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**COSME - Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs 2014-2020 -
Monitoring Report 2014**

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PART I *DETAILS OF COSME ACTIONS 2014*

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1. ACCESS TO FINANCE

1.1. LOAN GUARANTEE FACILITY (LGF) 1

The **Loan Guarantee Facility (LGF)** under COSME is the successor of the SME Guarantee Facility established under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme - CIP (2007 - 2013).

Based on the experience gained under CIP and in line with requirements formulated for financial instruments under the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom N° 966/2012 of October 2012) the terms and conditions for the COSME financial instruments have been adjusted.

Within the single EU debt financial instruments for EU enterprises' growth and R&I, **the LGF provides with:**

- **Counter-guarantees** and other risk sharing arrangements for guarantee schemes including, where appropriate, co-guarantees;
- **Direct guarantees** and other risk sharing arrangements for any other financial intermediaries meeting the eligibility criteria.

The implementation of the LGF is entrusted to the **European Investment Fund (EIF)**.

The **characteristics** of the LGF in the form of **capped (counter-) guarantees** are:

- Guarantees for debt financing (including via subordinated and participating loans, leasing or bank guarantees) which shall reduce the particular difficulties that viable SMEs face in accessing finance either due to their perceived high risk or their lack of sufficient available collateral;
- Up to an amount of EUR 150,000 for all types of SMEs (regardless of sector or size) will be eligible for financing under the LGF. Above the threshold financial intermediaries will have to verify that the SME is not RDI driven and therefore not eligible for financing under the Horizon 2020's SME & small midcaps debt financing window (InnovFin SME Guarantee Facility). As regards the level of the guarantee, the entrusted entity will provide guarantees to financial intermediaries which will cover a portion of the expected losses of a portfolio of newly generated, higher-risk SME transactions.
- The portfolios shall be composed of transactions which the financial intermediary would not have supported in the absence of the guarantee. The range of financial products which can be supported through the guarantees is intended to be broad so as not to discriminate amongst the SME population and to allow financial intermediaries to tailor products according to the specific needs of the market in which they operate.
- Individual guarantee agreements to be signed by the entrusted entity with a financial intermediary will have a maximum duration of 10 years, whereby it shall be permissible that individual financing transactions have maturities exceeding 10 years. Individual financing transactions must have a minimum duration of 12 months.

The **characteristics** of the LGF in the form of guarantees for **securitisation transactions** are:

- Guarantees for the mezzanine tranche of securitisation of SME debt finance portfolios, which are coupled with a contractual undertaking by the financial intermediary to build up new SME debt finance portfolios. The amount of this new debt financing shall be calculated in relation to the amount of the guaranteed portfolio risk. This amount and the period of time shall be negotiated individually with each originating institution by the entrusted entity.

¹ Further information is available as part of the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on financial instruments supported by the general budget according to Art.140.8 of the Financial Regulation as at 31 December 2014 – [COM\(2015\)565](#) and the accompanying Staff Working Document [SWD\(2015\)206](#)

The LGF is demand-driven meaning that the allocation of funding takes place based on the demand expressed by financial intermediaries also taking into account the need for a broad geographical distribution (e.g. through incentives to be provided from the Commission to the entrusted entity).

Relationship with Horizon 2020:

The LGF is part of the single EU debt financial instrument for EU enterprises' growth and research and innovation (R&I), together with the InnovFin SME Guarantee facility set up under the Horizon 2020 programme. The InnovFin SME Guarantee facility, which is also entrusted to the EIF for implementation, provides financing to SMEs and small midcaps with significant research, development and innovation (RDI) potential or investments in RDI activities, both with significant technological and financial risk provided that these are eligible under the innovation criteria as set out in the open call for expression of interest published for this facility.

Financial intermediaries are free to apply either for one or both facilities under COSME and Horizon 2020 in line with their business objectives and possibilities to reach the potential target group of the different facilities.

LGF contribution to the EU SME Initiative

The LGF may also contribute to the financial instruments to be deployed under the SME Initiative, a joint instrument combining EU funds available under COSME LGF and/or the InnovFin SME Guarantee facility under Horizon 2020 and ESIF resources in cooperation with EIF/EIF with a view to generate additional lending to SMEs in specific Member States. This contribution may take the form of uncapped portfolio guarantees or securitisation operations and cover the mezzanine tranche of the portfolio. The SME Initiative is conceived as an anti-crisis measure with budget commitments over 3 years (2014-2016).

RESULTS AND IMPACT

- **The Delegation Agreement entrusting the EIF** with the implementation of the LGF has been signed on 22 July 2014.
- The EIF has published in August 2014 a continuous **open call for expression of interest** (http://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/single_eu_debt_instrument/cosme-loan-facility-growth/index.htm) to which financial intermediaries may apply at any time until 30 September 2020.
- By the end of 2014, three guarantee agreements have been signed with three financial intermediaries located in Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom. It is expected that under these agreements, EUR 850.9 million of financing will be provided to around 13.000 SMEs.
- In terms of relevance of results and impact and based on cumulative implementation data as at the end of 2015, in anticipation of the monitoring report for 2015, more than 51 000 SMEs already received financing for almost EUR 1 300 million under the LGF, also thanks to the enhancement of the COSME LGF through additional risk-bearing capacity provided from the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) which was made available in July 2015. This particularly swift start of implementation, exceeding expectations and confirming the high market demand, shows that the LGF by providing financing to riskier SMEs that otherwise would not have had access to such financing, especially start-ups and smaller SMEs, has an important impact on the real economy in the EU and other participating countries of

the COSME programme.

- There was no LGF contribution to the SME Initiative in 2014.
- Furthermore, the SME Guarantee Facility (SMEG) under CIP, the predecessor of the LGF, continues to support SMEs as some SMEG financial intermediaries are still in the so-called “availability period” of their operation, during which time they can include new SME loans or leases in the guaranteed portfolio. In 2014, more than 56.000 SMEs received more than EUR 3 billion of financing supported by SMEG. Since its start, the SMEG has supported the provision of more than EUR 19 billion of financing to almost 368.000 SMEs.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

After the launch of the call for expression of interest in August 2014, the EIF as well as the Commission received positive feedback from relevant stakeholders on the usefulness of the instrument. This has been further confirmed by the very strong pipeline presented by the EIF to the Commission and available commitment appropriations were exhausted already towards the end of the first half of 2015.

