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European Union



Contracting Authority: EUROCHAMBRES
EU4Business: Connecting Companies Project
Reference: ENI/2019/411-865

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Selection of Assessors to Evaluate

Business Support Organisations Grant applications

Deadline for submission¹ of applications:

25 September 2021 at 17:00 (Brussels time)



¹ Submission should be done by email to EU4BCC address: eu4bcc@eurochambres.eu inserting "Experts/assessors ENI/2019/411-865" in the subject of the email.



CALL FOR TENDERS - TERMS OF REFERENCES

1 - EU4BUSINESS: CONNECTING COMPANIES (EU4BCC)

1.1 BACKGROUND

Boosting sustainable economic development and supporting job creation is at the heart of the EU's contribution to stabilising its neighbourhood. In 2009 the EU launched the **Eastern Partnership** (EaP), (https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership_en), a joint policy initiative which aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

In the past years, EaP countries have achieved significant progress in reforming their economies and integrating into the global marketplace. However, many SMEs in the region remain tied to low value-added sectors and still do not contribute as they could to job creation and export. There is a need to support them to increase their share in value-added production and employment rates, aiming in particular at increasing the export potential of SMEs.

In this context, the European Commission launched the EU4Business initiative (<http://www.eu4business.eu/>) that helps SMEs in the six countries of the EaP region to realise their full potential and boost economic growth. This action covers all EU activities supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the EaP countries. EU4Business programmes are implemented through partner organisations identified through a call for proposals.

1.2 ABOUT EU4BCC PROJECT

Within the EU4Business initiative, EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, signed a grant contract n° ENI/2019/411-865 in 2019 to implement the project 'EU4Business: Connecting Companies' (EU4BCC).

This project is directly in line with EUROCHAMBRES' statutory objectives: to improve the general conditions in which businesses operate, to facilitate access to markets within and beyond the EU and to ensure the availability of human, financial and natural resources.

1.2.1 EU4BCC global objective is to support sustainable economic development and job creation in the EaP countries by helping SMEs grow - especially by promoting trade, encouraging inward investment and fostering business links with companies in the EU.

1.2.2 EU4BCC specific objective is to strengthen the capacity of EaP BSOs and local business associations in promoting trade relations with the EU through 59 actions to be implemented in five economic sectors: i) Bio/organic Food ii) Wine iii) Tourism iv) Textiles v) Creative Industries.

1.2.3 Bodies involved in the implementation of the EU4BCC

To achieve its target, EU4BCC will rely on:

- **Project Advisory Board (PAB)** will supervise the project and is composed of senior representatives from EUROCHAMBRES, DG NEAR, etc.
- **Board of Sectorial Experts (BSE)** is in charge of the elaboration of a long-term strategy to promote investment, trade relations and business cooperation between the two regions.
- **Sectorial Consortium (SC)** is a set-up for each identified sector. It is composed of EU Chambers of Commerce and EaP Chambers of Commerce. The SC is in charge of implementing the BSE recommendations and coordinating and monitoring the actions performed by the Business Support Organisations.

- **Business Support organisations (BSOs):** Selected BSOs will be in charge of implementing the actions: twinning, B2B matchings, study visits.

1.2.4 Implementation of an Action

Actions can be of three types: twinnings, B2B matchings, study visits.

It will be jointly implemented by **partnerships composed of EU and EaP BSOs called a BSOs Partnership.**

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.

Therefore, a **BSOs Partnership** should comply with the following requirements:

- EU BSOs and EaP BSOs interested to implement the action have to team up to present a joint proposal (in that case, the lead applicant is automatically the EU BSO).
- The BSOs partnership must be composed of a balanced number of partners: half from the EaP Countries, **namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**, and the other half from the Member States of the European Union. i.e. if the BSOs partnership is composed of several EU and EaP co-applicants, the BSOs partnership should be composed of an equal number of EU BSOs and EaP BSOs - EU lead applicant included).
- Consequently, a BSOs partnership should be composed of at least one EU lead applicant and one EaP co-applicant.
- The same BSO can apply to receive funds for a maximum of 2 actions from a max of 2 sectors (separate proposals to be submitted for each type of the actions). If two proposals are presented under the same call and sector, they cannot refer to the same action (i.e., two proposals can be submitted for one study visit and one twinning in the same sector or in 2 different sectors).
- Members of the concerned Sectorial Consortium involved in the implementation of action in any selected sector cannot be part of a BSOs partnership.

