizational capacity of the SME, as individual structure. (max. 25)

**SME in the forming /being set up Network**

* + Level of integration of the SME in the forming/being setup EU network (in terms of integration of technical profile and horizontal or vertical role in the network, product complementarity, objectives and goals, development programs, Countries, etc.) max.25.

Each company can be awarded in max. n. 1 EU network. The EU Network awarded within the present Call as results of selection will be published on the project website. The excessive eligible applications will be included in a reserve list and considered in case of renouncement of the beneficiaries of the approved list.

# OBLIGATIONS

After the completion of selection and set-up of EU networks, the beneficiary SMES must sign a Network Agreement within 20 days after the communication of the results, with Promoter Project Partner who has in charge the management of the pilot action.

Beneficiaries undertake to:

* sign Network Agreement including Network’s Plan of Action and its Budget,
* submitting a financial reporting including proofs of expenditures and submitting an operative reporting about work in progress and status of the ongoing project’s activities.

# HOW TO APPLY

European SMEs can forward the expression of interest (**in attachment**) to the email address: karolina.musielewicz@swp.gda.pl according to the deadline.

# DEADLINE AND TIMING

The call for European SMEs is open **from** **18thJune to 31stJuly 2019**.

# RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROCEDURE - CONTACT PERSON FOR INFORMATION

Karolina Musielewicz (609 103 105; karolina.musielewicz@swp.gda.pl);

# AUDIT

The selected SMEs and awarded SMEs are required to provide to Promoter Project Partner, all the information and documents required.

The selected SMEs are required to notify any cessation of activities and any other event occurred after the application delivery relating to the stated requirements, which could lead to the loss of any of the requirements for admission to the planned activities of the Call for Applicants.

# LIABILITY

Each Applicant is responsible for the completeness, clarity and accuracy of the data and information contained in the documents and materials prepared as part of the participation to this Call for Applicants. The Promoter Project Partner and Project Partners of the LOOK-EU-NET Consortium are not responsible for such content, or for any inaccuracies, omissions or violations of the rights of other people.

# WITHDRAWALS, REVOCATION AND SANCTIONS

Each winning SME can renounce without any charge to the participation in the program, giving a written notice by 3 days from the date of publication of the results. In case of loss of any eligibility requirement, the beneficiary is excluded from the project (revocation) and sanctions are imposed. Sanctions are also imposed in case of breach of the listed obligations and withdrawal after 3 days from the date of publication of results. In both conditions, the leader of the LOOK-EU-NET project shall impose the reimbursement of any expense occurred, or any expense the LOOK-EU-NET Consortium is already committed to undertake. In both conditions, the leader of the Consortium may impose the request of repayment of damages, considering the seriousness of consequences that would arise from loss of eligibility requirements and non-fulfilment of the obligations and how they affect the execution of the project.

# 12. PRIVACY, DATA PROTECTION

1. As part of the Project LOOK-EU-NET, regular data will be processed: name, position, telephone and e-mail.

2. The administrator of personal data is the Project Partner who personally collected the personal data. These data will be shared with other Project Partners. There for Project Partners are at the same time, data controllers (in relation to data obtained independently) and processors (in relation to data that have been entrusted to them by other Partners Project).

3. Project partners are:

1.1. Informest Consulting (INFC), Via J. Linussio 51, c/o Parco Scientifico e Tecnologico Luigi Danieli, 33100 Udine, Italy, contact details: e-mail: look-eu-net@informestconsulting.it, phone: +39 0432 629743

1.2. UNIONE REGIONALE DELLE CAMERE DI COMMERCIO, INDUSTRIA, ARTIGIANATO, AGRICOLTURA DELL’EMILIA ROMAGNA (UCER), Viale Aldo Moro, 62, 40128 Bologna Italy, contact details: e-mail: staff@rer.camcom.it, Phone: +39 051 6377011