As of September 2015, the EIF received 47 applications from 19 countries, 16 transactions have already been signed out of which 5 have been frontloaded thanks to the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI).²

SME Initiative:

In the course of 2015 two Member States signed up, namely Spain and Malta. Both decided to pool resources with Horizon 2020 in order to focus on the financing of innovative SMEs and small midcaps. It is expected that going forward more countries will join the SME Initiative and will decide to make use of COSME LGF resources either under Option 1 (uncapped guarantees) or under Option 2 (securitisation).

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The call for expression of interest is open until 30 September 2020. New agreements with financial intermediaries can be signed until 30 June 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

As of 31 December 2014, the total budget committed for the LGF amounted to EUR 89 129 526, out of which EUR 42 846 380 were committed by the EIF to financial intermediaries under three guarantee agreements. The remaining amount was committed in the first half of 2015.

INDICATORS

For the three operations signed with financial intermediaries in 2014, the volume of financing which will be made available to SMEs amounts to almost EUR 851 million, with an expected number of around 13.000 SMEs benefitting from financing.³

² As the resources made available under the LGF are not sufficient to satisfy market demand for the financing of SMEs, a second amendment of the COSME Delegation Agreement has been signed in July 2015, allowing for a combination of LGF resources with additional risk-bearing capacity under EFSI so as to avoid disruptions in signing transactions with financial intermediaries.

³ The 2014 indicators will be achieved at the end of the availability period of the underlying SME loan portfolios. The indicators refer to new SME loan portfolios built during the whole availability period of individual deals with financial intermediaries authorised in 2014.

Based on the overall 2014 budgetary commitments for the LGF (EUR 89 million), the expected leverage for the operations signed in 2014 is 1 to 10. This leverage is expected to increase significantly in 2015 as additional operations related to the 2014 LGF budgetary commitments will be signed throughout the year.

BENEFICIARIES

In line with Article 58.5 of the Financial Regulation, the EIF ensures appropriate annual ex post publication of information on recipients. For the LGF, this information is available on http://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/single_eu_debt_instrument/cosme-loan-facility-growth/index.htm.

Recipients as of 31 December 2014:

Country	Financial Intermediary	Address	Type of support	Budgetary allocation
Germany	LfA Förderbank Bayern on behalf of other Landesbanken	Königinstraße 17 80539 Munich	Portfolio Guarantee	EUR 3 825 000
Spain	Nuevo MicroBank S.A.U.	Juan Gris 10-18 planta 10, Torre Centro Complejo Torres Cerda 8014 Barcelona	Portfolio Guarantee	EUR 35 750 000
United Kingdom	Orange Money Ltd	39-40 North Road N7 9DP London	Portfolio Guarantee	GBP 2 200 000

1.2. EQUITY FACILITY FOR GROWTH (EFG) 4

The **Equity Facility for Growth (EFG)** is one of the successor instruments of the High Growth and Innovative SME Facility (GIF) established under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme - CIP (2007 - 2013). It succeeds the GIF2 window set up under GIF to cover expansion stage investments into SMEs.

Based on the experience gained under CIP and in line with requirements formulated for financial instruments under the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom N° 966/2012 of October 2012) the terms and conditions for the COSME financial instruments have been adjusted.

The implementation of the EFG is entrusted to the European Investment Fund (EIF).

Through the EFG risk capital **funds** can be supported **which invest into SMEs at the growth stage**, predominantly **on a cross-border basis**, or which help portfolio companies to grow beyond their national markets with a view to supporting the development of a self-sustainable pan-European risk capital market.

The **characteristics** of the **EFG** are:

- The entrusted entity shall make **direct investments** in intermediary risk capital funds providing investments **for SMEs typically in their expansion and growth stage**. These risk capital funds shall provide equity and mezzanine finance, such as subordinated or participating loans;
- **Investments** shall be **long-term**, normally involving 5 to 15 year positions, whereby the life of an investment shall not exceed 20 years;
- Investments may also be made into risk capital funds investing at the **seed, start-up and early stage in conjunction with the early-stage Equity Facility for R&I** (Research and Innovation) **under Horizon 2020** whereby the investment from EFG shall not exceed 20% of the total EU investment;
- In the case of multi-stage funds, the COSME EFG and the Horizon 2020 early-stage Equity Facility for R&I will contribute pro rata to the funding of the risk capital funds based on the fund's investment policy.

The EFG is demand-driven, meaning that the allocation of funding will take place based on the demand expressed by financial intermediaries also taking into account the need for a broad geographical distribution (e.g. through fee incentives which the Commission has provided to the entrusted entity).

The EFG is part of the single EU equity financial instrument for EU enterprises' growth and research and innovation (R&I), together with the Horizon 2020 early-stage equity facility (the 'InnovFin SME Venture Capital' facility). The InnovFin SME Venture Capital facility will focus on risk capital funds investing in seed, start-up and early-stage SMEs and small midcaps that are RDI-driven.

Financial intermediaries are free to apply either for one of the two facilities under COSME and Horizon 2020 or for both in line with the fund's investment policy. The InnovFin SME Venture Capital facility succeeds the GIF1 equity facility under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The Delegation Agreement entrusting the EIF with the implementation of the EFG was signed on 22 July 2014.

⁴ Further information is available as part of the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on financial instruments supported by the general budget according to Art.140.8 of the Financial Regulation as at 31 December 2014 – [COM\(2015\)565](#) and the accompanying Staff Working Document [SWD\(2015\)206](#)

A continuous open call for expression of interest has been published by the EIF (http://www.eif.org/what_we_do/equity/single_eu_equity_instrument/index.htm) to which financial intermediaries may apply at any time until 30 September 2020.

While the EIF screened a number of potential fund proposals for eligibility under the EFG, no due diligence process was completed at the end of the year. The first signatures of fund agreements are expected to take place in the second half of 2015.

