



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

COSME

Call for proposals

CLUSTER GO INTERNATIONAL

REF: COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03

(NOTA BENE: the present Call combines the two Calls for proposals included as part of the CLUSTER INTERNATIONALISATION PROGRAMME FOR SMEs in the 2014 and 2015 COSME Work Programmes respectively, with REF: COS-WP2014-3-03 Action 1: Cluster Go International and COS-WP2015-3-08 ENT/SME/C/N08)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03

CLUSTER GO INTERNATIONAL

Basic act:

REGULATION (EU) No 1287/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) (2014 - 2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC

Date of publication of the COSME Work Programmes 2014 and 2015:

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 22.7.2014 amending Implementing Decision C(2014) 247 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2014 and the financing for the implementation of Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises:

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 29.10.2014 on the adoption of the work programme for 2015 and the financing for the implementation of the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) play a crucial role in reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹. Whereas they are considered as crucial engines for growth and job creation, their competitiveness is affected by a limited exploitation of international opportunities and innovation prospects in the Single Market and beyond.

In this context, the Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020)², hereinafter referred to as “COSME”, aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union.

The contracting authority is the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises³ (hereinafter referred to as "EASME"). EASME is, *inter alia*, entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation of parts of the COSME programme and the Horizon 2020 programme.

1. BACKGROUND

In a globalised world, SMEs need to be able to confront increasing competition from developed and emerging economies and to plug into the new market opportunities these countries will provide. There is a direct link between internationalisation and increased performance of SMEs. International activities reinforce growth, enhance competitiveness and support the long-term sustainability of companies. SMEs need to find the right partners to develop and produce globally competitive products and services. This calls for new forms of international cooperation that are often difficult for individual SMEs to manage on their own.

¹ COM (2010) 2020 final of 3 March 2010.

² Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of 11 December 2013 (Official Journal of the European Union 2013/L 347/33)

³ EASME was set up by Commission implementing decision 2013/771/EU of 17.12.2013 "establishing the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Size Enterprises and repealing decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC" (Official Journal of the European Union L 341 of 18.12.2013).

Clusters can act as real "springboards" for SMEs to help them getting access to global value chains and develop long-term strategic partnerships. SMEs benefit from specialised business support services of cluster organisations, such as through the organisation of international study visits, partnering or "matchmaking" missions that facilitate finding new partners outside their own region for research and prototyping as well as for bringing products and services to the market. SMEs have to increasingly integrate their activities into global value chains in order to become and remain competitive. As global value chains, by their nature, involve or are even controlled and managed by foreign companies, it is often not easy for SMEs to link to them.

The clustering of different competences along a value chain in a region remains an important element of competitive advantages, but the successful participation in global value chains is another condition for economic success. Cluster organisations can help enterprises, and in particular SMEs, to find international cooperation partners, raise their excellence, innovation capacity and their overall competitiveness.

This action will contribute to fostering the development of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (i.e. European meta-clusters) by helping SMEs find easier access to global value chains and engage in long-term cooperation with strategic partners in third countries. This is a top priority for European actions as highlighted in the Commission Communication 'For a European Industrial Renaissance'⁴. This Communication identifies efforts to increase the internationalisation of SMEs and their integration into global value chains as a particular priority and acknowledges the need to better exploit the "potential of clusters to create favourable innovation ecosystems for groups of mutually reinforcing SMEs".

This action builds upon and further exploits synergies with the following key initiatives that have been launched by the Directorate-General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) to promote transnational cluster cooperation within and beyond Europe with a view to better support SMEs in global competition.

- Firstly, this includes the **European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)** which currently counts over 950 registered cluster organisations from across Europe. It represents the main instrument for European cluster organisations to profile themselves, exchange experiences and identify potential partners for transnational cooperation within and beyond Europe. To facilitate international cluster cooperation, the ECCP has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with partners in India, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, Tunisia, Morocco, Mexico and Chile. The ECCP web-based platform will be further developed through a new service contract in 2015 and shall be used as the main online dissemination platform to promote activities and results of the "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships" that are to be established through this action. Applicants to this new action shall prepare for providing information material to the future service provider of the ECCP web-platform for their Partnership to be promoted and disseminated via such web-platform);
- Secondly, a number of specific **cluster matchmaking events** have been organised to promote closer cluster cooperation with partners outside and within Europe in areas of mutual interest. The first international cluster matchmaking events were organised

