



**SMEs Go International
Technical Assistance Facility:
call for submission of concept notes**

Guidance for applicants



Introduction

The 'SMEs Go International Technical Assistance (TA) Facility is a unique support service provided by the European Commission for eligible projects related to the 'European Strategic Cluster Partnership for Going International' (ESCP4i).¹ The TA aims for scaling-up European SMEs internationalisation efforts by concretely providing tailored and effective advisory services to 25 selected projects.

The objective of 'SMEs Go International' is to support European SMEs to develop commercially viable/bankable business projects in partnership with non-EU countries. This work-package builds on past interventions and our extensive experience within the EU and globally.

Our vision of this facility is to support SMEs to:

- **GROW** - untapping the potential of European SMEs through tailored direct advisory support;
- **CONNECT** - harnessing internationalisation of European SMEs by enabling partnerships with third country organisations;
- **TRANSFORM** - supporting European SMEs to diversify, innovate and generate employment.

Why apply?

Selected projects will receive tailored and in-depth consulting and support services to develop commercially viable or bankable business projects at markets outside the EU. Beneficiaries will profit from the best-suited mix of business advisors and support experts, who will help projects to take their plans one-step further, effectively tackling challenges and overcoming obstacles for their cross-national projects. *NOTE: no direct financial support is provided by this action.*

Technical assistance services consist of general and specific technical advisory support. Depending on the specific needs of each selected project, such technical assistance services will be tailor-made and will focus on the specific market/country targeted by the project. They may consist of a selection of the following components:

The principles of our approach:

- Placing SMEs at the heart of the facility
- Ensuring tailor made direct support that focuses on growth, and transformation of SMEs
- Commitment to work in cooperation to develop the project of both business advisors and SMEs
- Flexibility and adaptation
- Demonstration of success and trickle-down effect
- Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

¹ <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/escp-4i>

Table 1 General advisory support

Advisory product	Specification
Challenges and opportunities in foreign markets	Webinars to explore and discuss some of the key challenges and opportunities in the relevant market targeted by the project.
Marketing your products	Webinars focused on market assessments, marketing actions, and communication.
Business planning	Webinars focused on business planning principles and key elements.
Accounting	Training and advice on accounting systems and key principles.
Auditing	Training and advice on auditing and systems that support efficient auditing and monitoring.

Table 2 Specific advisory services

Advisory product	Combination of services
Market access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market research ▪ Market information ▪ Product exhibitions ▪ Advertising ▪ Packaging ▪ Market linkages ▪ Development of samples techniques for buyers
Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market analysis ▪ Value proposition ▪ Market and customer segments ▪ Value chain definition ▪ Review of the Unique Value Proposition (UVP) ▪ Impact drivers
Financial Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pricing of the product/service ▪ Costs vs revenue streams ▪ Cash-flow planning and analysis ▪ Financing channels

Advisory product	Combination of services
Technical Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sector specific feasibility studies ▪ Technology readiness assessment ▪ Demand analysis and forecasts ▪ Options analysis ▪ Gap analysis
Legal Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The investment vehicle/fund management company ▪ Review of the investment vehicle ▪ Advice to project promoters on appropriate project governance and management ▪ Franchising- Legal advice on setting up a legal and commercial relationship between the franchisor and the franchisee ▪ Taxation- Legal advice on tax implications of setting up business abroad ▪ IPR advice-Provision of advice on IP management and strategy for SMEs ▪ Regulatory environment ▪ Legal advice on sectoral regulations, regulations related to the execution of the project, permitting procedures and other regulatory issues related to the investment project
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) briefing note on internationalisation efforts ▪ Improvement recommendations and Clear Production Analysis
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Storage and warehousing ▪ Transport and delivery ▪ Business incubators ▪ Telecommunication ▪ Logistics models
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Digitalisation ▪ Technology readiness assessment ▪ Demand analysis and forecasts ▪ Options analysis ▪ Gap analysis ▪ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) briefing note on internationalisation efforts ▪ Improvement recommendations and Clear Production Analysis ▪ Economic, business and financial advisory services ▪ Cost benefit analysis (CBA) ▪ Pricing of the product/service ▪ Costs vs revenue streams ▪ Cash-flow planning and analysis

Advisory product	Combination of services
Technology and product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technology transfer / commercialisation ▪ Technology procurement ▪ Quality assurance programmes ▪ Design services
Alternative financing mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road-mapping ▪ Due diligence preparation ▪ Contacting financial institutions ▪ Presenting to financial institutions ▪ Factoring companies ▪ Equity financing ▪ Facilitating supplier credit

