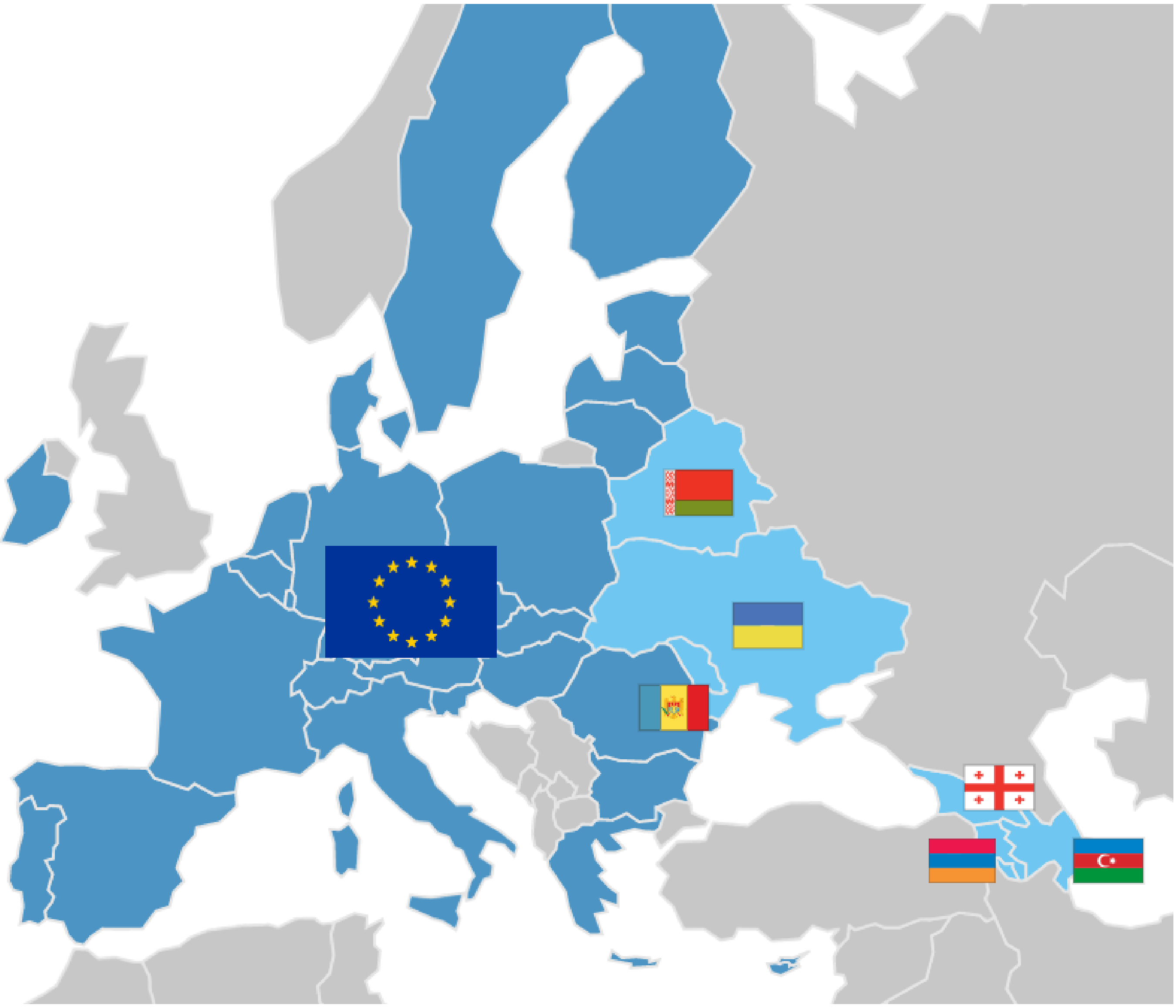

Call for Proposals

FAQ

EU4Business

EUROCHAMBRES

EU4BUSINESS: CONNECTING COMPANIES
Call for Proposals: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Introduction

This document has been produced with the questions received through the project's contact email (eu4bcc@eurochambres.eu), during the networking sessions, and during the presentation of the call for proposals. Please note the project team is not allowed to give answers to questions by email and this is the reason why this FAQ document has been created.

The FAQ will be updated on a weekly basis to add the questions received after the publication of the first edition. EUROCHAMBRES project team will continue adding questions and answers until Friday, 9 April (17:00, Brussels time) and the last version will be published on Monday, April 19.

FAQ

SUBMISSION

Question 1: *Should the partner from an EAP country register in the submission system?*

Answer: No, only the EU lead applicant must register to the submission system and submit the full application.

ELIGIBILITY

Question 1: *Who can apply to this call of proposal?*

Answer: A partnership of EU and EaP Business Support Organisations (BSOs) that are keen to implement actions in the following selected sectors: Bio/organic Food, Wine, Tourism, Textiles and Creative Industries.

To be eligible, the lead applicant must be:

- a private or public legal entity
- **a non-profit making entity**
- established in a Member State of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden).

To be eligible, the co-applicant(s) must be:

- a private or public legal entity

- **a non-profit making entity**
- established in one of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

The partnership must include an equal number of applicants from the EU and the EaP countries. E.g., if the partnership has four members, it should have one lead applicant and one co-applicant from the EU and two co-applicants from the EaP region.

In that case (4 BSOs applying), one of the co-applicants needs to be:

• established in a Member State of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden)

Question 2: *Can the lead applicant and/or co-applicant(s) apply to receive funds for two different actions in the same sector?*

Answer: Yes, the same non-profit BSO can apply for a maximum of two actions within the same sector or within two different sectors. In both cases, two different proposals will need to be prepared and submitted. Please keep in mind that the two applications need to be done for **two different types of action** (i.e. not two study visits, but a study visit and either a twinning or a B2B matching).

Question 3: *Can the same BSOs partnership receive funds for two different sectors?*

Answer: Yes, if the BSOs partnership can demonstrate its capacity and relevance in both sectors. Two separate proposals are expected to be submitted. At the same time, please make sure that each of the members of the BSOs partnership takes part in a maximum of 2 applications in 2 different sectors. If one of the participants is involved in 3 or more proposals, none of the submitted proposals will be evaluated.

Question 4: *Can a BSO be involved in 2 project proposals as a lead partner?*

Answer: Yes, as long as the 2 proposals are targeting 2 different types of action.

Question 5: *Should the applicant be officially recognised by the local authorities or it is sufficient to be an association?*

Answer: The applicants need to be a public or private legal entity and non-profit organisation. They will have to provide a copy of the statutes. Should the statutes not be in English, the BSO is required to send an English translation of the specific article indicating the non-profit making status.

Question 6: *Can the National Chambers of Commerce and Industry apply to the call?*

Answer: The call is open for Business Support Organisations that include, among others, the following:

- Business associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Employers' federations
- Women associations
- Sectorial federations
- Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries; etc.

The National Chambers of Commerce can apply to the call if they are not members of the already selected Sectoral Consortia.

Question 7: *Can Chambers from the EUROCHAMBRES members' network be part of the BSOs Partnership?*

Answer: Yes, as long as they are not already selected to be part of the Sectoral Consortia.

Question 8: *Can SMEs apply to the call for proposals?*

Answer: The application is open for Business Support Organisations. The lead applicant and co-applicant(s) can only be a non-profit making entity.

Question 9: *Could you please describe the definition of Business Support Organisations (BSO)? It includes only Chambers, or it can be other organisations?*

Answer: Are considered as BSOs, among others:

- Business associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Employers' federations
- Women associations
- Sectorial federations
- Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries; etc.

Question 10: *Are Local Action Groups (funded under the EU-ENPARD LEADER programme) eligible to apply to the call for proposals, as according to the call guidelines, „are considered as BSOs: vi) Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries?" As multi-sector development agencies, they support several sectors. In this case, they have expressed interest in Tourism.*

Answer: Any organisation can apply as long as it meets all the eligibility criteria of the call (for more details, see call guidelines 2.1 – Eligibility Criteria).

Before sending the application, BSOs are advised to check with their legal department, that will be aware of the local context and regulations to help them determine whether the organisation meets the requirements.

Question 11: *Can Chambers that are already members of one of the selected Sectorial Consortia within the EU4BCC programme submit a proposal in a different sector?*

Answer: No, members of the Sectorial Consortia of the EU4BCC project cannot be part of the BSOs partnership and, therefore, are not eligible to participate in this call for proposals.