In 2014, the GIF (High Growth and Innovative SME Facility) instrument continued to provide risk capital to SMEs, with more than EUR 288 million of equity finance mobilised to 112 SMEs. Since its start, the GIF has mobilised more than EUR 3 billion of equity finance to around 450 SMEs. This number will continue to rise for several years since many of the funds are still in the early part of their 5-year investment periods.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

According to relevant stakeholders, there is a significant shortage for risk capital investments in the market and the lack of equity finance in Europe is increasingly being recognised as a key bottleneck to the provision of further overall SME funding.

In this context, the EU equity instruments such as the EFG have an important role to play supporting SMEs and addressing market gaps or sub-optimal market situations, especially with respect to the 'access to finance' issue for early-stage enterprises, including in their expansion and growth phase.

The due diligence process for equity operations is however much more complex than the one required for the signature of guarantee agreements and needs more time. In addition, the fund-raising process takes also more time due to the involvement of various investors.

According to industry statistics fund-raising conditions remain very challenging, with the consequence that fund managers may not be able to raise the required private capital in the existing adverse market conditions to reach the first closing of the fund.

Five fund agreements have been signed by the end of 2015, out of which two relate to Growth and Expansion Stage funds and three to Multi-Stage funds, in combination with the InnovFin Equity Facility for Early Stage set up under Horizon 2020.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The call for expression of interest is open until 30 September 2020. New agreements with financial intermediaries can be signed until 31 December 2021.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

As of 31 December 2014, the total budget committed for the EFG amounted to EUR 51 657 588 that can be committed by the EIF to sign agreements until the 31 December 2021.

INDICATORS

It is expected that over the lifetime of the programme between 362 and 544 firms will receive risk capital investment with overall volume ranging from EUR 2.6 to EUR 4 billion.

The target leverage effect is expected to be in the 1:4 to 1:6 range over the lifetime of the programme.

BENEFICIARIES

In line with Article 58.5 of the Financial Regulation, the EIF ensures appropriate annual ex post publication of information on recipients. As no fund agreements have been signed with financial intermediaries in 2014, there is no such publication yet.

1.3. ACCOMPANYING ACTIONS

The budget committed in 2014 for the accompanying actions amounts to EUR 1 241 252 to deliver the following results:

Survey on SMEs access to finance

DG GROW and the European Central Bank (ECB) jointly run regular surveys on SMEs' access to finance. To limit the burden that data collection places on SMEs, requirements and resources have been pooled into a common framework for surveying the European SMEs.

A framework agreement for the performance of surveys on the access to finance of SMEs was signed with Panteia B.V. (the Netherlands) on 8 May 2014 for 4 years.

The 2014 Survey on the access to finance of enterprises (SAFE) provides information on the financial situation, financing needs, access to financing and expectations of SMEs in the six preceding months and comprises a sample of 17,000 firms across 30 countries.

EU's small businesses are increasingly optimistic about their growth prospects but many are still concerned about the lack of access to finance. Between April and September 2014, SMEs demands for financing were not always fulfilled - especially for smaller and younger companies.

The next survey was planned for October 2015. It was carried out in all EU Member States and in other countries participating in COSME. It targeted SME managers with a control group of large firms. The results are published on <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/safe> in December 2015 for the use of interested parties, including Member States, analysts, academia.

SAFE results are also widely used in the evidence-based policy context, in many Commission reports and analysis. It includes annual SME performance review reports (SBA country fact sheets, access to finance dimension: <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/performance-review>), the European Semester SME access to finance evidence (Key areas: comparing Member States' performances - SME access to finance: <http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/key-areas/>), research papers prepared by DG ECFIN, EIF or OECD. Independent researchers are also often requesting access to anonymized micro data to perform more detailed analysis.

Promotion of EU financial instruments

In order to successfully roll out the COSME financial instruments throughout Europe, the Commission organised the campaign 'EU Access to finance days' in Member States.

In total 17 events were organised and further events in other Member States were prepared for 2015. The Commission also produced various communication materials such as leaflets and infographics. To ease the access of SMEs to EU financial instruments, the Commission has also created a single webportal on all EU financial instruments.⁵

Following the successful completion of the road show presenting EU financial instruments in 28 Member States, further targeted events might need to be organised in new Participating Countries or countries lacking strong demand for COSME financial instruments. The

⁵ http://europa.eu/youreurope/business/funding-grants/access-to-finance/index_en.htm

Commission also needs to continue to update and promote the single webportal on all EU financial instruments.

Study - "Practical guide on crowdfunding SMES"

In 2014 the European Commission proposed a Communication on crowdfunding to address these issues and exploit the full potential of crowdfunding in the EU. Among the envisaged actions, the Commission announced the need to "raise awareness, provide information and training modules for project owners, especially for financial return crowdfunding". Currently, not enough and complete information is available at EU level to inform SMEs on this innovative form of finance. This guide aims at filling this gap. Better access to crowdfunding by SMEs can ultimately lead to more investments and employment in the EU.

A contract (under a Commission Framework Contract) has been signed with ECORYS to deliver a guide on crowdfunding, which explains to SMEs what it is, its benefits/risks, and how it works.

The guide is available in 23 languages in DG GROW website.⁶

Workshops

Workshops with SMEs, banks and other financial institutions were organised to monitor the market situation and to facilitate SMEs' access to finance. The topics were SME-banks transparency and loan applications, mezzanine financing, European Small and Mid-cap awards jury panel meeting, expert meeting on the Practical Guide on Crowdfunding, follow-up to the study on "Improving the market performance for SMEs".

Positive feedback has been received from participants on quality, relevance and added value of workshops.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/crowdfunding-guide/index_en.htm.

2. ACCESS TO MARKETS

2.1. ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK

The **Enterprise Europe Network supports businesses and innovation – in particular SMEs** – by offering information, feedback and business cooperation services, innovation, technology and knowledge transfer services as well as services encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Community framework programmes for R&D.