Who can apply? Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for support, the applicant must comply with the following requirements:

- The lead applicant needs to be based in the EU or a COSME participating country (for the list of non-EU COSME countries, please check [here](#));
- The lead applicant needs to be an SME;
- The lead applicant needs to demonstrate that the project in question was developed through participation in the European Strategic Cluster Partnership for Going International' (ESCP4i)² action of the European Commission (Calls 'Cluster Go International' COS-CLUSINT-2016-03-01, COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03 and COS-CLUSINT-2017-03-6);
- The lead applicant must be able to prove business partnership cooperation (or equivalent e.g. Letter of Intent) as result of work of the European Strategic Cluster Partnership for Going International' (ESCP4i)³ action of the European Commission (Calls 'Cluster Go International');
- The lead applicant needs to prove financial solvency;
- The lead applicant needs to commit to dedicate necessary time and resources to work in collaboration with the experts;
- The project must not have benefited from the technical assistance from the pilot Low Carbon Business Action in Brazil and Mexico.

² <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/escp-4i>

³ <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships/escp-4i>

How to apply?

Applicants are asked to fill in all sections of the application form on EU Survey and upload supporting information. Please see the application form [here](#).

The application form consists of the following sections.

- Part 1 – Eligibility: this part is a quick checklist at the beginning of the application to make sure that your application is eligible;
- Part 2 - General project information: this part asks information about the applicants;
- Part 3 – Project Information – Business Growth Plan: this part covers the business idea and concrete planning;
- Part 4 – Business Advisory Support needed: this part addresses the needs and justification for support through this TA and helps to tailor the support;
- Part 5 – Financial proposal: this part outlines the own commitments and requested support.

On 2 July, a webinar will be organised to answer your questions on the application process. After that date, if you have any further questions during your proposal preparation process, please contact smes-go-international@ecorys.com . All questions and answers will be collected and published on the [website](#).

How will applicants be selected?

The following table presents the selection criteria based on which the concept notes will be evaluated:

Table 3: Selection criteria

Criteria	Definition	Weight
Technical feasibility	This criterion addresses the robustness and credibility of the technical approach, project plan, technological solutions and risk management in place.	25%
Financial and economic evaluation	This criterion evaluates the financial soundness and sustainability, the capability of the project to represent value for money and the relevance and credibility of the expected socio-economic and environmental impacts.	25%
Business and commercialisation potential	This criterion assesses the market and commercialisation potential, the business added value, potential for scaling up and sustainability of the project.	25%
Needs assessment	This criterion assesses the relevance and consistency of the needs to be addressed by the technical assistance facility to develop the business proposal to commercially viable or bankable proposal.	25%

Evaluation process and final selection

Each concept note will be evaluated against the criteria presented above. The final scoring will be on a scale from 0 to 5 for each criterion, as in the table below. Each aspect needs to score at least 2 to be considered for the selection. The judgement will be conducted by an independent selection committee.

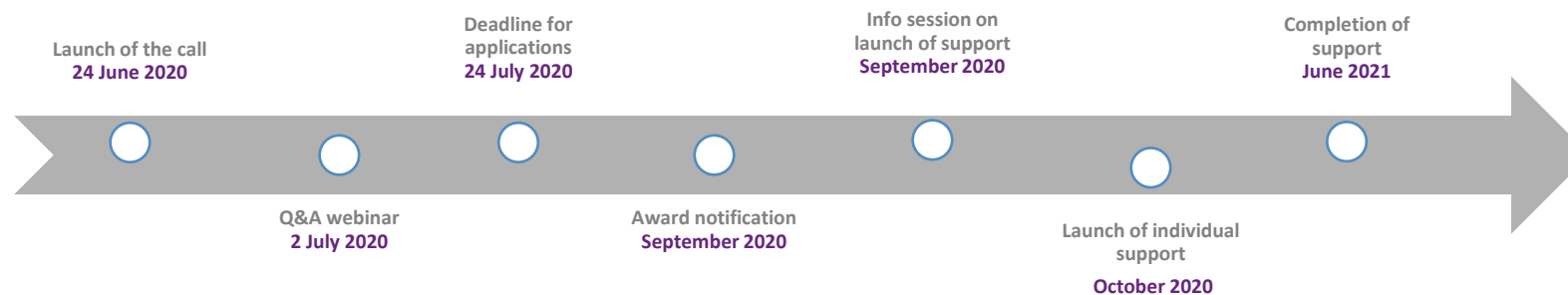
Table 4: Evaluation criteria

Score	Description
0 - Fail	The concept note fully fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1 - Poor	The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, showing substantial shortcomings.
2 - Fair	Concept note addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements/more clarity is needed, and some particular details are missing (in most areas).
3 - Good	Concept note addresses the criterion well, although certain improvements/more clarity is needed, and some particular details are missing (in limited areas).
4 -Very good	Concept note addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question with minor shortcomings.
5 -Excellent	Concept note successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question.