Actions should be implemented from 1 December 2021 till May 2022 bearing in mind that the BSOs partnerships will have to submit to EUROCHAMBRES their final report the action by 15 June 2022.

1.2.5 Call for proposals to identify BSOs partnerships

EUROCHAMBRES published a call for proposals on the 1st of July 2021 in order to identify, for each economic sector, a partnership of EU and EaP Business Support Organisations having a keen and common interest in elaborating, managing and implementing actions under the supervision of the relevant Sectorial Consortium.

The extract of the guidelines for applicants (Annex1) provide detailed information regarding the call

- the eligibility criteria: legal, financial and technical capacity of the applicants
- the number of actions allocated to each sector
- the contents of each activity
- the goals to be achieved per activity
- the indicators to be achieved per activity
- the management required to manage the action

The timeline for the selection of the BSOs Partnerships is as follows

- Deadline for submission of the BSOs Partnerships' full applications: 30 September 2021
- Information to the lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications: up to 30 October 2021
- Notification of the award: 15/11/2021 (indicative)
- Grant contract signature: 4th week of November 2021
- Timeframe to implement the action: between 1st December 2021 to 31st May 2022

1.2.6 Financing of the actions

Each selected BSOs Partnership applying for the implementation of action should present a maximum provisional budget of € 60.000.

EUROCHAMBRES will finance 95% of the provisional budget of the action, the remaining 5% must be funded by the BSOs partnership. The actual grant will be based on the actual costs incurred during the action.

2. Purpose of the call for tenders

The number of applications in line with the eligibility criteria should be approximately 22 to 30.

The purpose of this call for tenders is to identify potential assessors having expertise in EU funded projects and in evaluating applications. Selected assessors should be **available during the evaluation period scheduled to take place from 11 October 2021 to 11 November 2021**

The number of applications allocated to the assessors will indeed depend on:

- a) the number of applications in line with the eligibility criteria (administrative checks to be performed by EUROCHAMBRES)
- b) the number of selected assessors

The exact number of applications will be communicated to the selected assessors together with the notification of the award on 30 September 2021.

The different stages of the evaluation procedure and content of the assessor report are included in **Annex 3 – Extract from the call for proposals**.

3. Criteria of selection

- Candidates can be
 - Proposed by a Business Support Organisations, National Association of CCIs, Chambers of Commerce in general, Employers' Association, European Federations, organisations. The candidates:
 - should hold a senior position within the organisation
 - with sound experience in the implementation of European funded projects or
 - Individuals with the legal status of independent and VAT number, fulfilling the selection criteria.
- The organisation proposing the candidate should not be involved whatsoever in the EU4BCC project. This means that the organisation cannot be involved in
 - the Sectorial Consortium
 - a BSOs partnership applying for a grant to implement an action.
- Candidates must
 - Have at least 5 years of proven expertise in the EU project cycle

- Project conception
- Project implementation
- Be able to provide a list of EU contracts she/he was involved in
- Have expertise in assessing call for proposals or call for tenders.

4. Commitments of the applicant

- The candidate will undertake to assess the application forms with impartiality and treat all the information contained in the applications as strictly confidential. Any information related to the assessment should not be transmitted to third parties. This commitment will be included in the service contract.
- The organisation proposing a candidate will be requested to sign a declaration of honour certifying that it is not involved whatsoever in the EU4BCC project and is not part of any BSOs Partnerships applying for a grant to implement an action. (**Annex 1 – Declaration of honour**).
- A template of the service contract will be sent as soon as the evaluator(s) is/are selected and the call for proposals is closed.

5. Commitments of EUROCHAMBRES

EUROCHAMBRES undertakes to provide the evaluator with all supporting documents needed to perform the assignment (such as: the grid, the evaluation reporting template, etc.).

EUROCHAMBRES undertakes to process the candidate data in line with the provisions of the GDPR, which provides the following:

- the company/organisation must collect and process **only the personal data that is necessary to fulfil that purpose** ('data minimisation');
- the company/organisation must ensure the personal data is accurate and up-to-date, having regard to the purposes for which it is processed, and correct it if not ('accuracy');
- the company /organisation can't further use the personal data for other purposes that are not **compatible** with the original purpose;
- the company/organisation must ensure that personal data is **stored for no longer than necessary** for the purposes for which it was collected ('storage limitation').