Question 12: *Are Swiss non-profit organisations eligible for the call for proposals?*

Answer: No. The call is open only for the BSOs registered in the EU and EaP countries. Therefore, the Swiss organisation cannot participate in this call.

Question 13: *Can social enterprises apply to the call for proposals?*

Answer: To be eligible for the call for proposals, the applicants should be public or private entities and non-profit organisations.

Before submitting the application, BSOs should consult their legal department, that will be aware of the local legal context and advise them whether the organisation meets or not the eligibility criteria. In addition, the Statute of the organisation has to be sent together with the application (Part C of the proposal).

Question 14: *Can a profit organisation with a non-profit close apply to the call for proposals?*

Answer: To be eligible for the call for proposals, the applicants should be public or private entities and **non-profit organisations**.

Question 15: *Considering what stated in the call guidelines at page 5 about the "Members of the concerned Sectorial Consortium", could you please specify whether an agency or other institution linked to a member of the sectorial consortium as a shareholder or as a subsidiary company, but with a different VAT and registration number and legal address and with a different and separate legal status other than the member of the sectorial consortium can be considered as eligible for this call for the proposal?*

Answer: BSOs that are not part of the Sectorial Consortia can apply to the call. However, to be eligible for the call for proposals, the applicants should be public or private entities and **non-profit organisations**. The guidelines provide all additional specifications.

Before submitting the application, BSOs should consult their legal department, which will be aware of the local legal context and advise them whether the organisation meets or not the eligibility criteria. In addition, the Statute of the organisation has to be sent together with the application (Part C of the proposal).

Question 16: *The definition of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) allows the local and regional economic development agencies established in [Country] to be eligible for the call. We would like to participate in the call* *together with a partner from [Country] (national agency). In [Country], all BSOs, according to their law, are 'non-commercial', so they don't have any turnover, but rather, in the case of public, the state budget allocation to finance the expenses. Is our potential partner eligible to participate in the call? Can we consider this budget allocation like 'turnover'?*

Answer: The BSOs are eligible as long as they meet the following criteria set in the call guidelines: a) be public or private entities; c) be non-profit making entities.

All organisations have a turnover (not to be mistaken with the income).

Question 17*: Can a technological park in [country] that acts as a business incubator be placed under the category of 'business associations'? It is a non-profit organisation under public authority, owned by 3 municipalities, 2 companies and 1 university. It was established as a support institution for the development of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity in the regional environment.*

Answer: We cannot say if the technological park in the country is a business association, but, to apply for this call, the question is rather if they are a BSO. If the entity is dedicated to supporting the creation and growth of businesses as core activity, then they are a BSO. Additionally, the call requires the BSO to be a non-profit entity.

Question 18: *Can the European Chambers of Commerce who are interested in participating in this call receive funds?*

Answer: Yes, as long as they meet all the requirements of the call and they are not already part of the Sectorial Consortia within the EU4BCC project.

Question 19: *Is the call open only for the Chambers of Commerce (members of Eurochambres), or the [National] Small and Medium Enterprises agency could take part as well?*

Answer: The call is open for all Business Support Organisations that are: a) public or private entities, and b) non-profit making entities. Are considered as BSOs, among others:

- Business associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Employers' federations
- Women associations
- Sectorial federations
- Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries; etc.

Question 20: *Can a [National] organisation, registered as Association of Social Promotion to which several companies belong, participate in the call within the EU4BCC project? As it is a social promotion association and not a Business Association, does it still fall within the concept of BSO - Business Support Organisations?*

Answer: Are considered as BSOs; i) Business associations ii) Chambers of Commerce iii) Employers' federations iv) Women associations v) Sectorial federations vi) Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries, etc.

The definition could also include incubation / technical / science parks, innovation support organisations, innovation hubs, clusters, etc. The Business Support Organisation should be, in principle, dedicated to supporting the creation and growth of businesses.

Question 21: *Is it possible to prepare the separate applications from the Network of Business Information Support Centres (Network of BISCs) and its participants (12 Business Support Organisations all around [Country])? The network was established within the EU4Business initiative under the support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Its goal is to help SMEs become more successful and competitive.*

Answer: We cannot say and cannot give any suggestion on specific cases. We remind you that 1 entity can submit a max. of 2 applications.

All BSOs can apply to the call, provided that they meet the eligibility criteria, including

a) be a public or private legal entity

b) be a non-profit making entity.

Question 22: *We are interested in submitting a proposal for this call. We would like to know if* ***De Minimis*** *applies for this call?*

Answer: The funds received from the initiative EU4Business are not following the Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid.

Question 23: *According to the call for proposals "Lead applicant and co-applicants must have a turnover of min. 50.000 euro/year over each of the last 3 closed financial years (see part C of the call of the proposal)" does this means separately both co-applicant, and the lead applicant should have the turnover of min. 50.000 euro/year?*

Answer: Each member of a BSO partnership (lead applicant and co-applicant(s)) should have a turnover of min. 50.000 euro/year over each of the last 3 closed financial years.

Question 24: *Can a non-for-profit sectorial federation/association that has no full contract staff but only contract collaborators (including among them official roles such as President, Vice-President and General Secretary) apply? If yes, how can the daily rates be calculated? The staff working for the association have no fixed monthly salary, but they issue invoices based on the work they carry out for the association, which may vary from month to month.*

Answer: All staff members that a BSOs partnership propose must have an employment contract within their organisation. In-house consultancy is not applicable for the staff in call for proposals.

Question 25*: I need to buy a number of hotels in Russia. Can this call for proposals finance this project?*

Answer: No. The call is open only for Business Support Organisations (BSOs) based in the European Union and Eastern Partnership countries.

Question 26: *Is the Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator considered as a BSO?*

Answer: If the entity is dedicated to supporting the creation and growth of businesses as a core activity, then they are a BSO. According to the call guidelines, are considered as BSOs; i) Business associations ii) Chambers of Commerce iii) Employers' federations iv) Women associations v) Sectorial federations vi) Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries, etc.

The definition could also include incubation / technical / science parks, innovation support organisations, innovation hubs, clusters, etc. Before applying, please make sure you also meet all the requirements of the call (ref. is made to the non-profit criterion, etc.).

Question 27: *Is it true that the applicant must have an annual turnover of at least 50,000 euro? I represent a non-profit organisation, which does not have such opportunities for mentioned turnover.*

Answer: Yes. To be eligible for the call, each applicant should have a minimum of 50,000 euro annual turnover for each past 3 financially closed years.

Question 28: *In we are in the two different BSOs partnerships (in two different sectors), can we submit proposals for two same actions (e.g. two applications for Study Visits)?*

Answer: Applicant can submit a maximum of two applications (within the same sector or within two different sectors). Said applications must be for two different types of action.

Question 29: *Is the National Office of Vine and Wine eligible for the call? We are a public body, and we were created in order to support winemakers.*

Answer: To be eligible for the call, the EU and EaP BSOs should meet the following legal criteria: a) be a public or private legal entity, and b) be a non-profit making entity. BSOs should also meet other technical and financial capacity criteria set in the call guidelines (more details can be found in the call guidelines 2.1 – Eligibility Criteria).

Question 30: *In the call guidelines, it is mentioned that 'lead applicant and co-applicants must have a turnover of min. 50,000euro/year over each of the last 3 closed financial years'. Does the 50,000euro/year are an average? For example, an organisation with a turnover of 55,000 euro in 2018, 25,000 euro in 2019 and 125,000 euro in 2020 would be eligible?*

Answer: A turnover of min. 50,000 euro refers to **each year** during the last 3 financially closed years – not an average.

Question 31: *Can an organisation founded in 2019 be eligible considering that can provide proof of the turnover only for the last two years?*

Answer: All applicants must complete Annex 8 – Statement Turnover – and have a turnover of min. 50,000 euro/year over each of the last 3 closed financial years; therefore, the applicant registered in 2019, won't be able to meet the financial capacity criteria of the call.

Question 32: *We are from the EaP country and plan to apply to the call for proposals in partnership with an EU organisation that provides business advisory services to young entrepreneurs, creating start-up incubation centres, supporting the internationalisation of companies, carrying out qualification actions, and creation of networking networks. Is that EU organisation eligible to be the lead applicant, considered as a BSO?*

Answer: All EU BSOs can be lead applicants if they meet legal eligibility criteria of the call (a. be a public or private legal entity, b. be a non-profit making entity), in addition to other technical and financial capacity requirements set in the call guidelines.