Two measures were implemented in 2014. The first relates to **the activities and further development of the Network**. The second relates to the **activities put in place to organise the Annual Conference and to animate the Network**. It includes services needed to operate the IT tools and to organize trainings, working groups, meetings, communication activities and services to the Network partners.

The **operational objectives of the Enterprise Europe Network** are:

- (1) Help enterprises **finding partners** outside their own country for developing their business, export, technology and knowledge;
- (2) Provide services encouraging the **participation of SMEs** in the Community Framework Programme for RTD and promote EU policies and SMEs **access to EU programmes** and financial instruments;
- (3) Develop Network **recognition and awareness locally**; ensure that the Network and its services are known by SMEs in the geographical areas covered;
- (4) Develop an **integrated service range**, where services towards business development are balanced with services towards technology and knowledge transfer, and synergies among network partners are increased;
- (5) Guide clients towards the most appropriate service provider; implement the “no wrong door” concept and build synergies with other relevant service providers within the Network as well as in the region, to offer complementary services;
- (6) Continuously increase the quality and effectiveness of the integrated services provided by the Network;
- (7) Contribute to the SMEs Feedback function by consulting businesses and obtaining their opinion on Community policy options;
- (8) Build an efficient management system in reducing the administrative burden for all parties, for planning, reporting and monitoring.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

2014 has been the last year of the Network in the CIP period. The Network consisted of 79 consortia for which there were framework partnership agreements in place from EU28 and 13 from CIP participating countries with specific grant agreements signed to cover this last operational period 2013-2014.

There were 23 cooperation agreements signed for Business Cooperation Centers in 3rd countries (please refer to een.ec.europa.eu for the current list of partners present in 63 countries).

Conditional terms for Associated and Affiliated membership were signed with 16 and 10 organisations respectively as well technological partnership agreements with JRC, EUREKA, CERN and ESA.

To assess the impact of the services provided by Network partners to their clients (SMEs), a 5th benefits survey was launched. About 41% of the 2.078 respondents were micro enterprises. The review of the innovation and internationalisation capacity of SME is the prevailing type of advisory services. IPR support has triggered the highest impact on turnover (72%), followed by the internationalisation/innovation capacity review (63%). The impact of the network is most perceived in the development of new products, followed by accessing new markets and finding business partners abroad. About 35% of the clients acknowledge that the Network had a significant impact in the revision of their organisations strategic approach.

Also in 2014, the Network contributed to the Missions for Growth organised in third countries as well as the “Strategy for Growth Missions” in Belgium, Italy, Greece and Spain with the participation of about 4,000 companies, and an average of 30 countries represented in each mission. The participating companies were involved in approximately 8,000 business-to-business meetings.

The Annual conference 2014 in Torino attracted 785 participants from more than 40 countries with 72 speakers on EEN related topics. It facilitated 1.170 bilateral meetings on business opportunities from the Network's client SME.

Preparation of the call for proposals for the Network in COSME (2015-2021)

Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) were signed for a 7 year period with each of the consortia selected by two calls for proposals. In a second stage, selected consortia were invited to submit a work programme and budget for the first operational period 2015-2016, this led to the signature of **Specific Grant Agreements (SGA) 2015-2016**.

Additional operational periods are foreseen for 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 and 2021.

1st call- deadline was May 2014

- 105 applications were received.
- 82 consortia were selected, these consortia involve 498 organisations.
- Consortia submitted their final work programme and budget for 2015-2016.

2nd call- deadline was October 2014

- 14 applications were received.
- 12 consortia (including BiH, AM, RS, UA on waiting list) were selected⁷.

These consortia involve 61 organisations (out of which 24 on the waiting list, pending on their decision to participate in the COSME programme).

Cooperation agreements were signed with 31 consortia to set up **Business Cooperation Centers** involving 98 organisations in 31 third countries. They focus their activities on partnership services and have to finance their activities by their own resources. Three additional third countries joined the Network after the third cut-off date of the call for expressions of interest (15 December 2015).

In 2015, we could observe that about 450.000 SME received services via the Enterprise Europe Network ranging from information on EU matters, to specialised advisory services or facilitating partnership between SMEs via company missions and matchmaking events. The objective is to increase SME's competitiveness and increase their innovation capacity via the

⁷ Armenia and Serbia joined COSME in the meantime

3.000 network staff present in all EU regions and 35 countries outside the EU. The 625 participating organisations provided specialised advisory services to 60.000 SMEs on access to finance, intellectual property rights, business and technology reviews and resource efficiency. About 22.000 SMEs participated in matchmaking events. These activities resulted in 3.190 special achievements reported by companies and numerous success stories. The external Network's evaluation showed that SME who used the Network grew 3% more compared to those who didn't.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

As a first priority, EASME had to finalise the signature all specific grant agreements.

The governance structure of the Network is currently being reviewed, especially on the role of the Network's Steering and Advisory Group and the possible successor of the Consultative Forum.

Monitoring and reporting requirements are being reviewed, as well as ways to further improve the quality of the delivered services. Guidelines and measures to further increase the performance of the different consortia are being put in place.

A new training plan was developed taking into account the needs of newcomers in the Network, including the development of new methods for training staff.

Regional linkages between Network organisations and regional players involved in SME and innovation support will be further developed.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The signature of the specific grant agreements by EASME was finalised in 2015.

The call for Business Cooperation Centres remains open. There will no longer be any fixed cut-off dates. Interested organizations may submit a proposal whenever their application is ready. The new training plan is being implemented as well as the new format (Steering and Advisory group) for operational governance. This body also discusses some strategic matters. The new monitoring, reporting and linkages with regional actors started in 2015 and will continue throughout the new network.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The first operational period under the COSME programme, covering the **Network Grants 2015-2016**, was financed by combining the budgets of 2014 and 2015. The total budget available is **EUR 100 170 608**:

- EUR 46 492 984 from the COSME WP 2014.
- EUR 53 677 624 from the COSME WP 2015.

The budget includes the grants for the COSME participating countries⁸

In total **90 consortia and 535 partner organisations** are selected (4 consortia involving 24 organisations in potential COSME participating countries may still join later on)⁹.

In addition, a budget of EUR 3 million was committed for the annual conference and Network animation.