⁴ COM(2014)14 Final (see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0014&from=EN>)

respectively in Japan in November 2012 in the field of clean technologies, in Brazil on biotech in September 2013, in India on resource efficiency in October 2013 and in China on multiple sectors in October 2014. Other cluster matchmaking events have also been organised in Europe in 2014, such as in Belgium, Italy and Spain notably with a view to fostering cross-sectoral cooperation between clusters and their members across Europe. Further cluster matchmaking events will be organised in 2015 and 2016 by the European Commission. The "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships" to be established or strengthened through this action will be invited to participate on a voluntary basis to such forthcoming matchmaking events. Each Partnership undertaking activities under Strand 2 of this action shall allocate a budget to participate in two international cluster matchmaking events organised in third countries and/or in Europe by the European Commission services;

- Thirdly, a **pilot cluster internationalisation action** was launched under CIP in 2011 and 2012 to encourage clusters in Europe to work concretely together and engage in true cooperation on international markets. As part of this pilot action, 6 European cluster consortia⁵ have been set up and supported to work together and develop joint internationalisation strategies in specific third countries. The pilot action contributed to the design, testing and validation of this new approach in different business sectors, notably new materials and cleantech, life-sciences, renewables, sports goods, facilities & events, advanced textiles, and food and related biotech sectors.
- Finally, **thirteen "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships"** have been initiated as part of a call for the expression of interest launched by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform in March 2013⁶, with a view to pioneering cross-sectoral collaboration between cluster organisations and the development of joint internationalisation strategies towards third markets.

2. OBJECTIVES – THEMES – ACTIVITIES - OUTPUTS

2.1. Objectives (general and specific)

The main objective of the action is to intensify cluster and business network collaboration across borders and sectoral boundaries and to support the establishment of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships to lead international cluster cooperation in fields of strategic interest – notably in support of the development of emerging industries.

By reinforcing cluster and business network cooperation and supporting the shaping of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (i.e. European meta-clusters) in a more strategic manner at European level, this action will help SMEs contribute to the emergence of new value chains and to take a leading position globally.

This action focuses on the promotion of cluster internationalisation where interested consortia have the opportunity to develop and implement a joint internationalisation strategy and support SME internationalisation towards third countries beyond Europe.

The action will be implemented by consortia of cluster organisations and/or business networks operating in COSME participating countries that are interested in establishing

⁵ See at: <http://www.clustercollaboration.eu/european-strategy>

⁶ See at: <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/escps>

and running a European Strategic Cluster Partnership. The Partnerships are expected to develop a joint 'European' strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals towards specific third markets.

"**European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCP)**" are characterised by the following elements:

1. ESCPs shall be composed of a minimum of three independent legal entities representing a cluster or business network from minimum three EU Member States or countries participating in the COSME programme under Article 6 of the COSME Regulation. Each Partnership member shall be registered (or, as part of this call, has submitted a complete cluster profile as an annexed document to the call with a view to be registered) on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform⁷ with a detailed profile of its cluster or network;
2. The ESCP's members shall aim to develop and implement a joint internationalisation strategy fostering complementarities between them, promoting cooperation across related industries and sectoral boundaries in support of emerging industries.

Concerning the focus of cross-sectoral cooperation and outreach to related industries, applicants may seek inspiration from the work of the European Cluster Observatory, which has identified, analysed and reported on several "emerging industries" such as in the "European Cluster Panorama 2014"⁸. Yet, such identified emerging industries or growth trends should not be followed without reflection. Instead of merely prioritising new technologies or industrial growth areas where there might be little pre-existing strength, applicants should seek to unlock complementarities across existing and related economic activities⁹. Specific consideration shall be given to Partnerships addressing the priority areas as defined in the 2014 Commission Communication 'For a European Industrial Renaissance'¹⁰ as well as to those representing low carbon and related sectors in view of the "Low Carbon Business Action" with Brazil and Mexico, financed under the EU's Partnership Instrument¹¹.