6. Number of BSOs Partnership applications to be assessed, financial arrangement and modalities of payment

6.1. The number of BSO applications allocated to each assessor will depend on i) the number of applications in line with the selection criteria ii) the number of assessors.

6.2 A service contract between EUROCHAMBRES and the assessor will indicate the number of applications allocated to him.

6.3 Once all the evaluations is completed, the assessor(s) will send own evaluation report and evaluation grid.

6.4 The evaluator is expected to assess one proposal per day (technical and financial parts of the proposal only).

EUROCHAMBRES will perform the administrative and legal checks for all the proposals received.

6.5 A fee of **€ 400 (VAT excluded)** per day will be paid to the entity proposing the assessor for each evaluation report completed in line with the guidelines of this Terms of Reference and within the timeframe. Each report will need to be duly signed by the evaluator. An incomplete evaluation report will be rejected by EUROCHAMBRES and therefore could not be invoiced to EUROCHAMBRES.

6.6 Fees, based on the number of evaluation reports approved by EUROCHAMBRES and therefore on the number of days spent for the final selection of the BSOs partnerships, will be invoiced by the assessor(s) after finalising the evaluations and will be paid within 30 days after reception of the invoice.

7. Evaluation period

The evaluator(s) will start to assess the application forms by 11 October 2021 and send her /his final recommendation for the preselection of BSOs by 11 November 2021, 13.00, at the very latest.

8. Final selection of the BSOs Partnership

The Selection Committee will meet on 11 October 2021. Notification to the selected BSOs will be done on 15 November 2021 (indicative date). A representative of the European Commission will be invited to attend the meeting.

9. Timeline

The timeline for this call for tenders is as follows (indicative):

- Publication of the tenders: Friday 28 August
- Deadline for submission: 25 September
- Selection committee: 27 September 2021
- Notification of the award: 30 September
- Signature of the service contract: 7 October 2021 (and indication of the number of applications to be assessed)
- Evaluation period from 11 October 2021 to 11 November 13.00. Final selection of BSOs: 12 November 2021. Notification of BSOs: 15 November 2021

10. How to apply

Tender offers should include:

- the CV of the candidate,
- the evidence of her/his expertise as required in the selection criteria,
- where applicable, the declaration of honour of the entity proposing the candidate,
- the confirmation of the candidate indicating availability for the evaluation period indicated at point 7 above and the number of available days.

Tenders should be sent by email at the following email address eu4bcc@eurochambres.eu by 25 September 17.00 (Brussels time) at the latest. Tenderers should use the following subject when sending the application email: Experts/assessors ENI/2019/411-865.

EU4BCC
BSO Partnerships Application forms
Guidelines
Evaluation procedure & Evaluation reports

1. Preliminary remarks

The opening of the BSOs Partnerships application forms and administrative checks will be performed by EUROCHAMBRES.

EUROCHAMBRES will check if:

1. all the legal, technical and financial documents as requested in Part C application form have been provided ([see Annex 2](#))
2. if any of the BSOs member of a Partnership is not involved in any of the 5 Sectorial consortia. In such cases, their application is ineligible.
3. If the examination of documents reveals the legal and financial eligibility criteria are not met, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

ONLY THE APPLICATIONS HAVING PASSED STAGE 1 WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE ASSESSOR WHO WILL PURSUE THE EVALUATION PROCEDURE

2. Framework of the overall evaluation process

Application forms will therefore be evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and co-applicants. They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid.

There are two types of evaluation criteria: BSOs Partnerships capacity to implement the action and quality of the proposal criteria:

Capacity to implement the action criteria includes the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action.

Quality of the proposal criteria helps to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

The assessor will assess the application form according to the instructions given to the applicants (Guidelines for applicants and template of the full applications forms composed of Part A - Description of the Action , Part B - Budget, Part C - legal, financial and technical requirements) and in accordance with the instructions received from EUROCHAMBRES.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

- Each proposal should be evaluated based on its own merits, and not in comparison with other proposals.
- The evaluator should issue concise, pertinent and well-justified comments for each subsection of the evaluation table, with a formulation that can be communicated directly to the lead applicant, if requested.
- The evaluation must be consistent with the comments and the score allocated to the application forms.