⁸ Turkey, Moldova, Albania, FYROM, Montenegro, Iceland in 2014

⁹ Two consortia (Armenia and Serbia) joined in the meantime

INDICATORS

The reporting of the Network partners on the delivery refers to the reporting data received for the last operational period 2013-2014. The below indicators are based on data collected from the final reports. It gives an impression on the number of SMEs and the variety of services delivered by the about 3.000 staff in the Network. Services range from information on EU matters, company visits and awareness raising campaigns to specialised advisory services, company missions and brokerage events.

Actual number of SMEs:

- Involved in Promotion & information local events: 411.000
- For whom success stories were documented : 857
- Receiving specialised advisory services: 132.668
- Clients in feedback related actions: 20.716
- Involved in brokerage events: 50.719
- For whom partnership proposals were produced & disseminated: 19.169
- That signed a partnership agreement: 5.273
- Total workforce providing services: 1.473 full time equivalent, about 3000 staff.

The Annual conference 2014 in Torino attracted 785 participants from more than 40 countries with 72 speakers on EEN related topics. It facilitated 1.170 bilateral meetings on business opportunities from the Network's client SME.

Other Network qualitative indicators:

- Client satisfaction survey: more than 85% of client SME reported that the received services were 'good or very good' which is a slight increase compared to the previous years.
- Staff participating in trainings & working groups: 422
- Services most appreciated by clients – top 3:
 - Possibility to access new market by facilitating contacts and meeting with foreign companies.
 - Opportunity to develop new products and services
 - Wide range of services offered: access to finance, information, IPR, partner research.

Network partners have been further stimulated to contribute to the continuous improvement of the Network's value chain and benefits for SMEs. As explained above, evaluation data has been obtained by organising a 5th Benefits Survey showing the economic benefit of the services to SMEs.

BENEFICIARIES

Typical participating organisations are chambers of commerce, innovation agencies, regional development agencies, SME organisations, technology centers and universities.

For the new Network, as a result of both calls of proposals, 535 organisations have been selected in the EU and 6 participating countries. Also, all regions in the EU and these participating countries have been covered. About 20% of the organisations are new to the Network.

2.2. YOUR EUROPE BUSINESS PORTAL - YEB

Your Europe Business Portal aims at being the reference **public information portal for enterprises interested in cross-border activities within the European Union**.

Your Europe Business provides a multilingual practical guide that facilitates cross-border transactions.

Your Europe Business Portal is part of the Your Europe Portal that includes a business and a Citizens section.

The portal offers all the information citizens and businesses need to exercise their single market rights in Europe. Its unique selling point is that it informs not only about the EU rules, but also how these apply in practice in each member state. The information is multilingual (in 23 official languages of the EU - all except Gaelic - and in Norwegian for EU-level pages and in the national languages and English for the country pages).

Your Europe offers businesses, public administrations and stakeholders a centralised and easy access to information on doing business in Europe, and signposts to more specialised information and help services, when relevant. To better address user needs, the content will have been completely revamped in the period 2013-2015.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The information on EU rules was completely revamped. In the course of the revamp we revised and streamlined the content, got rid of jargon, and removed information about policies, legislation planned/not yet in force, promotional material, and news, leaving only information about rules in force or of practical use. This approach, combined with the AdWords campaign, led to an impressive increase in traffic: in the first 9 months of 2014 there was an increase of 70% in visits, of 37% in unique visitors, and 136% more page views (compared to first 9 months of 2013, before the revamp).

The revamp of national information was mostly finalised in February 2015. We replaced the old and obsolete national pages with new, much slimmer, national content. Unlike in the past, the information is provided only if the national rules differ from the EU rules.

Also, following the launch of improved mobile versions (smartphone, phablet & tablet), the share of visits from mobile devices rose in the first half of 2015.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The communication and awareness raising on the activities on YEB needs to be increased, for example via social media and online campaigns.

Strengthening collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network is needed, e.g. closely following up the enquiry form's statistics, surveying the Enterprise Europe Network's partners for feedback and improvements and creating national "fiches" in collaboration with them.

The role of the YEB portal will be assessed as an important possible basis and contributor to the Digital Single Gateway.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The cooperation with the Enterprise Europe Network is ongoing and will be re-enforced in the year to come. The role of the YEB in the Digital Single Gateway will be clarified as the project advances in 2016.

INDICATORS

Since 2012, YEB has experienced a constant considerable growth in visits, unique visitors and page views. In 2014 YEB was visited almost 2.5 million times, 2.5 times more than in

2012. With 2.56 million visits by the end of 2015, this result is already 2.7% better than 2014 figure.

The monthly statistics for 2015 so far show however a decreasing trend in both visits and page views compared to 2014 which is likely largely caused by the revamp and rationalisation of the national content (online since late February 2015), in the course of which the overall number of pages on Your Europe Business was more than halved.

A survey involving 1600 users took place showing that the topics most search for are: Funding for business – 24%, Start/expand business abroad – 15% and Cross-border VAT and customs – 15%

The results show that over 87% of replies indicate that the overall site rating was excellent, good or satisfactory.

BENEFICIARIES

SME and entrepreneurs who want to start cross-border activities.

2.3. ASEAN, CHINA AND MERCOSUR IPR SME HELPDESKS

The ASEAN, China and MERCOSUR IPR SME Helpdesk (renamed for ease of understanding by SMEs - South-East Asia, China, and Latin America IPR SME Helpdesks) is a continuation of existing Helpdesks. These services offer practical business advice from experienced professionals (lawyers, business executives, IPR investigators) in person, on-line, and through workshops, e-learning materials, and training.

The service covers countries and regions, with focus on high-growth markets where there are particular IPR problems of importance to European SMEs. The services are provided both 'on the ground' to European SMEs already 'in country' and 'at home' in Europe, so that the relevant information on IPR in the regions can be delivered where it is most useful / needed most, to serve European SMEs efficiently and effectively.