Once the evaluation is completed, all applicants will receive a written notice on the outcome of the evaluation. Individual feedback will be provided.

Timeline

The application and support process will follow the following timeline:



Annex: Question by question guidance on the application form

This annex lists all questions asked in the application form and provides you with further information to help make your application a success. For any queries, please contact smes-go-international@ecorys.com

Part 1- Eligibility criteria

Question	Guidance
Is the lead applicant based in the EU or one of the COSME participating countries?	Please select “yes” if the lead applicant of your application is based in the EU or in a non-EU COSME participating country (please check here).
Is the lead applicant an SME?	In order to qualify, an SME must have the following features: a staff headcount of maximum 249 persons, a turnover of maximum €50 million or a balance sheet, and a total of maximum €43 million. Subsidiaries of larger organisations are not considered SME.
Have you signed a business partnership cooperation agreement (or equivalent) as a result of the work of the ESCP-4i Strand 1 or 2 activities of the 'Cluster Go International' calls COS-CLUSINT-2016-03-01, COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03 and COS-CLUSINT-2017-03-6 between the ESCP-4i SME members and business?	Companies which have not signed a business cooperation agreement but are able to prove their commitment to partner with an organisation in a non-COSME country for a joint business project in an equivalent form such as signed Letter of Intent are eligible.
Are you financially solvent?	Please note that to be eligible for support you must present the profit/loss accounts for the last financial year.
Are you committing to dedicate the necessary time and resources to work in collaboration with the provided experts?	Please ensure you have a dedicated a project manager in place for this call. Your commitment must entail at least 30% of the total workload/resources to be spent under this action (100% consisting of your work and the work of the supporting experts).
Do you confirm that you have NOT benefited from the technical assistance from the pilot Low Carbon Business Action in Brazil and Mexico or any possible forthcoming similar actions on low carbon business partnerships funded under the Partnership Instrument?	Companies which benefited from the technical assistance from the pilot Low Carbon Business Action in Brazil and Mexico, or any forthcoming similar actions, are not eligible. For more information about the pilot Low Carbon Business Action, please visit: www.clustercollaboration.eu/international-cooperation/low-carbon-business-actions

Part 2- General project information

Question	Guidance
Project name/title	Please provide a name/title to your project which will serve as an identifier.
Information about the SME	
Country where the lead applicant is based	Please select from the drop-down menu of EU Member States and COSME eligible third countries.
Name of registered lead applicant	Please indicate the name of the lead applicant.
Address of the lead applicant	Please indicate the address of the lead applicant.
VAT registration number	Please indicate the VAT registration number of the lead applicant.
Type of sector	This refers to the type of industrial activity or sector linked to your project. Please select from drop down menu using sectors outlined in the 1 st and 2 nd generation, or "other" (please specify).
Website	Please insert the URL of the lead applicant's website. Feel free to include the websites of consortium members.
Contact person	Please indicate the name of the lead contact person i.e. the project manager responsible for the management of this project.
Project team information and organisations	
E-mail address of contact person	Please indicate the e-mail address of the referred contact person.
Phone number of contact person	Please indicate the phone number of the referred contact person.
Legal status of the lead applicant	Please select the option that corresponds to the lead applicant's status: "Individual Enterprise", "Limited Company", "Public Company Limited", "Partnership", "Sole Company Limited", or "Others, please specify".
Revenue/income (EUR)	Please specify the lead applicant's revenue/income in Euros in the last available year.

Number of employees	Please indicate the number of employees of the lead applicant.
Are you involved in international partnerships? If so, please indicate where the partner organisations are located	Please specify if you are involved in partnership or business engagement with any international business partnership, and in which countries.
Information about the ESCP4i cluster and the business partner in a third country	
Name of the ESCP4i cluster	Please indicate the name of the ESCP4i cluster associated to the SMEs.
Name of ESCP4i partnership	Please indicate the name of the ESCP4i partnership wherein this project emerged.
Number of project consortium partners	Please note that the number must be at least two: the SME within the COSME country/lead applicant, and the partner organisation in a third country.
Name of the partner organisation	Please indicate the name of the partner organisation.
Address of the partner organisation	Please include street, number, city, and country.
Sector of business/organisation	Please indicate the relevant sector within which the business/organisation operates.
Type of business/organisation	Please indicate whether it is a private company, a cluster organisation, other support organisation (e.g. chamber of commerce), or other (please specify).
What is the rationale for working with this specific partner organisation in the context of this project?	Please elaborate your response in 250 words max. This should provide a commentary on why this application is relevant and the overarching rationale.