3. The ESCPs shall contribute to facilitating the internationalisation of their SME members towards specific third countries, and/or attracting strategic foreign direct investment and cooperation partners and/or securing critical imports, knowledge and technologies with a view to support growth and employment in Europe;

⁷ See at: <http://www.clustercollaboration.eu/> and

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/internationalisation/index_en.htm

⁸ See at: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/observatory/cluster-mapping-services/cluster-mapping/cluster-panorama/index_en.htm

⁹ - Delgado, Porter & Stern (2012) Clusters, Convergence, and Economic Performance

- In the search for regional industrial strongholds with similar or related competence profiles, the European Cluster Observatory's cluster mapping of concentrations of economic activity in 38 sectors across Europe's regions on the basis of employment statistics as well as for 10 "emerging industries" may also be useful sources (available at: www.clusterobservatory.eu)

¹⁰ COM(2014)14 Final (see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0014&from=EN>)

¹¹ Partnership Instrument, Annual Action Programme 2014 (C(2014)7423, Annexes D & E: <http://www.cc.cec/sg/vista/view/main/commissiondossier/commissionDossierDetail.jsf> COM(2014)14 Final (see <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0014&from=EN>)

4. The ESCP's members shall set up a Partnership Agreement engaging them to develop common actions and a roadmap for implementation with a long-term cooperation agenda to foster sustainable European Partnerships, notably beyond the lifetime of the project funded under COSME.

At the end of the evaluation process of this call, the label of a "European Strategic Cluster Partnership" (ESCP) will be awarded to all applicant consortia that demonstrate that they fulfil the ESCP characteristics as defined above and express their interest and commitment in developing them by signing a "ESCP" Charter¹² which commits the Partnership members to comply with the above four characteristics.

The "ESCP" label will be awarded to all consortia to be funded under strands 1 and 2 of this action as well to those not funded under this action but interested and

- put on a reserve list following this call as their proposal passed the overall and individual thresholds set for the award criteria;
- were set up as part of the 6 pilot cluster internationalisation projects launched under CIP in 2011 and 2012 to develop joint internationalisation strategies¹³, provided that they sign the "ESCP" Charter following this call;
- established as "ESCP" following the call for expression of interest launched by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform in March 2013¹⁴, provided that they sign the "ESCP" Charter following this call.

The non-EU funded "ESCPs" will therefore still benefit from visibility and dissemination support about their activities and results through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform for a duration of two years. They will also be invited to participate in European events promoting learning and cross-fertilisation between the Partnerships. They will equally be invited to participate in international cluster matchmaking events organised in European and in third countries by the European Commission services and EASME, with half of the places available for these missions reserved for non-funded or strand 1 members of ESCPs.

This action will be implemented through two different strands and applicant consortia must apply for one strand only:

- **Strand 1** is aimed at supporting preparatory actions for the establishment and shaping of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCPs). Activities under strand 1 shall contribute to developing a joint internationalisation strategy and a roadmap for its implementation.
- **Strand 2** is aimed at supporting the first implementation, testing and further development of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships. Activities under strand 2 shall contribute to developing concrete activities supporting cooperation with strategic partners in third countries (i.e. beyond Europe).

¹² The "European Strategic Cluster Partnership (ESCP)" Charter is a document that shall confirm the interest and commitment of the Partnership members in developing the four main characteristics of an "ESCP" as indicated under the section above on "*European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCP) are characterised by the following elements*" on p. 5 of this call. This document shall be signed by all the Partnership members to commit them to comply with the four characteristics.

¹³ 6 pilot projects "Promoting international cluster activities in the CIP participating countries" (ending 30/10/2014) see at: <http://www.clustercollaboration.eu/international-projects>

¹⁴ See at: <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/escps>

Applicants shall verify that their members are not part of another application under the same strand and not part of more than one application under the other strand.

2.2. Description of the activities

Applicant consortia are free to propose activities they consider relevant. However, it is essential that all activities are clearly related to the objective set out for each strand and duly justified.

Strand 1: Supporting preparatory actions for the establishment and shaping of new European Strategic Cluster Partnerships (ESCPs)

Under strand 1, applicants should propose preparatory actions that will contribute to establishing a "European Strategic Cluster Partnership" respecting all the characteristics defined above (see section 2.1) to develop a joint internationalisation strategy for the Partnership and a roadmap for implementation.

Possible preparatory actions under strand 1 include:

- Identification of initial strategic partners across Europe (e.g. by conducting a complementarity, compatibility and readiness check in terms of strategy, skills, language capabilities, etc. to find the right partners);
- Partnership building (e.g. through training/coaching activities on building collaboration, coordinating and leading a Partnership, and organising cluster visits for Partnership members and their SMEs, regional actors and other relevant stakeholders);
- Legal advice for developing a legal representation for the consortium (e.g. by exploring the need for a coordination or management structure, to establish a legal entity and define its form, coordination and mandate);
- Identity shaping such as the development of a joint communication/marketing and branding strategy, development of a common logo and visual identity of the Partnership;
- Intelligence gathering (e.g. studies/analyses on market insights and global mega trends¹⁵ and opportunities; knowledge about competing players, relative positioning, market trends and opportunities – and defining the added value of the Partnership's combined competencies in relation to this; identification of cooperation opportunities to target in third countries; limited exploratory visits to third countries or invitation of experts from third countries);
- Collaboration planning (e.g. coaching/advisory support for formulating a joint strategic vision and common goals; facilitating commitment/preparation to engage in cooperation relating to resources, staff, knowledge, IPRs; conducting surveys among SME members and other relevant stakeholders to assess their needs and interest in cooperation; defining the scope and implementation