The services are offered in co-ordination with and in direct response to requests from European SMEs and their representatives. Services are co-ordinated also with relevant EU Member States SME support and trade representations. The Helpdesks offer services that could not be easily provided individually by each Member State and allow to pool expertise to be available to any EU SME. Such economies of scale also enable to customise the training or advice to specific sectors or business models. The service will also avoid duplication of technical contacts with the relevant countries administrations to 'signpost' SMEs.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

In 2015 all helpdesks are operational. The China IPR SME Helpdesk has exceeded the initial planning on queries as they received more than 90% of the yearly target within 6 months. They are on target with the publications and events, but should improve website visits.

The impact on SMEs performance is not yet measurable.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The helpdesks will operate till end of 2017. They all aim at increasing the number of users, continue to expand the cooperation with organisations that work directly with SMEs.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The Call for tender was published in June 2014, and the Grants signature in February 2015 for China, April 2015 for South East Asia and July 2015 for Latin America.

The projects will operate 36 months and finish their operations at the end of 2017.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The budget of EUR 7.2 million was fully committed and split in:

- EUR 2.6 million for the South East Asia IPR SME Helpdesk;
- EUR 2.4 million for the China IPR SME Helpdesk;
- EUR 2 million (for 30 months) for the Latin America IPR SME Helpdesk;
- EUR 0.2 million for the common website operations.

The Commission has received 1 proposal for the South East Asia IPR SME Helpdesk, 1 for the China IPR SME Helpdesk, 3 for the Latin America IPR SME Helpdesk and 2 for the common website operations.

INDICATORS

For 2015	China	South East Asia	Latin America
1. Inquiries	680	40	250
2. Training and awareness events	100	30	42
3. Individual visitors on the website	21000	12500	20000
4. Publications:	10	10	40

The China IPR SME Helpdesk performed a feedback survey. 97% of respondents found the advice useful and 99% would recommend the services of the helpdesk.

BENEFICIARIES

- South-East Asia - Development solutions ltd. (lead), Euro-Cham Vietnam, TEBA (Thai-EU Business Association), EBN.
- China - Development solutions ltd. (lead), EU Chamber of Commerce in China, EBN.
- Latin America - Universidad de Alicante (lead), EUROCHAMBRES, Instituto Nacional da Propriedade Industrial (INPI-PT), Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, EUROCHILE, Instituto Nacional De Propiedad Industrial (INAPI), IDS-Instituto Dannemann Siemsen.

2.4. SME INTERNATIONALISATION

The Portal

The SME Internationalisation portal aims to provide a 'single-entry point' that guides the SMEs on their way to internationalisation. It offers SMEs tailored and easily accessible information on how to expand their business in third countries. It integrates information on existing support services, measures or other existing sources at EU, national and regional levels. It provides one single-entry portal for SME wanting to go international completes information on the existing support measures at EU and national level as well as the necessary procedures for internationalisation. Synergies with other COSME activities like the EEN or YEB will be sought for the future.

The contract of EUR 425,000 (out of a budget of EUR 500 000) was implemented after a call for tender for which the Commission received one offer.

The Portal was launched in June 2014 as a free of charge and open to public database containing some 300 “service providers” located both in the EU and in 25 countries and providing 600 support services. The added value compared to other EU websites helping SMEs in their business and to go international is that in gathers in one place many service providers present in the country of origin of the European SME, the service providers present in other EU member states, some of them offer their support to the respective SME, the support in the non-EU target country and support funded by the EU.

It had 19.890 visitors and in 2014 and 108.633 page views. In 2015, it increased to 20.671,visitors and 126.455 page views.

SME conference, Napoli, Italy, 1-10-2014

The Italian Presidency of the Council (2nd semester 2014) proposed to organise on the eve of the SME Assembly (1st October 2014)¹⁰ an open forum on SME internationalisation and Euro-Mediterranean Industrial Cooperation.

The aim of the conference was to gather views and expertise on the best methods to internationalise SMEs, to share good practice and to identify policy opportunities at European level. Member States’ representatives, stakeholders, business support organisations participated in the event.

The work done since the 9th Ministerial meeting on Euro-Mediterranean industrial cooperation (February 2014) was acknowledged. Moreover, the assessment of the business climate in South Mediterranean countries, which was jointly drafted by the European Commission (DG GROW), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) was presented and discussed.

Around 70 persons attended the conference and representatives of the private sector actively participated in all discussions throughout the day and were the main contributors to the forum on SME internationalisation. The event also allowed exchanges of good practices among entrepreneurs as well as an open dialogue between delegates from the private and the public sectors.

The conference cost 33.000 euros from an initial budget of EUR 100 000.

European footwear: more than fashion

¹⁰ See action 3.13

The aim of the project is the promotion of EU manufactured footwear in third countries, in this pilot project the country chosen is Kazakhstan. The country was identified in cooperation with EU footwear industry stakeholders on basis of the positive trends of consumption expenditure for light industries products. The country was identified also as an entry point to the Eurasian Union. The project will support the entry of European footwear in new markets, while contributing to the recognition of distinctive and high quality European footwear.

The objectives of the Project are:

- Promote the image of European footwear in new emerging consumer markets via an awareness campaign;
- Provide relevant information for SMEs about local business structure and culture and distribution networks and,
- Support the internationalization of European small and medium footwear companies in third countries, in Kazakhstan.

The project consists of the following actions:

- Execution of a Pre-market support study and development of a data bank of potential partners at the local Kazakh market.
- Selection of about 30 EU SMEs identified by their respective national associations in accordance with the profiles identified in the study.
- Organisation of a promotional trade mission of these companies in Kazakhstan (Alma Ati).
- Organisation of a promotion communication campaign for the EU footwear industry.

Two offers were received during the call for tenders and the selected contractor is the consortium represented by European Profiles S.A. (Greece). The contract was signed on 8 June 2015 for a value of EUR 133 250 and will finish on 6 May 2016. The 28 January 2016 the steering committee has adopted the interim report. The trade mission took place in March 2016. Footwear companies from all COSME participating countries were invited. 36 footwear companies (from IT, GR, SP, AUT, PT, NL, PL) participated in a road show in Kazakhstan signing 24 partnership agreements out of 39 business negotiations. At least 163 B2B meetings were organised by these companies with 98 visitors from Kazakhstan (78 companies, 10 public entities and 10 media).