Question 33*: Can a BSOs partnership consist of just 2 partner organisations?*

Answer: Yes. In this case, the lead applicant should be established in the EU and co-applicant in one of the EaP countries. In case a BSOs partnership consists of more than 2 BSOs, the applicants should ensure that it has an equal number of BSOs from the EU and the EaP countries. E.g., a BSOs partnership consisting of 4 BSOs should have 1 EU based lead applicant, 1 EU based co-applicant and 2 EaP based co-applicants.

Question 34: *Can a Special Agency of the Chamber of Commerce that is a member of one of the selected consortia within the EU4BCC project apply to the call if the agency has a different legal address, VAT number, statue, director and financial statement than the Chamber? The organisation's legal department states that the Special Agency benefits from functional and administrative independence from the Chamber.*

Answer: As provided in the guidelines page 5- 6th bullet point, a member of a sectorial consortium (SC) involved in the implementation of action in any selected sector cannot be part of BSOs partnership. If the applicant considers that it is a separate legal entity from the member of a SC , it must provide the evidence that it is an autonomous entity . This means that the member of the SC finances less than 25% of the applicant budget. In addition the applicant must prove that it has its own payroll, turnover and balance sheet.

Question 35: *Is it possible for the CCI of Transnistria to be a partner of the project consortium?*

Answer: BSOs can apply as long as they meet all requirements set in the call guidelines. Please check paragraph 2.1 Eligibility criteria.

Question 36: *Should the activities especially for B2B and study visit to be planned both in EU and EaP or could they be located only in one country? For example can we plan a B2B only in EaP as well as the study visit or if we locate them in EaP it is necessary to replicate them also in the EU country?*

Answer: Each action must be implemented in EU and EaP countries.

Question 37: *Can a private university be the co-applicant of the project? In the guideline there is a broad definition of the eligibility criteria - the co-applicant(s) must be: a private or public legal entity, so we would like to clarify this issue.*

Answer: If the question refers to a university being a BSO, please check the question and answer above, number 20.

If instead the question concerns the legal eligibility criteria, co-applicant needs to be a non-profit organisation. The entity can be public or private.

Question 38: *Together with our EU partners, we are considering preparing a proposal for the call with a focus on the BIO/Organic sector. Could you define more precisely what is covered by Bio/Organic? Can sustainable farming practices in a broader meaning considered here or we shall strictly adhere to certified organic production?*

Answer*:* In accordance with the definition given by the European Commission, organic products and production rules can be found at the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/organic-farming/organic-production-and-products_en

Question 39: *Could a non-profit organisation conducting business support services on a regular basis apply for the call if it doesn't belong to any category below? All other technical and financial capacity requirements are met.*

- *Business associations*
- *Chambers of Commerce*
- *Employers' federations*
- *Women associations*
- *Sectorial federations*
- *Local and regional economic development agencies established in the eligible countries; etc.*

Answer: The answer can be found in Question 20 and 26 of FAQs (Eligibility).

Question 40: *As we are a chamber of commerce from an European country based in another European country, can we involve SMEs from both countries in our B2B or Study visit project?*

Answer: Yes.

APPLICATION

Question 1: *When is the application submission deadline?*

Answer: The BSOs partnerships must submit the application before the 30th of April, 2021 (17:00 Brussels time).

Question 2: *Where should I send my application?*

Answer: BSOs should apply to the grant via the call's submission system: https://submissions.connectingcompanies.eu/#!/

Question 3: *Does each co-applicant need to apply separately?*

Answer: A BSOs partnership needs to submit one proposal. The Lead applicant will collect all requested documents and upload the proposal on behalf of the partnership.

Question 4: *How the application submission process looks like?*

Answer: The lead applicant needs to first register in the submission system - https://submissions.connectingcompanies.eu/#!/. The lead applicant needs to indicate name and surname, name of the organisation, and mail address.

Once the registration is submitted, a verification email with a link to complete the registration will be sent to the email address provided during the registration. When this step is completed, the lead applicant will have access to the page where the application can be submitted.

In the process, the lead applicant will need to indicate the sector targeted by the application (Bio/organic Food, Wine, Tourism, Textiles and Creative Industries) as well as the type of action (Twinning, Study Visit, B2B Matching). The lead applicant will have to upload the application, composed of 3 parts:

- Part A – application form,
- Part B – budget,
- Part C – legal, technical and financial capacity.

Parts A and C should be submitted as unique PDF files (one for Part A, one for Part C). Part B should be submitted as an xlsx file.

For more information, both the guidelines (and the templates), and the slides used for the presentation of the call can be consulted at the following link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEWYbWkjK4/1-YeDyqz3ACt1QLAZNA-_w/view?utm_content=DAEWYbWkjK4&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

Question 5: *When will we know the selection results of the call?*

Answer: Indicatively, the final results will be announced on 11 June 2021.

Question 6: *Can I save the draft of my application before submitting it?*

Answer: Yes, you can choose to save a draft in the submission system and go back to finalise later. To enter the system again, you need to click on the link received by email when your initial registration has been done (the validation link).

Question 7: *What will be the relation between BSOs and Sectoral Consortium?*

Answer: Sectorial Consortia will be in charge of monitoring the actions performed by Business Support Organisations.

Question 8: *How many staff members should the applicant include in the application?*

Answer: It is recommended that a BSOs partnership proposes an action team composed of at least 4 people: Project Officer, Event Manager, Communication Officer and Financial Officer. For further information, please check the guidelines.

Question 9: *Is it allowed to propose a staff member that has a consultancy contract or is hired as a freelancer?*

Answer: No. All staff members proposed by the BSOs partnership must have employment contracts in the organisations they represent.

Question 10: *Should the activities (for example, B2B) be organised face to face, or we can organise online meetings (B2Match and etc.)?*

Answer: The proposal should be made for face-to-face activities. Some online activities can be foreseen. However, due to the Covid context, the applicants will also need to propose a contingency plan (section 9, Part A) for the entire activity to be implemented online, should the pandemic context ask for such measures.

Question 11: *Is there any platform for searching partners with the EU BSOs as eligible applicants under the call for proposals?*

Answer: There is no official platform to search for partners within the call. However, the EU4BCC team will host a series of networking meetings on 22-24 March where the interested BSOs can introduce themselves and search for partners. In case of interest, the BSOs can register here: https://connectingcompanies.eu/index.php/projects/

Additional networking events will be organised by the Sectorial Consortia. Information on these initiatives will be shared via the official EU4BCC social media channels.

Question 12: *The guidelines mention the B2B meetings should be organised between EU and EaP countries but also within EaP countries, in line with the 20 Deliverables for 2020's objective. Is that requirement permanent, or these meetings should adhere to the deliverables for certain future periods, e.g. 2021? If so, where could the deliverables be found?*

Answer: All project deliverables need to be achieved by the end of each project. The maximum duration of each action and the minimum deliverables per action (Mandatory and optional goals, Indicators to be achieved per action & Visibility of the action) are indicated in the call in paragraph 2.1.3.

Question 13*: In terms of the expected results of the B2B matching, and considering that B2B matching has to be developed within 6 months, is it expected to provide indicators for the following actions:*

- measured and proven increase of export/import for at least 4 of the 20 SMEs involved,

- proven increased production or sells for at least 1 SME, or proven increase of income or share market?

We are raising this question as we consider it quite difficult to achieve these results in such a short period of time.

Answer: These indicators are mandatory minimum expected results; therefore, the BSOs partnership implementing the action must commit to achieve the indicators specified in the guidelines by the end of the implementation window.

Question 14: *Will the proposal of higher indicators than the minimum be assessed with increased scores, and what will be the approach of evaluators to range the scores in this case (will evaluators compare all applications and assign scores depending on the size of overperformed indicators, or do you have any guidance (i.e. in percentage) that the applicants can see beforehand?*

Answer: Detailed information about the assessment process and criteria is included in the call guidelines (2.3 EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS).

Question 15: *On step 1 of evaluation, will evaluators only read Section 1 and 2 (general information and the concept note), or will also read sections 3-10? Should applicants duplicate the information about KPIs etc., in Section 2 'Concept note'?*

Answer: Please read carefully section 2.3 EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS, of the guidelines. Part A has to be fully filled in according to the indications it provides in each section. Annex 1 to part A (Logical Framework) also needs to be included.

Question 16: *Will "the list of previous projects and activities (if any) performed and connected to the field of the call for proposal or to the action to be carried out or to the sector for which the application is submitted" be assessed and scored? Could you please share the methodology of scoring?*

Answer: The applications will also be evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and co-applicants using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid included in the call guidelines (2.3 EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS). Each applicant should demonstrate that they have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action.