¹⁵ The European Cluster Observatory will publish a "Global Mega Trends Report" in 2015 that will be available at the EU Cluster Portal: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/index_en.htm

modalities of common actions; other relevant activities associating strategy development and operational collaboration actions with cluster actors, particularly SMEs);

- Joint actions planning (e.g. coaching/advisory support for mentoring SMEs to identify international opportunities in strategic third countries; generating ideas for collaboration with third countries and identifying the joint actions to be developed and implemented in a second phase).

Expected results and deliverables

The consortium members are expected to develop and submit a joint internationalisation strategy defining a joint ‘European’ strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals and actions towards specific third markets as well as an implementation roadmap.

The **joint internationalisation strategy** shall comprise:

- a **Partnership Agreement** respecting the characteristics of the "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships" defined above, identifying the Partnership members, setting out the modalities of cooperation between them, and expressing clearly their interests and plans for engaging in international cluster cooperation together.

The Partnership Agreement should include a long-term cooperation agenda with a view to fostering a sustainable Partnership, notably beyond the lifetime of a possible project funded under COSME. In particular, it shall indicate which additional public-private co-financing is envisaged to be mobilised for the development of the international plan during a possible project funded under COSME and beyond.

- an **internationalisation strategy plan** providing (in a note of maximum 10 pages) a detailed description of the purpose of the collaboration and its strategic objectives through a SWOT analysis; the different fields of competences and the envisaged complementarities between the Partnership members; the expected advantages, the targeted third countries, the cooperation interest in terms of thematic area/application/technologies per targeted third country; the potential international cooperation partners; the expected mutual added value and interest among the Partnership members and the international partners; the expected economic impact expressed through quantitative indicators, notably in terms of growth and employment in Europe for the Partnership SME members¹⁶.

The plan shall present how the Partnership will seek and exploit synergies with the inter-regional activities, notably cluster cooperation funded under the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation (INTERREG) and the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), e.g. in the context of smart specialisation strategies and the EU Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, notably the H2020 INNOSUP-2015-1 action for “Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains”¹⁷. To this end, the Partnership members shall demonstrate how their approach has the

¹⁶ The European Cluster Observatory will publish a “Global Mega Trends Report” in 2015 that will be available at the EU Cluster Portal: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cluster/index_en.htm

¹⁷ See at: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2350-innosup-1-2015.html#tab2>

potential to act as a catalyst in contributing to and/or being leveraged by other activities supported under H2020 and European regional funds.

Moreover, the plan should also include:

- background information about previous international activities and cross-sectoral cooperation activities of each Partnership member and between them;
 - benchmarking information on existing international cooperation initiatives directed at similar target countries and thematic areas;
 - joint branding and marketing strategy statement, logo and plan.
- an **implementation roadmap** providing a comprehensive overview of the joint activities foreseen to be developed with a detailed plan for implementation highlighting the different roles and steps.

Strand 2: Supporting the first implementation, testing and further development of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships

Strand 2 shall support the first implementation and testing of the joint internationalisation strategy proposed by applicant consortia and contribute to the further development of the “European Strategic Cluster Partnerships” by building cooperation activities with international partners in third countries.

Possible support actions under strand 2 include:

- Cooperation building with third countries aimed, notably, at identifying the right partners in third countries, organising tailored fact-finding missions in third countries, joining relevant networks, and hosting tailored fact-finding missions in Europe for international partners;
- Tailored identity shaping and joint promotional activities such as the development of a joint communication/marketing and branding strategy adapted to the target third countries; study on the feasibility and assistance needed for establishing an "Ambassador" function or opening a joint representation office in third countries (e.g. legal advice, identification of a permanent representative); study on the feasibility of establishing a (permanent) representation in Europe for hosting international delegations; exploration of the possibilities for using existing regional/national offices abroad for supporting joint promotion and visibility;
- International matchmaking activities with third countries involving the cluster Partnership SME members such as the organisation of international cluster matchmaking missions in third countries and in Europe, facilitating C2C (cluster-to-cluster) and B2B tailored meetings; conducting follow-up activities on cooperation potential identified at matchmaking events, etc. Such missions abroad shall focus on economic impact for companies, have specific, individualised B2B programmes organised for each company, prepare “return” visits of foreign partners to Europe, promote common identity of the European clusters through the Partnership; evaluate economic impacts after 6 and 12 months;
- In addition, each Partnership shall allocate a budget, within the scope of the strand 2 project and without relying on additional COSME funding, to participate in two international cluster matchmaking events organised in third countries and/or in Europe by the European Commission services or EASME. Here it

should be noted that ESCPs in the area of low carbon and related sectors that participate in matchmaking missions organised by the “Low Carbon Business Action” with Brazil and Mexico, financed under the EU’s Partnership Instrument¹⁸, cannot, at the same time, use funding from strand 2 to finance similar activities with Brazil or Mexico;

- Operational collaboration with third countries, involving the cluster SME members and other relevant stakeholders, such as technical and financial feasibility studies for the development of a joint collaborative project with an international partner; identification of relevant financing sources; development of a cooperation agreement with an international partner; actions providing assistance for SME members to a) identify business and innovation cooperation opportunities in target third countries, b) prepare joint business plans with an international partner, c) draft legally binding international collaboration agreement, and d) access available funding opportunities for internationalisation; funding for pilot/experimental practical collaboration actions involving SME members which could possibly also be implemented with co-financing from the home regions/countries of Partnership members.

Mandatory support actions under strand 2 include:

- Learning and monitoring activities, possibly leading to an expansion and/or reshaping of the Partnership, such as promoting exchanges between Partnerships developing activities under strand 2 and enabling cross-fertilisation and learning from their experience and on how to make such Partnerships succeed as well as monitoring activities measuring both business and innovation oriented results and impact of the Partnerships and their international cluster cooperation activities. The monitoring activities shall be linked to the cooperation goals of the Partnerships. Each Partnership members shall participate in an annual European event promoting the learning and monitoring activities carried out by the different Partnerships.

Expected results and deliverables

- Collaboration activities developed and implemented with international partners, such as cooperation agreements/ Memoranda of Understanding signed by Partnership cluster members with international partners; Letters of Intent signed between Partnership SME members and international stakeholders; fact-finding mission reports; potential cooperation actions identified and initiated through international cluster matchmaking events; pilot operational collaboration projects developed between Partnership SME members and international partners; proposed IPR collaboration and standards setting initiatives;
- A monitoring scoreboard with verifiable indicators of the project results and their expected impact such as increased exports, increased jobs in Europe, increased visibility of EU SMEs in foreign markets, innovation projects (including patents), new or adapted products and services, critical imports secured, and direct foreign

¹⁸ Partnership Instrument, Annual Action Programme 2014 (C(2014)7423, Annexes D & E: <http://www.cc.cec/sg/vista/view/main/commissiondossier/commissionDossierDetail.jsf>

investments or cooperation partners attracted, or expertise in support of these activities;

- A mid-term report on the cooperation activities undertaken and lessons learned, with a monitoring scoreboard as set out above and practical recommendations for improving the implementation of the strategy, at the end of the first year of implementation;
- A final report on the cooperation activities undertaken and lessons learned, with a monitoring scoreboard as set out above and practical recommendations for improving the implementation of the strategy at the end of the project with a plan for a long-term cooperation agenda fostering a sustainable Partnership beyond the lifetime of the project.

2.3. Indicators for the action

The actions to be implemented under strand 1 and strand 2 will be assessed, as a minimum, against the following performance indicators:

- Number of cluster organisations and business networks from different COSME participating countries having benefited from the supported actions;
- Number of Partnership Agreements resulting from the supported actions;
- Number of events (workshops/ matchmaking events/ working group meetings) organised;
- Number of SMEs having directly or indirectly benefited from the supported actions, resulting in cooperation projects,
- Increase in the percentage of the turnover from international activities, and employment in Europe, of the SMEs having benefited directly and indirectly from the supported actions, as measured through a survey by the end of the action;
- Impact of the supported actions in terms of number and volume (i.e. amount/funding) of resulting cooperation projects between the Partnerships and international cluster and business network partners for the benefit of European SMEs.