- Strong and weak points should be mentioned. In particular, the comments should not consist mainly of a summary of the proposal but should offer a brief critical analysis according to the different questions of the evaluation table.
- If the evaluator has any doubt about the score assigned to the applicants, he / she must communicate his / her reservations to the Evaluation Committee, who will advise him / her.
- Each evaluation table will be signed and dated by the evaluator who made the evaluation.
- Given that the deadline for the BSOs partnerships to submit the proposals is set for 30 September 2021, EUROCHAMBRES does not know at the time of the publication of the present call for tenders the total number of BSOs Partnership which will apply.
- The assessor(s) will evaluate between 10 and 22 applications.
- The assessor(s) will send evaluation reports every time she / he has completed 5 reports.
- When all the application forms will be evaluated, the assessor will have to send to EUROCHAMBRES her/his recommendations for the preselection of BSOs Partnerships.

3. Evaluation procedure

To prepare her/his report, the assessor will have to go through the following steps:

3.1 Evaluation of the concept note

The concept notes will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Part A of the application form.

Concept note evaluation grid

1. Relevance of the action	30
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants?	5
1.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
1.3 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices, etc.)?	5
1.4 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, BSOs and SMEs from a local rural area(if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5
1.5 Does the proposal identify the needs and constraints of target groups and final beneficiaries?	5
1.6 Are all the relevant KPIs mentioned in the proposal and addressed? How will the partnership reach them? How relevant are the activities proposed?	5
2. Design of the action	20
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results?	5

2.2 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5
2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)? Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results of the action (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5
2.4 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5
Total Score	50

Only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for the next steps of the evaluation procedure.

3.2 Evaluation of the Provisional Budget

The check of the provisional budget will take into account the following:

- Budget has been filed in using the correct template
- Worksheet # 1 has been correctly filled in
- Worksheet # 2 has been correctly filled in
- Worksheet # 4 has been correctly filled in
- Eligible costs are in line with the requirements mentioned in Section 2.1 of the present guidelines
- Staff costs of 40% of the provisional budget
- The provisional budget includes a lump sum of €1.500,00 for each participant taking part in training activities
- The provisional budget is realistic and cost-effective.

Budget compliance with the template application form

	Yes	No
Budget has been filed in using the correct template		
Worksheet # 1 has been correctly filled in		
Worksheet # 2 has been correctly filled in		
Worksheet # 4 has been correctly filled in		
Eligible costs are in line with the requirements mentioned in Section 2, points 2.1 and 3.2 of the present guidelines		
Staff costs represent a maximum of 40% of the provisional budget		
The provisional budget includes a lump sum of €1.500,00 for each participant taking part in training activities (see <i>important consideration in Section 2, point 3.1</i> of the guidelines)		
The provisional budget is realistic and cost-effective.		

3.3 Evaluation of the technical application (description of the action)

The assessor will check if the proposal addresses the following key elements:

- needs in the sector are identified
- potential participants are clearly pre-identified
- both partners are involved in the action
- the activities to be performed are clear
- the timetable is realistic
- the expected results of the action are quantified and sustainable (for instance, the number of business opportunities opened up by the contracts signed between EaP and EU SMEs, etc.)
- indicators are identified and achievable
- indicators correspond to the logical framework indicators
- the impact has quantitative, measurable and verifiable data
- means of verification are indicated
- visibility actions are foreseen (including a list of the tools to be used, justification on how activities will reach the identified target groups, etc.)
- critical risks and mitigation plan is indicated
- gender balance is taken into account
- rural/urban area balance is also considered when selecting the BSOs and/or SMEs to involve.

Further general elements should be indicated in a more general vision, considering that the goal of the activities should be to foster:

- trade between Member States of the EU and EaP countries;
- growth for the SMEs;
- institutional building, between CCIs and BSOs, best practices, benchmarking cooperation, contracts between companies;
- transfer of know-how, transfer of technology, synergies with existing business networks;
- job creation and poverty reduction.

The evaluation table of the full application is divided into sections and subsections.

The first section contains the selection criteria that allow evaluating the financial, professional and operational capacity of the applicants to execute the proposed action. Applicants and their co-applicant(s) must possess the professional competencies and qualifications necessary to carry out the proposed project. The applicants must also have stable and sufficient funding sources to carry out their activities throughout the project's validity period.