Question 17: *Within the application form template, WP 1 is called* ***Work Package 1- Organisation and event management****. Within the Call description, it is called* ***Project management****. Should applicants build the description of the WP based on the guidance in the Call description and insert this description under the* ***Work Package 1- Organisation and event management*** *section of the application form?*

Answer: Please check the published Erratum.

Question 18: *Can applicants change the page orientation from book (vertical) to landscape (horizontal) in sections 4, 5, 6 of the application form (Part A) for a better overview of activities?*

Answer: If needed the applicant can do so.

Question 19: *Should applicants copypaste the logframe as is, or should they delete the irrelevant information (related to other types of actions) and add their own information as per increased indicators and explanation of approach both in the main table and the 'Indicators per action type' sheet?*

Answer: Yes, the applicant should delete irrelevant information related to other types of action and add their own information, including increased indicators and approach, while respecting all minimum KPIs for the chosen activity.

Question 20*: In the last line of the logframe, the output is formulated related to the EU SMEs and indicator – related to the EaP SMEs. Should we address EU, EaP or both groups (and should then the indicator of 17 SMEs embrace both groups or each of the group)?*

Answer: The indicator (17 SMEs) relates to the SMEs per EaP country that have to be reached out.

Question 21: *A copy of the applicants' turnover statement for the three last years – can the turnover of affiliated members of the BSO that is part of the BSO partnership be included to support the turnover of this BSO?*

Answer: All applicants must fill in Annex 8 – statement of turnover – the declaration has to be filled with all the income of the organisation according to their annual accounts.

Question 22: *Can the budgets of the other projects implemented by the BSO that is part of the BSO partnership be counted in the turnover for the technical capacity assessment?*

Answer: Annex 8 – statement of turnover – must be filled with all the income of the organisation according to their annual accounts.

Question 23: *Can a BSOs Partnership composed of an EU BSO and an EaP BSO constitute a twinning ("to enable sharing of specific knowledge and best practices, allow peer-to-peer exchanges and cooperation, ...developing better business linkages...") at the scope to better develop SMEs (beneficiaries) linkages from both sides - EU and EaP?*

Answer: Twinnings are targeting BSOs as final beneficiaries (participants in the action). Therefore, the aim of the twinning should be the one of involving further BSOs in the activity (min. 14 in all, min. 7 on the EaP and min. 7 on the EU side) and help them develop new/better services for their members.
Page 12 of the call:
"The action is not supposed to be a training, but rather include workshops, on-the-job coaching and/or peer to peer exchanges, with the help of facilitators and experts, as well as the following types of activities:
• Developing better business linkages including through encouraging the creation of 'clusters' of companies that cooperate with each other to launch new or better products, or initiating forums to consider how local companies can improve the linkages between them
• Workshops to increase BSOs internal capacity and ability to provide sector-specific support to SMEs for export purposes, with the specific objective of increasing cooperation and interlinkages between EaP and EU BSOs

• Developing Guidance and Best Practice Manuals on a sector by sector basis, although in an overall working framework
• Branding and marketing
• Market research (a product for SMEs on internal and external markets)
• Labelling
• Certification
• Quality and safety control
• ISO
• E-commerce
• Expand and develop communication towards EU BSOs/in the EU to diversify and attract more expertise and exchange of experience between EU and EaP SMEs and BSOs."

Question 24: *When we choose an action, for instance, B2B Matching to support SMEs, can we realise within that action also activities related to BSOs' capacity building?*

Answer: Each action has specific final beneficiaries, and activities within each action should be targeting those specific beneficiaries:

Twinnings – BSOs

B2B Matching – SMEs

Study Visits – BSOs and SMEs.

Question 25: *Should the preliminary meetings also be implemented within the duration of the action (A. Max. 10 months in the case of Twinnings, B. Max. 6 months in the case of Business to Business matchings, C. Max. 4 months in the case of Study Visits), or they could be done previous to the starting date of the action.*

Answer: All activities related to the action should be implemented within the timeframe indicated in the call for proposals.

Question 26: *Just to be precise, with one proposal, we can apply for one sector and for one of the actions (twinnings, b2b matchings or study visits), right?*

Answer: That is right. The applicants should send a separate application if they want to apply for a second action.

Question 27: *In case of ONE Partnership of EU and EaP organisations (for example two chambers), how many twinings, study visits and b2b must be conducted?*

Answer: One partnership implements only one action (twinnning, study visit or b2b matching). Detailed information regarding indicator can be found in the call guidelines (2.1.3 ELIGIBLE ACTIONS: ACTIONS FOR WHICH AN APPLICATION MAY BE MADE).

Question 28: *Under the section "Indicators to be achieved per action" part B - B2B Matching you write that the partnerships have to organise:*

- *1 online preliminary meeting allowing BSOs to meet each other and*
- *1 online preliminary meeting to focus on specific aspects.*

With "BSO" do you mean applicant and co-applicant(s)? Could you provide some examples of the specific aspects that have to be discussed?

Answer: At page 14 in the Guideline, reference is made to the preliminary meetings between the applicants to focus on the specific aspects that will be tackled in the implementation of the B2B matching. At page 12 there is also a list of activities meant to enhance SME to SME contact and trade opportunities:

- Organise Business to Business meetings between EU and EaP countries but also within EaP countries, in line with the 20 Deliverables for 2020's objective (https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/20-deliverables-for-2020/) to enhance people to people contacts and trade opportunities.
- Networking
- Participation to trade fairs
- Matchmaking on 'filiere' level
- Business mentoring and e-tools
- Coaching on e-commerce
- Innovation support

Additional preliminary activities involving SMEs can be foreseen.

Question 29: *In the description of WP4 (page 18) you mention among the minimum expected result the "signature of a MoU between one BSO in the EaP countries and 1 BSO in the EU countries". In this case, you mean two extra BSO (not applicant and co-applicant), is it correct?*

Answer: Yes, this indicator refers to the final beneficiaries of the project.

Question 30: *In terms of timing of the action, is it possible to organise first the study visit to EaP Country and after the study visit to EU Country?*

Answer: An order of which country the study visits will be implemented first depends on the applicants' choice.

Question 31: *About the following milestone: "Min. 8 SMEs and BSOs involved on each side (EaP and EU), therefore min. 16 in all". It means that a partnership, composed by one EU lead and one EaP co-applicant, has to ensure min 8+8=16 participants/final beneficiaries) or 16+16=32? And these 16 (or 32) have to be final beneficiaries or just participants.*

Answer: For this milestone, a BSOs partnership must involve minimum 16 BSOs and SMEs in total (8 on the EaP side and 8 on the EU side). These participants are the final beneficiaries on the project.

Question 32: *Is the travel to Brussels compulsory for all the actions and sectors foreseen in this call?*

Answer: From the available budget it is mandatory that each proposal should forecast at least 2 visits to Brussels for min. 2 persons for events/trainings/workshops. Seen the current pandemic and should the situation not change, the participation could turn into online participation at a later stage. The specific face-to-face visits are to be foreseen in the budget.

Question 33: *If the BSOs partnership consists of 1 EU BSO and 1 EaP country BSO, can each of these BSOs have 1 visit of 1 person to Brussels, so it will be 2 visits of 2 persons?*

Answer: Each visit to Brussels should include at least 2 representatives of the BSOs partnership.

Question 34: *Can you indicate which events in Brussels can be visited within the call? Should these events be organised by the applicants, or maybe the applicants can take part at EASME events?*

Answer: The selected BSOs Partnership will be invited by EUROCHAMBRES or the Sectorial Consortium to attend training sessions, networking and benchmarking activities at the level of the overall EU4BCC project (i.e. training sessions on the grant contract financial procedures and on project performance indicators, EU4BCC stakeholders' annual meetings, workshops for exchange of experiences and best practices etc.). To attend these meetings 1,500 euro per person should be foreseen to cover travel and accommodation costs. The participation of the BSOs partnership in the EU4BCC final conference will be covered by EUROCHAMBRES within the limit of 130 participants for the final beneficiaries SMEs and BSOs.

Question 35: *When selecting Twinning action, it is mandatory to address BSOs or we can apply twinning to SMEs?*

Answer: Twinnings can only have BSOs as final beneficiaries. SMEs can only be involved in certain activities performed during the twinning, if necessary. For example they could be involved in the piloting of a new training module produced as a result of the twinning. However, they will not participate in the twinning itself but only in a pilot or test or survey, etc. phase.