Projects must report on these indicators, but applicants should also propose further performance indicators to be integrated into their monitoring plan, which will be discussed and adjusted to each strand activities upon discussion with EASME and the Commission services at the beginning of the project.

3. TIMETABLE

indicative dates are marked with *

	Stages	Date and time or period
a)	Publication of the call	23 December 2014*
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	31/03/2015 – 17h00 Brussels time
c)	Evaluation period	April and May 2015*
d)	Information to applicants	June 2015*
e)	Signature of grant agreements	September 2015*
f)	Starting date of the projects	October 2015*

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at EUR 3.750.000.

The maximum EU contribution granted will be EUR 187.500 per project under strand 1 and EUR 450.000 per project under strand 2.

EASME expects to fund eight projects under strand 1 and five projects under strand 2.

EASME reserves the right to readjust the estimated budget for the two strands by changing the proportion each one represents in the total budget based on the results of the evaluation.

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 75% of **eligible costs**.

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

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Applications must be submitted no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3.
- Applications must be submitted as explained in section 14.
- Applications must be drafted in one the EU official languages.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application from the onset and without any evaluation process.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6.1 Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are cluster and business network organisations registered or planned to be registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform¹⁹.

Applicant organisations must be legal entities. They can be fully or partly public or private bodies; private bodies must be properly constituted and registered under national law.

Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2. For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

Applicant organisations must be established

- in EU Member States;
- or in countries participating in the COSME programme under Article 6 of the COSME Regulation²⁰.

Applicants also have to submit

- a description of each cluster and business network organisation involved as a partner in the project demonstrating that it offers or channels cluster and network support services to businesses in compliance with the definition given in the section 1.3 (s) on 'innovation clusters' in Annex I of the new “*EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation*”²¹;

¹⁹ See at: www.clustercollaboration.eu

²⁰ The following groups of countries are eligible for participation in COSME:

- a. European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement, and other European countries when agreements and procedures so allow;
- b. acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions, or similar arrangements;
- c. countries falling within the scope of the European neighbourhood policies, when agreements and procedures so allow and in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements, Protocols to Association Agreements and Association Council Decisions.

²¹ 2014/C 198/01 - according to this definition:

‘innovation clusters’ means structures or organised groups of independent parties (such as innovative start-ups, small, medium and large enterprises, as well as research and knowledge dissemination organisations, non-for-profit organisations and other related economic actors) designed to stimulate innovative activity by promoting sharing of facilities and exchange of knowledge and expertise and by contributing effectively to knowledge transfer, networking, information dissemination and collaboration among the undertakings and other organisations in the cluster;

See at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN) with further information available at http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/rdi_framework_en.pdf and http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/legislation/horizontal.html

amending the Community Framework (2006/C 323/01 see at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:323:0001:0026:en:PDF>),

a reference of section 5.8 of which was included in the COSME Work Programme regarding the "innovation clusters" definition

- the complete cluster profile of each applicant registered or planned to be registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform²².

6.2 Eligible consortia

- minimum number of entities forming the consortium: three different cluster and/or network organisations;
- minimum geographical balance: three different COSME participating countries.

Applicant consortia shall verify that their members are not part of another application under the same strand and not part of more than one application under the other strand.

6.3 Implementation period

The maximum duration of projects under strand 1 and strand 2 is 24 months;

Applications for projects under strand 2 scheduled to run for a longer period than that specified in this call for proposals can be considered based on duly justified arguments.

6.4 Other conditions

Applicant consortia in strand 2 will have to submit with their proposal a complete description of their **joint internationalisation strategy** including the Partnership Agreement, international strategy plan and implementation roadmap as described in section 2.2. of this call.

Applicant consortia can apply for one strand only and eligible organisations can be part of maximum one applicant consortia for each strand.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

1.1. Exclusion from participation:

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

- they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;
- they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;

²² See at: www.clustercollaboration.eu

- (d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the RAO or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;
- (e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;
- (f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation²³.

1.2. Exclusion from award:

Applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- (a) are subject to a conflict of interest;
- (b) are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by the Commission as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;
- (c) find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation.

1.3. Supporting documents

Applicants must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation²⁴, filling in the relevant form.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1 Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents ~~to be submitted with the application:~~

- a) Low value grants (\leq EUR 60 000):
 - a declaration on their honour.
- b) Grants \geq EUR 60 000:

²³ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and Council of 25.10.2012

²⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and Council of 25.10.2012

- a declaration on their honour and,

EITHER

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

OR

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

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above thresholds apply by applicants.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the RAO considers that financial capacity is not satisfactory, he may:

- request further information;
- propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments;
- propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.4 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;
- reject the application.