1.3. HANDWERKSKAMMER REGION STUTTGART Heilbronner Str. 43,70191 Stuttgart, Germany, contact details: e-mail: info@handwerk-international.de , phone: +49 711/1657-444 87-41

1.4. BADEN – WUERTTEMBERG INTERNATIONAL – GESELLSCHAFT FUER INTERNATIONALE WIRTSCHAFTLICHE UND WISSENSCHAFTLICHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT MBH Willi-Bleicher-Straße 19, 70174 Stuttgart, Germany, contact details: e-mail: annika.gold@bw-i.de , phone: +49(0)711 227 87-41

1.5. Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce with headquarters in c/ Dinamarca, 4 45005 Toledo, contact details: e-mail: bvicente@camaratoledo.com, Phone: 925 28 54 28

1.6. Free Entrepreneurship Association Gdansk with headquarters in ul. Piekarnicza 12A

80-126 Gdańsk, contact details: e-mail: swp@swp.gda.pl , Phone: 58 350 51 40

1.7. PLOVDIV CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (PCCI), Postal code 4003, City: Plovdiv, Bulgaria, contact details: e-mail: office@pcci.bg , Phone: +359 32 908 980

4. Personal data are collected and processed in the Project LOOK – EU - NET, because:

a) it is necessary to sign an agreement on participation in the Project or a contract for granting support under the Project or to undertake based on the request of interested persons -activities related to the company's admission to the Project prior to concluding such an agreement (Article 6 paragraph 1point b RODO),

b) data processing is necessary to fulfill the obligations of the Partners in connection with the implementation of the Project - whole implementing the Project, they are subject to procedures defined by the Institutions granting co-financing for the implementation of projects (Article 6 paragraph 1 lit. c RODO)

c) data processing is necessary for legitimate reasons that are implemented by the Partners and which result from our connections with companies participating in the Project in connection with the implementation of the Project and providing support in Project (Article 6 (1) (f) RODO)

5. Personal data are processed in order to implement, monitor and evaluate the Project, including: to establish or maintain contact with interested parties in matters related to participation in the Project,

 providing companies with the support they are interested in, e.g. in the form of conferences, outgoing missions, etc.

 archiving project documentation.

6. Providing personal data is voluntary - the obligation to provide it does not result from the Act, nor from the contract. However, providing data is necessary for the company to participate in the Project and use the support it provides.

7. Additionally, if the consent has been given, the data, i.e. the email address, will be processed for the purpose sending a newsletter, i.e, information about events and activities undertaken in the Project.

8. The consent to the processing of data in order to receive a newsletter is not a condition participation in the Project.

9. Personal data, which are processed on the basis of consent, are subject to processing for a period of implementation time of the Project, but no longer than until the consent to data processing has been withdrawn.

10. At any time, the data subjects may request the Administrator to access data personal data and rectification.

11. In cases specified in the GDPR, data subjects may request the deletion of data, limitations of data processing, objecting to data processing (in the scope in which they are processed on the basis of the legal interest of the controller) to other entities.

12. With respect to personal data that are processed on the basis of consent, you can withdraw this consent at any time. However, this does not affect the lawfulness of processing, which was made on the basis of such consent before its withdrawal.

13. If the processing of personal data violates the GDP, the data subjects may bring a complaint to the President of the Office for Personal Data Protection.

14. The recipient of personal data is: Project Partners, employees and collaborators of the Administrator and Project partners, entities monitoring the implementation of the Project - Managing Authority or Intermediary, entities that carry out tasks in the Project in such a way the extent to which it is necessary to carry out the tasks entrusted to them.

15. Personal data may also be passed on to other entities in order to perform related tasks with monitoring and reporting under the COSME Programme of the European Commission

16. Data are not subject to profiling, they are not processed in an automated way.

17. Personal data will be processed on the basis of art. 6 points 1 of the Parliament Regulation European Parliament and of the Council (EU) of 27/04/2016 no. 2016/67