Question 36: *In section 1.1. Background (guidelines), it is stated on page 4 that "the action should cover, as far as possible, **three** of the following issues: gender equality, etc." However, in section "2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application can be made - type of actions and underlying actions" it is stated on page 11 that "The action should cover, as far as possible, **one** of the following issues: gender equality, etc". Please could you clarify how many issues the action should cover as far as possible?*

Answer: Each application should include at least three of the following issues, as indicated in page 4 of the call and also during the organized presentations of the call:

- gender equality;
- business opportunities opened up with the Eastern Partnership Agreements signed between the EU and EaP countries;
- institutional building, between CCIs and BSOs, best practices, benchmarking, cooperation between companies;

- transfer of know-how, transfer of technology, synergies with existing networks like Enterprise Europe Network;
- job creation and poverty reduction;
- businesses in rural areas run by women and men.

An erratum has been published.

Question 37: *In the annex 9, Part C, checking list, it's indicated "applicant identification form"; what type of identification form do you require to be sent to you?*

Answer: This line refers to Annex 7 of Part C – Financial Identification Form (for the lead applicant only).

Question 38: *Concerning the Application form - part A. The Section 3 requires:*
"DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION (2 pages maximum without changing the font). This part should include the following information:
- Aim pursued by the action
- Date of the implementation
- Beneficiaries
– Organisational chart: timetable for the action (starting with month 1 up to the final month of your implementation plan)
- Tools used to publicise the action - Possible synergies with local authorities or other sectoral actors."

The Section 8.4 requires:
"Work Package 4 – Implementation of the action (including online action). Please explain in max. 2 pages (without changing the font) how you will organise the action and how the action will take place (when and where), which are the tools you will use, if any, etc. in order to reach at least the minimum expected results indicated in the call for each type of action."

May you explain how we have to approach the completion of these two different paragraphs? What is the difference? Which topics you wish to read at Section 3 and which ones at section 8.4?

Maybe at section 8.4 the tasks, the deliverables of the WP4 (in the WBS framework) are required while the description has to be described at the Section 3?

Answer: In Section 3: Description of the Action (Part A), the applicant should provide the general overview of the proposals and the description of the action plan to implement the project. This part should demonstrate the feasibility and relevance of the action, how it takes into account the needs of the SMEs and BSOs, what elements it includes, who are the beneficiaries, if the timetable and used tools are realistic, how dissemination is foreseen, etc.
In 8.4 Work Package 4 – Implementation of the action (including online action), the applicant should give detailed information on concrete steps it will undertake to achieve minimum expected results and milestones. The implementation should be also further detailed into tasks for the specific WP4.

Question 39: *With reference to the action STUDY VISIT, could you please specify how many milestones must be accomplished by each single project?*

Answer: For the milestones, please check paragraph "*Indicators to be achieved per action*" which starts at page 14 in the Guidelines for applicants. The specific ones for Study Visits start at page 16.

Question 40: *I would like to ask whether in the application form there has to be indicated the exact beneficiaries (name of the companies and their representatives) of the proposed project? Or the sector is enough and specific companies can be adjusted and decided later?*

Answer: In the application form, the applicant should provide the general description of the beneficiaries, the way they will be reached and selected, as well as the numbers to be reached according to the KPIs. There is no need to indicate the names of the participating SMEs and of their representatives.

Question 41: *Having in mind the current health situation and in order to increase the chances of organising the action face-to-face, we are planning to start the action in November 2021 (respecting the rule of the 5 months of start the action since the grant agreement signature), meaning the end date would be February (4 months allowed). One of the milestones foreseen for the Study Visits is a "survey prepared during the action and launched 6 months after the end of the action to prove the achievement of the key indicators". Considering we have to submit the final report on 15th June at the latest, would it be possible to send the survey a little bit earlier?*

Answer*:* The BSOs partnership needs to prepare the survey during the action. Such survey needs to be launched 6 months after the end of the action. If needed, applicants can foresee other surveys to be launched at the beginning or during the implementation of the action.

Question 42: *Regarding the expected results of the Study Visit (page 16 of the call for proposals text):*

One of the compulsory expected results of the Study Visits is: "at least 2 new services launched by at least 3 of the BSOs involved and at least 2 concrete results (commercial contract, launch of product, creation and launch of a new marketing campaign or increased safety and quality plans, etc.) involving 4 of the SMEs involved". The creation of a specific study, a training module, some guidelines and/or a guide of good practices can be considered as services created by at least 3 of the BSOs? On the other hand, the finished concrete results shall be produced within the action timeframe (i.e. four months)? At this stage, it is very complicated to determine the results obtained by the SMEs, do we need to specify them? In addition, any clarification about this expected result will be highly welcomed.

Answer: The creation of a specific study, a training module, some guidelines and/or a guide of good practices can be considered as new services, among others. **All expected results should be delivered within the timeframe of the implemented action**. Further impact of the action can be revealed by the survey prepared during the action and launched 6 months after the end of the action to prove the achievement of the key indicators (ref. is made to the logframe for each consortium).

The applicant should indicate expected results in the application form.

Question 43: *Can we consider a new packaging creation as a suitable and accepted new branding or new marketing plan for SMEs (compulsory result)?*

Answer: No, the marketing plan should be broader and may include a new packaging creation. The same applies for a branding or rebranding strategy.

Question 44: *May you please give us further guidance/explanation within the only 1 compulsory result (page 17 of the call for proposals text):*

- *joint production or development of new product/service, or*
- *innovation, or*
- *other forms of cooperation, etc.*

We do really appreciate if you could please offer some examples that could illustrate what you are expecting.

Answer: The BSOs partnership can choose one of these results to be delivered. These results should be realistic, in line with the project's objectives and answering the needs of the beneficiaries. The applicant is free to suggest its own idea, depending on the context.

Question 45*: Are the indicators of Sections 4, 5 and 6 of Part A the same as the ones to be provided in the Excel Annex 1 of Part A?*

Answer: Logical Framework (Annex 1 of Part A) provides an overview of the outcomes, outputs, results to be achieved within the project. It also contains all indicators and targets mentioned in the call guidelines and Part A of the application, as well as the forms and means of verification on how the BSOs partnership will achieve all the targets and assumptions.

Question 46*: In Section 8 of Part A – Proposal: Which are considered 'core events' of the action (page 11 of the Part A and page 17 of the call text)?*

Answer: In section 8 of Part A, applicants should develop each WP. Specifically, in section 8.1 applicants should explain the overall organisation of the action (twinnings, study visits, B2B matchings) as well as the event management plan you will apply. Events could be:

- online preliminary events
- communication/dissemination events
- b2b face-to-face or online events
- conferences
- events foreseen while traveling (business meetings, visits, participation to networking events, etc.)
- success stories sharing, etc.

You can foresee into your event management plan the events that better suit your type of action and which will better help you reach the expected results. The main events (core events) should be indicated and detailed in this section.

Question 47: *Does the composition of the team have to be limited to the positions listed in Part C - Annex 5, or can other staff members of the BSO partnership with different functions be added? Also, is it possible to duplicate the position? i.e. two financial officers, one in the European BSO and one in the Eastern BSO.*

Answer: The applicants are not limited to the positions listed in Part C. However, they need to make sure that all suggested staff members meet the requirements of the call.

Question 48: *Can you please confirm for a Study Visit that only final reports (narrative and financial reports), -not interim ones- shall be submitted by 15th June 2022?*

Answer: Please refer to section 1.3 of the Guidelines for applicants, page 7, paragraph a) Modalities of payments.

***Question 49:** The guidelines say that for Twinning projects participating BSOs needs: proven capacity of communicating in English (reading, speaking, writing). Is the fact that the organisation works on EU projects for 10 years enough, or applicants need to present another prove?*

Answer: The language requirement applies to the staff suggested by the BSOs partnership. The lead applicant should collect and send CVs of all proposed staff members. CVs, to be sent in Europass format, should include the languages section. In addition, for each staff a link to reports, communication plans, etc. published over the last 5 years can be sent as a proof that language requirements are met.

***Question 50:** In the call for proposal, it is clearly specified that the target groups of the twinning actions are BSOs (and NOT SMEs) from EU and EaPs. Nevertheless, in the milestones and in the logframe, indicators include SMEs besides BSOs. Could you clarify whether it is correct that both are beneficiaries of the actions.*

Answer: For the answer please refer to questions 23, 24 and 35 that can be found above (Application).