Part 3- Project information: Business Growth Plan

Question	Guidance
Please provide a short project summary.	Please include a short summary of the project. elaborate on the concrete milestones that led to this application and demonstrate its origin from an ESCP4i partnership activity. Also show how this project builds on these milestones and what you plan next. Develop your answer in 500 words max.
Please outline the key vision and objectives of your project.	Please describe the overarching vision and objective of the project. The objective should clearly link to the type of services/products and solutions your business will offer. Develop your answer in 250 words max.
Please explain the problem your project is addressing	Please consider the following elements in your response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a market gap/need? - What are the main market barriers that you have identified? Please develop your answer in 500 words max.
Who is your target customer segment/ potential market?	Please explain who would be served (e.g. target group, customer segment, etc) by your project in 250 words max.
What are the channels through which your value propositions are delivered to the customers/users?	Please explain what communication, distribution channels, etc you are considering in 250 words max.
What are the revenue stream(s)?	Please explain the channels of your revenue i.e. sources of your revenue stream in the context of the project, in 250 words max.
Indicate how internationalising will help you achieve your goals	Please provide detailed commentary on why and how internationalisation will help achieve the overarching goal and objectives of this project. Develop your answer in 500 words max.
Please outline your Business Plan behind this project in detail	Guiding questions: what is the core business model? What will it look like in practice? How will it help you internationalise and grow? The key is to respond to <u>how</u> you will achieve results. Key ingredients of a business plan include: strategy, revenue model, opportunity, marketing strategy, organisational set-up and management team to ensure delivery and supervision. Please develop your answer in 500 words max.

Your project targets	
What do you wish to achieve through this project?	Please try to use concrete targets including quantified growth target in line with the objectives you set out above. Develop your answer in 500 words max.
Work Plan	Please present your project roadmap, indicating the specific activities and steps and key milestones in the project lifespan.
The project team	Please present an overview of project personnel, including short bios (max. 250 words), highlighting the technical, business and other relevant qualifications of key members involved in the activities of the project.
What are the main technical and operational risks and challenges for the implementation of your project? What measures could you apply to mitigate those?	Please list potential risks and challenges, along with proposed mitigation measures for each of them.
Financial investment and resources	How are you investing on this business (in-kind or cash)? Please provide details about your source of financing and what you are financing. Develop your answer in 500 words max.
Cross-cutting issues	
Indicate how your project will generate employment and/or diversify your business offer	Please develop your answer in 250 words max.
Indicate the long-term sustainability of the project and its outcomes	Please develop your answer in 250 words max. Consider the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential growth perspective - Follow-up by other initiatives - How will this project idea sustain beyond the life of this support

Part 4 – Business Advisory Support needed

Question	Guidance
Please select your general business needs, if any	Please select from the list of general packages in the drop- down menu.
What is your specific needs linked to this project?	Please focus on needs except financial support (e.g. legal experts to address IPR issues related to...). Be as specific as possible.
What is your position to be able to achieve the above targets?	Please outline at least three points for each of the categories below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengths - Weaknesses - Opportunities - Threats
Explain why your project is in need of the support provided under this 'SMEs Go International' Technical Assistance Facility	Please elaborate on the type of support needed (e.g. specific focus of the support, estimation on the level of detailed analysis needed, specific challenge or issue to be tackled) and outline any existing or potential bottlenecks of your projects which you are aware of and that need to be addressed. Please develop your answer in 250 words max.
Outline at least three possible indicators to measure success of project support by the SMEs Go International Technical Assistance Facility	Please outline at least three indicators. Develop your answer in 250 words max.

Part 5- Financial proposal: specification of own resources and request for support

Question	Guidance
Present the resources you commit yourself for the implementation of this project and specify what direct support needs you have (in person days).	<p>Please provide as much detail as possible (investment costs, staff cost, cashflow planning) for your own resources.</p> <p>On person days: your own contribution should reflect at least 30% of the input needed. The requested number of support days should be reasonable and in line with the support you expect. Awarded projects might get a lower/higher number of support than requested, based on the assessment of the application.</p> <p>On your own resources: please note that the amount must be at least 50% of the requested expert support days in the column on the right (<i>request for expert support in person days</i>)</p>