36% of the EU participants declared high satisfaction in participating the event and 45% declared medium satisfaction. The interest in participating to similar events in third countries was 70% (high interest) while 24% expressed medium interest.

2.5. EU-JAPAN CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION

This action promotes the development of EU-Japan cooperation to improve the access of European businesses into the Japanese market by providing them with the needed data on local conditions and by acquainting them with commercial and industrial practises which EU businesses are facing in Japan. It also promotes the training on production technologies, quality management and innovation, aiming at improving the competitiveness of EU businesses.

RESULTS AND IMPACT IN 2014

- The ‘Vulcanus in Japan’¹¹ programme has the following objectives:

- Provide Japanese companies with skilled European science and engineering graduates as trainees to help them in the development of their business with Europe;
- Create a pool of future European executives who will be well placed to help their future employers in their business relations with Japan;
- Familiarise the future management personnel in EU’s industry with Japanese’s business culture, its economic structure and its institutions.

The intake of participants in “Vulcanus in Japan” increased from 25 to 44, and the EU-Japan Centre succeeded to recruit 21 Japanese host companies as compared to the previous 13 to receive all participants as interns in their companies. “Vulcanus in Europe” also succeeded to increase the number. of participants from 15 to 17.

- Improved information services and helpdesk: for enhanced business support, two new services for SMEs were established:

1) the “Japan Tax and Public Procurement” (JTPP) Helpdesk received 21 inquiries, performed Public Procurement Market Scans servicing 40 EU SMEs, organised 2 seminars, arranged supplier qualifications for one EU SME and had over 2,000 views on its website in the first months of service.

2) The Keys To Japan service selected 3 EU SMEs respectively from Malta, France and Germany among a total of 19 applicants which were sponsored for the draft of a completed business plan for market entry or expansion into Japan.

- The 50th Human Resources Training Programme (HRTP), a new session of the training programme, was organized in May 2014 as a 5-week training programme to train EU SME executives on ‘how to succeed’ in Japan.

- The number of EU applications remained constant (38 applications among which 36 from SMEs).
- HRTP 50 (12 May - 6 June 2014) gathered 14 participants from 10 Member states, among which 13 SMEs.
- 85% of the participating SMEs have benefited from the additional incentive¹² after

¹¹ Vulcanus in Europe, is the same for Japanese students- supported by the Japanese side of the Centre.

¹² SMEs can apply for: EUR 2 500 scholarship towards living expenses (paid during the HRTP course); EUR 500 additional scholarship (paid after participation in the HRTP course) if they submit a profile through “Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)” partnering service. SMEs can choose EEN closest contact point and will be introduced by the EU-Japan Centre to the selected partner. SMEs are free to not take advantage of EEN service but therefore will NOT be eligible for the additional EUR 500 grant. Eligibility will be checked through the ‘scholarship request – self-assessment declaration’ form that will be sent to selected SMEs before participating in the HRTP course.

having used the Enterprise Europe Network services.

- 11 participants attended the 5th optional week of B-to-B individual meetings, during which 41 company visits and 28 individual meetings were organised.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The services and work provided are foreseen to continue under forthcoming COSME work programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Ad hoc grant without call for proposals, according to legal basis which established the Centre and its role: Council Decision 92/278/EEC of 18 May 1992. The committed budget amounted to EUR 2 628 578.

INDICATORS

- Number of seminars organised per year and attendance: 11 seminars (8 in Tokyo & 3 in Brussels) with 1344 participants
- Number of participants to the executive training programmes: 223 participants
- Number of enquiries addressed to the Centre and satisfactory replies provided: 212 enquiries received, 146 satisfactory
- Number of students participating in Vulcanus and their level of competence: "Vulcanus in Japan" (Sept 2013 to Aug 2014) gathered 25 participants from 12 Member States. The next session (Sept 2014 to Aug 2015) gathered 44 participants from 17 Member States.
- "Vulcanus in Europe" (April 2014-March 2015) gathered 17 participants from Japan.
- Level of awareness about the Centre: In addition to the participants mentioned above, about 681.000 persons have been in contact directly or via the internet links with the Centre.

BENEFICIARIES

Institute for International Studies and Training, Japan.

2.6. FACILITATING ACCESS TO LIGHT RPAS¹³ **REGULATION**

Light RPAS are today regulated at national level. A number of Member States have already regulation in place. Other Member States are developing it and later on, a European regulation may enter into force.

This situation leads to a lack of awareness about safety regulations by SMEs wishing to operate business in other European countries. The difficulty to access the relevant regulation is often such that the SMEs prefer to operate outside Europe.

The measure should develop the tools (such as handbook, tutorials, advice service, web portal, etc.) deemed necessary to provide an easy access to all information relevant to RPAS operations in the 28 EU countries.

It will be adapted to light RPAS operators which are mainly operated by SMEs and entrepreneurs with limited aviation background. The measure will not only cover national and European safety regulation, but also provide information related to other important issues like privacy and data protection or insurance requirements. It will also provide information about the evolution of the regulation.

The call COS-WP2014-2-10 was postponed towards the end of 2014 in order to be better in line with the on-going regulatory developments. Proposals now have been evaluated, the selection procedure is completed and the contract was signed end of September 2015.

The initial budget of € 1 million has been fully committed.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The project was kicked-off upon signature of the contract at the end of September 2015. In order to contribute to raise drones' operators' awareness about the regulatory framework they have to comply with in each MS, the project is developing the DRONERULES.EU website. A first version of the website has been released mid-June 2016. Two other releases are foreseen to gradually incorporate all the requested services (analyses of regulations, handbook, tutorials, advisory service). Considering that the first version of the website has been released mid-June 2016, it is too early to assess its impact or have performance indicators.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

- Starting date of the contract: 1st October 2015
- End of the project: 30 September 2017

BENEFICIARIES

Foreseen beneficiaries are SMEs, entrepreneurs, start-ups, hobbyists, authorities, general public.