8.2 Operational capacity

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

Consortia also have to submit:

- a declaration on their honour accompanying the proposal as an annex where they can confirm their involvement in offering or channelling cluster and network support services to businesses in compliance with the definition given in the section 1.3 (s) on 'innovation clusters' in Annex I of the new “*EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation*”²⁵
- a list of previous projects and activities performed in the cluster area and connected to the policy field of the call aimed at promoting international cluster cooperation or to the actions to be carried out, including projects and activities supported through European regional or research funding as, for instance, under the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation (INTERREG) and the European Structural and Cohesion Fund and the 7th Research and Innovation Framework Programme (FP7).

²⁵ 2014/C 198/01. See at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN) with further information available at http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/modernisation/rdi_framework_en.pdf and http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/legislation/horizontal.html amending the Community Framework (2006/C 323/01), a reference of section 5.8 of which was included in the COSME Work Programme regarding the "innovation clusters" definition

9. AWARD CRITERIA

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

For Strand 1:

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY ELEMENTS LIKELY TO BE ASSESSED BY THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE	MAX. SCORE
1. Relevance of the actions in view of the objectives of the call	30
How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published theme of strand 1 to develop European Strategic Cluster Partnerships leading international cluster cooperation in strategic areas and supporting SME internationalisation beyond Europe?	
Do the proposed activities respond to the objectives of the call?	
Does the proposal integrate a cross-sectoral and thematic approach with regard to the composition of the Partnership? To what extent does the proposal demonstrate that the Partnership is based on cooperation across related industries and sectoral boundaries in support of emerging industries (e.g. involving another sector or related industry)?	
2. Quality of the proposed actions	35
How coherent, ambitious and suitable are the overall work plan and the proposed activities?	
To what extent are the proposed activities clearly defined and the work plan clearly presented in terms of milestones, deliverables and a sound management structure?	
To what extent does the proposal demonstrate how the Partnership will seek and exploit synergies with inter-regional activities, notably cluster cooperation funded under Horizon 2020 and European regional funds (i.e. European Territorial Programmes and European Structural and Investment Fund)?	
3. Impact on target audience	20
What is the expected outcome and potential impact and EU added value of the project and what can be the multiplier effect of the project to support SME internationalisation beyond Europe?	
Does the proposal describe how to measure the impact of the project results on the basis of specific indicators?	
To what extent do the project partners envisage working on a long-term cooperation agenda to foster a sustainable Partnership after the end of the project?	
4. Cost-effectiveness	15
To what extent is the budget clear enough and detailed? Is it necessary to implement all proposed activities?	
To what extent is the budget allocation justified per each member of the consortium and activities?	
Maximum total score	100

For Strand 2

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY ELEMENTS LIKELY TO BE ASSESSED BY THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE	MAX. SCORE
1. Relevance of the actions in view of the objectives of the call	30
How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published theme of strand 2 to further develop European Strategic Cluster Partnerships by building cooperation activities with international partners in third countries with a view to implementing international cluster cooperation in strategic areas and to supporting SME internationalisation beyond Europe?	
Do the proposed activities respond to the objectives of the call?	
Does the proposal integrate a cross-sectoral and thematic approach with regard to the composition of the Partnership? To what extent does the proposal demonstrate that the Partnership is based on cooperation across related industries and sectoral boundaries in support of emerging industries (e.g. involving another sector or related industry)?	
2. Quality of the proposed actions	35
How coherent, ambitious and suitable is the overall joint internationalisation strategy, including the Partnership Agreement, the internationalisation strategy plan and the proposed activities in the implementation roadmap?	
To what extent are the proposed activities clearly defined and the work plan clearly presented in terms of milestones, deliverables and a sound management structure?	
To what extent does the proposal demonstrate how the Partnership will seek and exploit synergies with inter-regional activities, notably cluster cooperation funded under Horizon 2020 and European regional funds (i.e. European Territorial Programmes and European Structural and Investment Fund)?	
3. Impact on target audience	20
What is the expected outcome and potential impact and EU added value of the project and what can be the multiplier effect of the project to support SME internationalisation beyond Europe?	
Does the proposal describe how to measure the expected impact of the project results on the basis of specific quantitative indicators in terms of growth and employment in Europe for the Partnership SME members?	
To what extent do the project partners envisage working on a long-term cooperation agenda to foster a sustainable Partnership after the end of the project and using local, regional or European funding to support future activities in this respect?	
4. Cost-effectiveness	15
To what extent is the budget clear enough and detailed? Is it necessary to implement all proposed activities?	
To what extent is the budget allocation justified per each member of the consortium and activities?	
Maximum total score	100