BUDGET

Question 1: *For the contingency plan, do you need to upload a separate alternative budget?*

Answer: No, in Part A (section 9 "contingency plan") an alternative solution should be indicated for the proposed activities. If the situation will impose to apply the contingency plan, where travels are not allowed, the beneficiary will be requested to submit an amendment with a reallocation of the budget to cover the costs required for the online implementation of the action.

Question 2: *Is it allowed to add additional lines to the budget template?*

Answer: Applicants can insert as many rows as needed, as long as they respect the budget headings.

Question 3: *The travel costs for other BSOs and SMEs that are not partner in the project cannot be included in the budget. Is this correct?*

Answer: The travel cost for the other BSOs and SMEs involved in the action, participants in the study visits or b2b matching has to be included in the budget. They are not partners, they are the final beneficiaries.

Question 4: *For travel costs no actual costs are allowed? only per diem and lump sums?*

Answer: Travel and subsistence costs for the final beneficiaries that are taking part in the activities (BSOs and SMEs) are lump sum.

For the staff of the applicants traveling for these activities/events the actual incurred cost will be applied.

Question 5: *Should the 5% of the co-finance by the applicant be the cash contribution or the in-kind contribution?*

Answer: In-kind contributions are not foreseen for this call. Please see the call guidelines.

Question 6: *Can the start of a business negotiation after a B2B meeting might be considered as a result?*

Answer: It will not count as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI).

Question 7: *Can we submit the documents in other languages than English?*

Answer: EU4BCC's working language is English, meaning that all documents need to be submitted in English. In case some of the official documents of applicant organisations (statutes, for instance) are in other languages than English, applicants must translate and attach the translation of all relevant information proving their capacity and eligibility.

Question 8: *On the page 9 of the Call for Proposals document, under Financial Capacity Criteria, it is mentioned that "Lead applicant and co-applicants must have a turnover of min. 50.000 euro/year over each of the last 3 closed financial years". Should the co-applicant from the EaP country demonstrate the same minimal financial capacity? Is this criteria applicable for each applicant (both lead and co-applicant) separately, or the criteria "turnover of min. 50.000 euro/year" is applicable for both partners cumulatively?*

Answer: Each applicant (lead applicant and co-applicant(s)) must provide the Statement of Turnover for the last three years (Annex 8 in the Part C of the application). Therefore, the criteria 'turnover of min. 50,000 euro/year' applies to each applicant (lead applicant and co-applicants) separately over each of the last 3 financial years. This criterion is equally applicable for the EU and EaP BSOs.

Question 9: *The EU partner and the EaP partner must reach the balance in the staff costs. Does this balance need to be realised at the level of staff costs or at the level of man-days? In the first scenario (balance to be reached at cost level) it could mean that, as result of different staff cost levels, an EU Lead partner would have +/- 20 man-days at his disposal for realising coordination, implementation of activities and reporting work, while the EaP partner could with the same budget have +/- 40 man-days at his disposal. Or, may we understand it correctly that the second scenario is to be understood as the one aimed at with this instruction, namely that both EU-partner and EaP partner could dedicate each, as an example, 30 man-days to the project. In this scenario it could mean that +/- 2/3 of the maximum allowed budget of 24,000 EUR for staff costs could be spent by the EU partner and 1/3 by the EaP partner. With a number of 30 man-days at its disposal, this would bring the EU partner closer to the minimum number of man-days needed to fulfil all project's engagements.*

Answer: The balanced budget does not refer to a number of days, it reflects the percentage of the budget that will be divided by the two or four partners. The activities of the project should be divided in the consortium and the budget needs to reflect this division in a balanced way.

Question 10: *Do we understand it correctly that some external experts can be hired (costs to be mentioned under 'Other costs') for interpreting or translation, as well as other technical experts for designing specific planned tools, checklists, trainings, etc. which will make a part of newly designed services to be launched at the EaP partner? And if so, is there any limit in the amount of costs beside that these costs need to be normal market prices (daily rates) in the EaP country concerned for the type of expertise concerned?*

Answer: Experts can be hired and inserted in the budget in "Other cost". However, in the justification of the budget and on the description of the action, this should be explained and duly justified. Please see the article 2.1.4 Eligibility of cost, costs that can be included.

Interpretation costs are eligible and for this a company should be contracted, please see the article 2.1.2 Subcontractors.

Question 11: *If a project, during its implementation, needs to cancel travels and replace them by online events, what will then be the impact on the amount of staff costs (max. 40 %) approved in the budget? Example: approved budget of 60,000 EUR includes 8,000 EUR of travelling and per diems. Staff costs = maximum allowed, namely 24,000 EUR. Will this not spending of 8,000 EUR of travel costs and per diems, diminishing the real total costs with 8,000 EUR, have an impact on spending of 24,000 EUR of staff costs (in other words, will only a reduced amount for staff costs be possible to claim during implementation although all the work to be delivered remains the same? Then, in reality only 20,800 EUR can be claimed for staff costs.*

Answer: If the situation will impose to apply the contingency plan, where travels are not allowed, the beneficiary will be requested to submit an amendment with a reallocation of the travel cost to cost required for the propose of the action.

Question 12: *Please tell me if I understand correctly: the main aim of the call is to improve and establish contacts, facilitating experience and knowledge sharing between entrepreneurs from Moldova and the EU. The main tasks for the applicant will be organising activities that will support those interested in this exchange?*

Answer: It is partly correct. The aim of the call is to support sustainable economic development and job creation in the Eastern Partnership countries by helping SMEs to grow (by promoting trade, inward investment and business links with companies in the EU). Hence, this particular call is designed to create partnerships between Business Support Organizations from EaP and EU countries (the EU BSOs to be lead applicants) that will be willing to implement one of the following actions: Twinnings, Study Visits and B2B matching. SMEs can be the final beneficiary of some of these actions. For detailed information, please check the call for proposals: https://connectingcompanies.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Call_for_proposals.pdf

Question 13: *In case of no travelling due to COVID, what will be the eligible options for the travel and catering budget reallocation (up to 60% of the budget) to more human resources (external expertise; certification fees, membership fees for BSOs in the EU and EaP business confederations and alliance, purchase of access to specialised marketplaces and tools in the ICT sector for BSOs)?*

Answer: At this stage, the applicants are requested to ensure the budget of the action is according to the description of the action, where they should envisage face to face activities. If the situation imposes to apply the contingency plan, where travels are not allowed, the beneficiary will be requested to submit an amendment with a reallocation of the budget to cover the costs required for the online implementation of the action.

Question 14: *Can the budget beyond the staff costs be spent on expertise / consultancy / preparation of elements of services for BSOs?*

Answer: Experts, trainers, speakers or interpreters are part of budget line 3. Other cost, services.

Question 15: *Can the tasks of preparing the description of the sectoral specifics be (sub)contracted to national BSOs in EU and EaP countries that are not members of the BSO partnership (not part of consortium) but will be engaged as beneficiaries into the network about which the BSO Partnership will take care?*

Answer: Subcontracting is not possible for a core activity.

Question 16: *Could you please bring an example of cases in which lump sums for final beneficiaries could be used?*

Answer: Example – in the B2B matching, a BSOs Partnership has to ensure the travelling of 10 SMEs to a B2B meeting in Italy. On the budget item 1.2.1 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary SMEs, the applicant will introduce the lump sum of 180 euro/day x 2 or 3 days. For the travel cost 2.3 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary SMEs, the applicant will introduce the lump sum 450 euro/day x 10 (the number of the SMEs participating in this activity). On sheet 2, Justification of the budget, the applicant will need to explain the travel from where to where, who are the participants and the number of days allocated to this travel.

Question 17: *Can the usual wage rates be reasonably increased for EaP staff engaged in this project, taking into account the higher requirements to skills and complexity of tasks that those typically performed by BSOs on the national scale?*

Answer: The applicant should check the Eligible direct cost, that states "the cost of staff assigned to the action, corresponding to actual gross salaries including social security charges and other remuneration-related costs; salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies);"

However, in the EU4BCC grant contract, it will be used sheet 3. DRC (Staff daily rate calculation), where the staff engaged in the action should provide all the details and supporting documents for the DRC 2020 used on the budget and afterwards on the expenditure report.

Question 18: *Can EaP staff possess smaller experience than described in the call, provided that the leadership roles will be taken by EU staff fully corresponding to requirements?*

Answer: All staff members proposed by the BSOs partnership must meet the call requirements according to the responsibilities of the BSOs involved in the partnership.

