1. **GRO/SME/20/C/02- Clusters Go International**

***Type of applicants targeted***

Cluster organisations from COSME countries.

***Description of the activities***

***Total amount of the action: EUR 6,600,000***

***Rate of co-financing: 90 %***

***Description of activities:***

The measure is a continuation of the on-going cluster internationalisation programme for the benefit of SMEs and envisages the Clusters Go International actions as follows:

The objective is to support both preparatory and implementation actions for the establishment and development of new 'European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for Going International' (ESCP-4i).

First, the Partnerships shall develop a joint ‘European’ strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals towards specific third markets. They shall contribute to better support European SMEs in global competition. They shall develop a joint international strategy and a roadmap for its implementation, and sign cooperation agreements between the Partnership and international business and/or intermediaries. The funded activities could include:

- Support services for the identification and partnership building of strategic partners across Europe, notably building upon the Smart Specialisation Strategies of the participating regions,

- The development of a legal representation,

- The preparation of surveys among SME members to assess their needs and interest in cooperation with third countries,

- The preparation of a joint branding and marketing strategy and a roadmap for cooperation.

Then, the Partnerships shall engage in the implementation, testing and further development of their joint international strategy and roadmap that will have to result in concrete activities supporting cooperation with strategic partners in third countries.

The supported actions could include tailored analysis and fact-finding missions or assistance for opening of a joint office abroad, operational actions involving the cluster SMEs such as the organisation of international matchmaking missions as well as follow-up actions promoting business cooperation and for learning and monitoring activities.

Partnerships will have to develop and sign business agreements (or equivalent formal cooperation documents) to develop joint collaborative project between the Partnership SME members and business and other relevant stakeholders from third countries, eventually leading to increase exports, investment opportunities and international ventures generating employment for European businesses.

Eligible consortia shall be composed of independent legal entities all representing a cluster organisation or a business network organisation. Each cluster organisation or business network organisation shall demonstrate its involvement in supporting the enhancement of collaboration, networking and learning in innovation clusters and providing or channelling specialised and customised business support services to stimulate innovation activities, especially in SMEs, in compliance with the coverage of innovation clusters given in the section 1.2 (e), 1.3 (s) and Annex I in the “EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation” and is (or planned to be) registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform. Cluster members such as SMEs and technology centres, where appropriate, shall be involved in the development of this action.

Eligible consortia must be composed of at least three legal entities established in three different COSME participating countries, among which at least two Union Members States.

Applicant consortia funded under the previous 'Cluster Go International' calls COS-CLUSTER-2014-3-03, COS-CLUSINT-2016-03-01, COS-CLUSINT-2017-03-6, and GRO/SME/19/C/03 are not eligible for this call.

Partnerships in the defence and security sector applying for the separate call titled “Clusters Go International in the Defence & Security sector” to be published in 2020 are not eligible for this call.

***Expected results of the action:***

The Cluster Internationalisation Programme for SMEs shall contribute to accelerate the development of more world-class clusters in all COSME participating countries by facilitating cluster internationalisation in a more strategic manner at Union level to better support European SMEs in global competition.

This programme will encourage European cluster consortia to work concretely together, notably across sectoral boundaries, to exploit synergies and develop a joint ‘European’ strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals towards specific third markets.

This will contribute to increase the number of "European Strategic Cluster Partnerships – Going International" established in Europe and help more SMEs access third markets and generate growth from international activities.

This action would support overall 12 Partnerships.

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

***Implementation***

Implemented by EASME

***Additional information***

***Specific objective:***

To intensify cluster and business network collaboration across borders and possibly also across sectoral boundaries.

To promote the pan-European Strategic Cluster Partnerships to go international and lead international cluster cooperation in areas of strategic interest towards third countries beyond Europe.

To support SMEs in global competition.

By strategically reinforcing cluster and business network cooperation and supporting the shaping of pan-European cluster consortia at European level, the action will help SMEs to internationalise and take a leading position globally.

This programme will focus on the promotion of cluster internationalisation where interested

consortia will have the opportunity to develop a joint international strategy and support SME internationalisation beyond Europe, including in emerging thematic areas.

***Indicative implementation timetable:***

Publication of the call: Q3 2020

Award: Q4 2020

Signature of grant agreement: Q1 2021

***Qualitative and quantitative indicators for the action:***

**1.** Number of cluster organisations or business network organisations from different COSME participating countries having benefited from the supported actions;

**2.** Number of cooperation agreements and business agreements resulting from the supported actions;

**3.** Impact of the supported actions to be measured in the number of resulting cooperation projects between clusters as well as business partners;

**4.** Number of SMEs having directly or indirectly benefited from the supported actions;

**5.** 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, compared to a similar group of SMEs not benefiting, as measured through a survey.