In order to be considered for funding, proposals for both strands will need to have passed an overall threshold of **70%** in terms of total score. In addition, thresholds of **50%** will be applied to each of the four individual award criteria described above in order to ensure a consistent minimum quality for all award criteria. Proposals will be ranked according to their total score.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Agency, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiary, as well as the procedure with a view to formalising the obligations of the parties.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1 General Principles

a) Non-cumulative award

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

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

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

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

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

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the action may take the form of:

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

Co-financing may also take the form of in-kind contributions from third parties, i.e. non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to the beneficiary or to the consortium. The corresponding costs are not eligible.

d) Balanced budget

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

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants who foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published [in the Official Journal of the European Union] [on the Infor-euro website available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm .

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

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

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC²⁶ or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC²⁷ shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action as described in the proposal must satisfy the conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action;
- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- it must be clearly stated in the proposal.

f) Financial support to third parties.

The applications for this action may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

11.2 Funding forms

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

➤ **Maximum amount requested**

The EU grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate indicated in section 4. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 11.1c).

➤ **Contributions in kind**

The external co-financing may be made up of contributions in kind in order to cover other costs necessary to carry out the project. Such contributions must not exceed:

²⁶ Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts.

²⁷ Directive 2004/17/EC coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors.

- either the costs actually incurred by third parties and duly supported by accounting documents;
- or, in the absence of such documents, the costs generally accepted on the market in question.

In-kind contributions shall be presented separately in the estimated budget to reflect the total resources allocated to the action. Their unit value is evaluated in the provisional budget and shall not be subject to subsequent changes.

In-kind contributions shall comply with national tax and social security rules.

➤ Eligible costs

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

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

The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.

If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 11.1b).

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

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

Eligible direct costs

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

- the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the applicant or equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the applicant's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs may include additional remuneration, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature, provided that it is paid in a consistent

manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required and independently from the source of funding used;

- costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- subsistence allowances (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.) provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices;
- costs of travel (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.), provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;
- depreciation cost of equipment (new or second-hand): only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by EASME;
- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;
- costs entailed by implementation contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;
- costs arising directly from requirements linked to the implementation of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, translations, reproduction);
- costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required;
- costs relating to external audits where required in support of the requests for payments;
- non-deductible value added tax ("VAT").

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

- a flat-rate amount of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

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

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are not eligible under specific actions.

➤ **Ineligible costs**

- return on capital;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;

- any bank costs charged by the bank of a beneficiary on the transfers from the Agency;
- costs declared by a beneficiary and covered by another action receiving a European Union grant. In particular, indirect costs shall not be eligible under a grant for an action awarded to a beneficiary who already receives an operating grant financed from the Union budget during the period in question;
- contributions in kind;
- excessive or reckless expenditure;
- any costs incurred during a suspension of the action
- others (in accordance with the relevant legal base).

➤ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

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

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action;
- the final financial statement of costs actually incurred;
- a certificate on the financial statements for each beneficiary, if it requests a total contribution of 325.000 € or more as reimbursement of actual costs.

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

11.3 Payment arrangements

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 70 % of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, provided all requested guarantees have been received.

EASME will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by EASME through a recovery order.

11.4 Pre-financing guarantee

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the authorising officer responsible may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the

guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

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

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1 By the beneficiaries

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

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

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

12.2 By EASME

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

EASME will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level²⁸ if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU,
- subject of the grant,
- amount awarded.

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

²⁸ European Union Official Journal L 39, 10 February 2007.

13. DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001²⁹ on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit A.1 of EASME. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/dataprotectionofficer/privacystatement_publicprocurement_en.pdf.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of EASME, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision 2008/969 of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (for more information see the Privacy Statement on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm),

or

- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under section 3.

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

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

➤ **Electronic submission**

Applicants are requested to log in at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal> and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

➤ **Contacts**

EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions must be sent by e-mail to EASME-COSME-CLUSTER-INT-CALL-2014@ec.europa.eu; Answers will be published periodically and within a reasonable period of time at [http://ec.europa.eu/easme/.](http://ec.europa.eu/easme/)

²⁹ European Union Official Journal L 8, December 2001, p. 1