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation grid

CRITERIA GRID FOR THE FULL APPLICATION FORM		Max. points
1. Financial and operational capacity		15
1.1. Do the applicants and their co-applicants have sufficient technical expertise in the sector? (in particular, knowledge of the issues to be addressed) TOPICS OF PROJECTS (support to BSOs, sectorial approach).	3	
1.2. Do the applicants and their co-applicants have sufficient management capacity (including staff, equipment and capacity to manage the budget of the action)?	5	

1.3. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of funding? Ref. is made to positive Financial Statements (balance sheets and profit&loss accounts) in each of the last two years.	5
1.4. Do both (or all) applicants have stable equity ratio? Ref. is made to the statement of turnover.	2
2. Relevance of the action	30
Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation (step 1)	
3. Effectiveness and feasibility of the action	20
3.1 Are the proposed activities appropriate, practical and in line with the objectives and expected results of the action? Is the plan to reach the expected results clear and achievable? Does the proposal mention how it will improve the situation of the final recipients and beneficiaries? Is the choice of activities well justified and will enable them to achieve the expected results? Are they effective and viable? Does the proposal indicate any (proven) methodology that facilitates the implementation of the action?	5
3.2. Is the organisation and level of participation of the applicant and co-applicants in the action satisfactory? Ref. is made to the organisational structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of the different actors (applicant, co-applicant and if they consider the participation of recipients or local authorities, etc.). • Team to manage the action, the roles staff has and the reasons why they have been assigned those roles. • Is there a contingency plan? • Is there any synergy with other projects, especially EU-funded initiatives? 	5
3.3. Is the activity plan clear and feasible? Ref. is made to the identification of the timing and actors involved in the action, as well as to the activity plan.	5
3.4. Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable performance indicators? Reference is made to the logical framework.	5
4. Sustainability of the action	10
4.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible effect on the target groups? Can the proposal have multiplier effects (including the possibility of reproducing and extending the results of the action and disseminating information)? Ref. is made to the impact and replicability of the action: quantitative, measurable and verifiable data and the possibility to replicate the results.	5
4.2 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? Is the proposal providing a table with critical risk analysis and mitigation measures?	5
5. Visibility and Communication plan towards BSOs and SMEs	5
5.1. Does the proposal provide a visibility and communication plan? How does the partnership intend to reach the target groups?	5
6. Budget cost-effectiveness of the action	20

6.1. Are the activities duly reflected in the budget? Ref. is made to the activities proposed and the allocated budget for those specific activities.	10
6.2 Is the relationship between estimated costs and expected results satisfactory? Ref. is made to the logical framework and relationship between the KPIs, means and the project objectives, and total budget.	10
TOTAL	100

The minimum threshold for the selection will be 70 points. Applications below said threshold will not be retained for funding and will not be part of the reserve list.

4. Evaluation report & final recommendations

For each BSOs Partnership application form, the assessor will provide detailed feedback on the:

- *capacity to implement the action criteria*
- *quality of the application*

Once all the evaluations of the applications are completed, the assessor should suggest to EUROCHAMBRES which applications could be preselected.

5. Provisional selection

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing ALL the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached and above the threshold indicated in the previous paragraph.

This table will be drawn up per sector, and the selection will be made taking into consideration the need for a balance between the types of actions per sector (i.e. if two applications have the same score, the one allowing for more balance between the financed actions will be granted as a priority).

In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list (until the end of the award procedure).

Once all the actions foreseen in one sector will be selected for granting and should there be any remaining funds, the specific amount of the surplus can be re-directed towards another sector, should there be actions on the reserve list which can be retained for funding in accordance with the above criteria (minimum threshold, table with ranking and balance between the types of actions).

The lead applicant of the proposal which has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by EUROCHAMBRES.

6. Final selection

After receiving the required clarifications (if needed), EUROCHAMBRES, together with the assessor(s) will make the final decision updating the list of provisional selection of proposals into the final list.

ANNEXES:

Annex 1 – Declaration of honour

Annex 2 – Application forms:

(A) Part A

(B) Part B

(C) Part C

Annex 3 – Extract from the call for proposals

Annex 4 – Logframe of the call for Proposals