Question 19: *Is the experience of managers counted only via full calendar years of employment, or will additional experience of work via project be added to the staff' track record?*

Answer: The experience is counted by years of employment and responsibilities on the organisation.

Question 20: *In the budget table (Part B), in the line "1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff) according to sheet 3 DRC (Daily Rate Calculation)" the data is already prefilled and is automatically counted in for the calculation of the line "Subtotal Human Resources". However, to our understanding, this line should either include no data, or should include the sum of lines 1.1.1-1.1.N and then should not be automatically summed up with the sublines 1.1.N. Please confirm.*

Answer: Sheet 3.DRC is already prefilled to give an example. The applicant should fill in all the orange boxes where necessary and specify all the other component of the salaries under 'e', 'f' etc. Moreover, the applicant should copy and fill in the same tab for each member of the staff allocated on the action, inserted in part 1 Budget of the action - 1.1 Human resources, and describe the main responsibilities and the days or hours allocated to the action on the sheet 2. Justification of the budget.

Question 21: *In which budget section should the "Participation in EUROCHAMBERs' training activities (travel and accommodation costs)" be planned ("a lump sum of 1500 EUR"*2 persons*2 visits) – in the travel section, per diem section, or splitted?*

Answer: The participation in EUROCHAMBRES' activities must be divided into two different budget categories 1.2.1 Abroad (staff assigned to the action) staff actual cost for the per diem/ daily allowance and 2.1. International travel EU-EaP staff or 2.1. International travel EaP-EU staff depending on from where the travel will take place.

Question 22: *Which rules for budget lines reallocation may be applied without a need to approve this reallocation with EUROCHAMBERs (i.e. in case of smaller or bigger flight prices but cheaper accommodation)?*

Answer: If the project is granted, the rule of 10% of the budget transfer between the budget heading will be applicable. However, more information will be offered in the training of the beneficiary and rules for reporting and implementing manuals are foreseen.

Question 23: *Can the lead contractor manage the whole budget, including the costs of staff of the co-applicant(s) and travel costs of all involved BSOs and SMEs from EU and EaP?*

Answer: Applicants are invited to submit balanced proposals regarding the repartition of the activities and the budget between the consortium partners.

Question 24: *Prior to the transfer of any funds to [National] co-applicant and implementation of activities, the project will need to pass the procedure of 'international technical assistance' registration at the Ministry of Economy of [Country], which may take up to several months. In case of a negative or delayed decision on registration, will activities be allowed to be performed under direct contracts of service concluded between the lead contractor and the staff of co-applicant?*

Answer: The window for starting the activity can be of 5 months, as explained in the Guideline:
If following the evaluation procedure (see infra section 2. Item 7) the BSOs partnership signs a grant contract with EUROCHAMBRES, the implementation of the action must start within 5 months from the date of signature of the grant contract. If the starting date of the action does not take place within this 5 month time period, EUROCHAMBRES will terminate the grant contract on that ground. The amount of the grant will be used to finance a new call for proposals (study visits or B2B matchings.)

In case of a negative or delayed decision, the Grant contract will be terminated. No other option is foreseen and core activities cannot be subcontracted.

Question 25: *Are incidentals considered as eligible costs?*

Answer: Please see the Eligible direct costs:

- the cost of staff assigned to the action, corresponding to actual gross salaries including social security charges and other remuneration-related costs; salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies);
- travel and subsistence costs for staff taking part in the action, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies) nor the rates published by the European Commission at the time of such mission if reimbursed on the basis of incurred costs;
- travel and subsistence costs for other persons taking part in the action (final beneficiaries BSOs and SMEs owners), provided they do not exceed the lump sum indicated in Annex B Sheet 5- Per Diems;
- costs entailed by contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of the action;
- costs deriving directly from the requirements of the contract (dissemination of information, evaluation specific to the action, certified translations, reproducing, insurance, etc.);
- duties, taxes and charges, including VAT, paid and not recoverable by the beneficiaries.

Question 26: *Is coverage of membership fees for BSOs in international networks for one or two years considered as eligible costs?*

Answer: No, this kind of cost is not directly linked with the objective of the action; please see the Ineligible costs.

Question 27: *Is coverage of membership fees for SMEs in national BSOs for one or two years considered as eligible costs?*

Answer: No, this kind of cost is not directly linked with the objective of the action; please see the Ineligible costs.

Question 28: *Can payment for one of the existing certification labels be considered as eligible costs?*

Answer: The applicant should specify the typology of the action, Twinnings, B2B matching or Study visits, where this activity is envisaged.

Strictly referring to the existing certificate, the applicant should consider that as a general rule, in EU Grant Projects, the eligibility of the cost starts from the signature of the contract. All costs reported before the signature of the contract are not eligible.

Question 29: *Concerning Part B - "budget for the action": do we need to create two different tables (one for each partner) or can we list all the budget items in one table and specify which partner will be responsible for it?*

Answer: A BSOs partnership should send only one budget form correctly filled in. The budget of the action must be created by the lead applicant and contain the forecast of the budget of all the partners involved in the consortium.

Question 30: *Concerning the Budget of Action and the line " 1.2.1 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary SMEs" and the answer n.16 (budget category) already published on web site in FAQs: in a study visit action, the calculation to be included into this line is related to both delegations or to just the abroad delegation? In other terms if we have a study visit to Italy with a group of beneficiaries composed by 8 EaP beneficiaries (between SMEs* *and BSOs) and 8 Italian x 3 days, we have to write down 8x3x180,00 or 16x3x180,00? And then when the study visit will take place in Belarus we have to write down again 8x3x133,00 or 16x3x133,00 ?*

Answer: Example – one of the activities of the study visit involves the travelling of 8 SMEs and BSOs from Belarus to Italy. On the budget item 1.2.1 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary (SMEs and BSOs), the applicant will introduce the lump sum of 180 euro/day for Italy x 3 days x 8 participants (i.e. the number of final beneficiaries travelling). For the travel cost 2.3 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary (SMEs and BSOs), the applicant will introduce the lump sum 450 euro/day x 8 (the number of the SMEs and BSOs participating in this activity). On sheet 2, Justification of the budget, the applicant will need to explain the travel from where to where, who are the participants and the number of days allocated to this travel.

For the remaining participants (from Italy to Belarus), the applicants will have to insert - on the budget item 1.2.1 Seminar/conference participants (SMEs and BSOs) - the lump sum 133 euro/day for Belarus x Number of days X Number of participants. For the travel cost 2.3 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary (SMEs and BSOs), the applicant will introduce the lump sum 450 euro/day x Number of participants. You can insert new lines where needed.

Question 31: *Can you provide a structure for the Budget article "Staff Cost".*

For Instance:
Staff cost, including
-Salary
-Travel and accommodation of staff members (internal and external), etc.

Answer: The budget of the action have a predefined structure . However, under the budget line 'Human Resources' the applicant should indicate salaries and per diems.

Budget for the Action 1	Unit 7	# of units	Unit value (in EUR)	Total Cost (in EUR)
1. Human Resources			**daily**	
1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff) according with the sheet 3 DRC (Daily Rate Calculation)	day	5	100	500
1.1.1 NAME SURNAME Position in the project / Partner 1	day	18	900	16200
1.1.2 NAME SURNAME Position in the project / Partner x	day	1	700	700
1.1.3	day	12	300	3600
1.1.4	day	10		0
1.1.5				
1.1.6				
1.1.7				
1.1.8				
Subtotal Human Resources		***MAX 40% (max. 24.000,00)***		**21000**
1.2 Per diems for missions/travel				
1.2.1 Abroad (staff assigned to the Action) staff actual cost	Per diem	20	200	4000
1.2.1 Seminar/conference participants final beneficiary SMEs	lump sum	50	150	7500
Subtotal Per Diem				**11500**

Question 32: *We have a lead applicant from the EU and a co-applicant from the EaP region. The lead applicant will subcontract some small activity, so we will be 2 applicants and one subcontractor.*
Are we obliged to have another subcontractor from EAP as well, or the rule of the equal partners from both regions only counts for applicants?

Answer: The rule of equal partners form EU and EaP countries applies only to the BSOs partnership. Please remember that the members of a BSOs partnership cannot be also subcontractors in the action and that core tasks cannot be subcontracted. Also, please consider that in sheet 2. Justification of the budget you will need to justify the subcontracting and make the correlation with your Description of the Action.

Question 33: *We are not eligible to be a co-applicant based on the turnover. Can we be sub-contractor for the grantees, in order to implement some part of the project?*

Answer: BSOs partnerships are allowed to sub-contract part of the action, however, they must ensure the following conditions are complied with:

- subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action,
- recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and is necessary for its implementation,
- the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget,
- any recourse to subcontracting, if not foreseen in the provisional budget), shall be communicated without delay to the Project coordinator for approval.

Question 34: *Can a proposed staff member be an employee of an applicant's entirely owned inhouse company? There is an agreement by which inhouse company provides personal only to the applicant (chamber). In Erasmus+ project these employees are allowed as staff.*

Answer: This project follows the rules of PRAG and not Erasmus +. All proposed staff members need to have a direct employment contract within the organisations they represent.

Question 35: *Our a chamber of commerce was born on January 2021, so we can't provide financial statements of the last two years. It replaced other chambers as a result of the Italian law n 219, 25th November 2016 and the subsequent Ministry of Economic Development's Decree 16 February 2018 that reordered the system of the Chamber of commerce in the entire territory of Italy. Can we anyway be lead partner or co applicant? We can provide the balance of the Chamber that we replaced?*

Answer: Please consult first with your legal department regarding the eligibility criteria, since for us is not possible to assess your eligibility criteria without seeing proper documentation. However, please consider that all applicants must be able to provide the financial statements of the last two years.

Question 36: *Can a participant to a study visit, part of the quantity of the milestone indicator, support with its own funds the expenses or must be included as beneficiary?*

Answer: All BSOs and SMEs participating in study visits should be considered as final beneficiaries and the relevant expenses (up to the maximum amount indicated in tab 5 of the budget) should be covered by the action.

Question 37: *Can the group of study visitors be enlarged to other SMEs or BSOs, out of the quantity of the milestone indicator, that will cover by itself the expenses?*

Answer: Yes, the group of the participants in the action can be bigger than the one presented in the guidelines, however, all BSOs and SMEs participating in study visits should be foreseen in the budget (up to the maximum amount indicated in tab 5. Per Diems).

Question 38 (a reference to question 35)*: Can we please check with you these eligibility criteria by sending you all the documents we have?*

Answer: EU4BCC team is not allowed to provide feedback on the individual cases and cannot check the applicant's eligibility before the actual evaluation of proposals starts.

Question 39: *Our chamber is formed by two chambers. Do we have to insert the budget data by summing up those of both chambers, or is it enough only of one chamber if they already meet the requirements?*

Answer: Each applicant (lead or co-applicant) should send financial turnovers as one entity. The applicant should check with its financial and legal departments about what financial information is related to this entity.

Question 40: *Is it possible to not account for the project staff costs? It means that all the action will be developed by employees of the BSOs partnership, but their cost will not be accounted for the project. This answer could be positive because the 40% limit of staff cost is a superior limit, suggesting that there is no inferior limit. This decision has to be taken into consideration because of the bureaucratic problems transferring the funds to the co-applicant (public BSO).*

Answer: Please take in consideration the general principle of eligible cost in EU funded projects, that states that the actual costs are actually incurred by the beneficiary and which meet the following criteria:

a) they are incurred within the implementation period, with the exception of costs relating to the request for payment of the balance and the corresponding supporting documents.
b) they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action.
c) they are incurred in connection with the action as described in the Description of the Action and are necessary for its implementation;

d**) they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular they are recorded in the beneficiary's accounting records and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices**;

Considering, the above paragraph all the cost of the project should be encoded on the accountancy of each beneficiary of the action that declared the cost.

Question 41: *If staff cost, in part B, cannot be zero, how, in case of approval of the proposal, the funds for staff cost given by Eurochambres to the lead applicant have to be transferred to the lead applicant (to cover its salaries), on the basis of which fiscal/commercial document?*

Answer: According with the conditions of the call, the funds will be transferred to the account number provided on the financial identification form (Annex 7, Part C). Payments shall be made as follows :

a) An initial pre-financing payment of EUR representing 40% of EUROCHAMBRES' contribution upon receipt of the Coordinator's request of payment.

b) An interim payment of 30% of the provisional budget upon receipt and approval by EUROCHAMBRES of the technical and financial report proving that the BSO partnership has spent at least 90% of the pre-financing instalment.

c) The balance payment will be made within 60 working days following EUROCHAMBRES' approval of the final technical and financial reports.

The lead applicant will transfer funds to co-applicant(s) upon the basis of a bilateral agreement they should sign in case the proposal is retained for granting.

Question 42*: There is a misunderstanding regarding the limit of the 40% of the staff costs. While in the excel file of Part B the 40% is only referring to the human resources, in page 27 of the call for proposals text says: "Staff costs including travel and accommodation costs represent a maximum of 40% of the provisional budget". Should the travel and accommodation costs to the BSOs partnerships to the study visits countries and the visits to Brussels be considered as part of this 40% or just the human resources?*

Answer: Subtotal Human Resources (40%) includes only salaries.

Question 43: *In the situation of our Local Chamber, the accountancy staff members are part of the Regional Chamber. Due to regionalisation, some transversal services are common for all the Chambers of the region (IT, Human Resources, Financial). That means that the accountants are paid by the Regional Chamber, but they work for all the local Chambers. Can we consider this staff as part of the action staff members?*

Answer: If the person assigned to the action have an ongoing employment contract with one of the organization part of the project it is possible, however it is recommendable that you will check all this eligibility criteria with your legal department since the national law may differ from country to country.

Question 44*: On page 6 of the call text it says, "For BSOs partnership visits to Brussels (min 2), € 1.500 per person should be foreseen for the travel and accommodation costs. At least 2 representatives of the BSOs partnership should take part in these visits".*

*Does it mean to include at least: 1.500*2 people* 2 trips=6.000 euros?*

Answer: No, the 1500 euro refers to a minimum amount for two travels in EUROCHAMBRES activities, please see the calculation explained in question 21 (Budget, FAQs).

***Question 45:** As 1,500 euro travel and accommodation costs for visits to Brussels, is considered as a lump sum, we do not understand the response given to question 21 (Budget of the FAQs):*

*"Q21. In which budget section should the "Participation in EUROCHAMBERs' training activities (travel and accommodation costs)" be planned ("a lump sum of 1500 EUR"*2 persons*2 visits) – in the travel section, per diem section, or splitted?*

Answer: The participation in EUROCHAMBRES' activities must be divided into two different budget categories 1.2.1 Abroad (staff assigned to the action) staff actual cost for the per diem/ daily allowance and 2.1. International travel EU-EaP staff or 2.1. International travel EaP-EU staff depending on from where the travel will take place"

Should not this be included as only one line per beneficiary?" If it must be splitted into two lines, can you please specify the values of the breakdown between 1.2.1 and 2.1?" Moreover, for those travelling from EU to EU it should be another line for "International travel EU-EU staff". For example, in our case, we would travel from France to Brussels.

Answer: As indicated in question 21 (Budget, FAQs), 1,500 euro needs to be divided into two categories, between per-diems (1.2.1 Abroad (staff assigned to the action) staff actual cost for the per diem/ daily allowance) and travel (for EU to EU travel, the applicant can indicate 2.2 Local Transportation (intra EU staff). However please take in consideration that the budget is an estimation, the actual cost incurred will be reimbursed.

***Question 46**: Travel and accommodation of staff costs shall be based on actual costs. Therefore, in the case of the flights for the BSOs partnership staff members, can we allocate 600 euros per flight? This point raises some doubts seeing that in the case of the final beneficiaries (BSO and SMEs) this amount must be 450 euros/flight maximum. Please, could you clarify this?*

Answer: The applicant can indicate average costs in the budget for staff travel and accommodation; however, only actually occurred travel and accommodation costs will be applied and reimbursed.

***Question 47:** Can a staff member from the final beneficiaries (BSO and/or SMEs) not being an owner participate in the study visit? For instance, in the case of SMEs, the Director of Sales or the Export Director"?*

Answer: The participation in Study Visits is not limited to the BSOs/SMEs owners. However, we highly recommend participation from the owners or "high hierarchy employees": CEOs, Managing Directors, etc. or department specific managers (for instance if they foresee to obtain a new marketing plan, the marketing manager / specialist / expert should take part in the action).

Thank you for your time and look forward to cooperating with you!

EU4Business: Connecting Companies Team

EUROCHAMBRES