¹³ Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems

2.7. INDUSTRIAL POLICY COOPERATION

Study on technical textiles world markets structures and opportunities

The objective is to enhance knowledge of EU companies active in technical textiles about worldwide export opportunities (with particular attention to Brazil, China, ASEAN countries and Korea)

The technical textile market accounts about 30% of the textiles consumption in weight terms worldwide. The main characteristic of the sector is the use of high end technologies and innovation in order to enhance products properties and functionalities such as strength, durability, elasticity, that can respond to huge variety of uses automobile, construction, medicine, to name a few. Based on the end uses, we can stratify the sector into 11 subcategories: mobitech, buildtech, homeotic, indutech, clothtech, meditech, agrotech, protech, packtech and others.

The most important factor governing market attractiveness is the versatility of a technical textile product. The sector can regenerate the mature market of classical textiles as its products are manufactured by fibres, yarns, filaments or more elaborated products such as non-wovens.

Technical applications have a more positive outlook than most other fibres and according to forecasts, it is expected to grow with the pace of 5% by weight per year. In terms of exports, the sector becomes more and more present in export performances of all the EU countries evolving from 33% of textile exports in average, in 2011 to 36% in 2013.

Traditionally North America and Europe were the main markets of technical textiles but in recent years Asia Pacific and Latin America became active drivers of the market.

The study will explore further EU export opportunities in these countries characterized by industrial development and by increasing needs for using sophisticated raw materials in the industrial process, and other industrial uses, such as the technical textiles. In addition purchasing power perspectives are increasing. For this reason, the sector has resisted due mainly to its export performance, during the recent years of financial crisis.

The study aims to provide:

- Analysis the revenue share of main EU competitors in the respective markets;
- Analysis the detailed market value chain on the markets to identify market dynamics for upstream and downstream segments;
- Develop a strategy making process for EU suppliers and present a comprehensive assessment of stakeholders strategies.

Two offers were received and the contract was signed in June 2015 with Gherzi van Delden GmbH (Germany) for EUR 300 000 and will end in September 2016.

Intermediate results of the interim report, submitted on December 2015, included:

- an overview of country-specific consumption/production scenarios and export/import trends;
- a priority list of products for further market analysis, covering twelve technical textile application segments and the trade conditions as well as barriers for EU producers.

The consultant is performing currently "in situ" SWOT analysis of the technical textiles sector and markets conditions, in the four target countries.

Mediterranean Young Talent (YOTA) in European Fashion Incubator

Objectives:

- Host 4 young designers from the Mediterranean partner countries in a European incubator;
- Strengthen relations between the EU and MED fashion clusters;
- Share knowledge and competencies between designers.

Two offers were received and a service contract with the London College of Fashion was signed on 18 May 2015 for an amount of EUR 100 000.

The successful designers, selected via a transparent process, are given the opportunity to spend up to six months at the Centre for Fashion Enterprise (CFE) in London, benefitting from the incubator's renowned business support programme as well as access to a wide network of experts and industry members, to help their business develop. To allow for the availability of studio space at Centre for Fashion Enterprise, the intake of designers from the YOTA programme has been divided into two cohorts. Cohort one has an intake of two designer businesses for six months. The designers selected were: Bashaques (Turkey) and Muslin Brothers (Israel).

They completed in Q2 2016 their 6 months stay in the fashion incubators, including all the consecutive steps that proceeded and followed their stay.

Overall it has been a very successful project with a great learning experience for both the designers and the host institution. Greatest value added of the project are new skills the designers acquired and new international connections developed in London which would allow them to expand their own businesses internationally. For instance, Designers acquired necessary skills to expand in their business international, in particular soft skills such as personal business skills" how to talk to industry".

Both designers are interested to set up (at least part of) their businesses and whole sale in London in order to be able to sell internationally, since local consumers from MED region are more interested to buy international brands.

Key challenge for the young designers was to find the balance between time spent in fashion incubator while keeping their own businesses running at back home. The host institution had to invest significant additional time for the young designers as needed lots of practical support on day to day basis.

The second wave of talents (programme from April 2016 to October 2016) also comes from Israel (Maya Bash: maya@mayabash.com) and Turkey (Ece Gözen: ece@ecegozen.com). They have just started their programme in April in London.

3. IMPROVING FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS AND COMPETITIVENESS

3.1. E-SKILLS FOR COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION

Several key actions were foreseen for closing the skills gap to ensure that Europe has the e-leaders and ICT practitioners it needs to spark enduring competitive advantage. In 2014, it was planned to publish three calls for tenders:

1. **Organisation of a communication and awareness campaign "e-Skills for Jobs"**
2. **Development and implementation of a European framework for ICT profession**
3. **Promotion of e-leadership skills in Europe**

The two calls on "ICT profession" and "e-Leadership" were published in March 2015. Services contracts were signed in July 2015.

The two services contracts on "ICT profession" and "e-Leadership" which started in August 2015 will be closed in January 2017.

The interim report of the "e-Skills for Jobs" campaign (2015-2016) has been released in January 2016.

After spectacular declines in ICT education enrolments and graduate numbers in the first years of the new millennium, the Commission developed in 2007 a long term e-skills strategy to reverse this trend. Since 2010, the number of ICT students has been growing again. The good news today is that there are signs that the rate of growth is now quicker than expected. The "e-Skills for Jobs" campaigns contributed to this achievement and mobilised very large numbers of countries and stakeholders in synergy with the "Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs". In 2015-2016, it covers 30 countries and involves 384 organisations. At the end of 2015 over 800 events gathering more than 300,000 participants have been organised. Media coverage and visibility on the Internet and social networks has been extensive. In total, it is estimated that over 115 million people were exposed to the campaign. Close cooperation has also been established with the EU Presidencies in the past campaigns. High-level events on e-Skills for Jobs had already been organised with EU Presidencies: 6 May 2014 in Athens (Greece), 30 October 2014 in Rome (Italy). The first high-level event of the 2015 campaign took place in Riga on 13 March 2015 (Latvia), followed by 15 December 2015 in Luxembourg; 16 March 2016 in The Hague (The Netherlands). The final high-level event will take place on 18 October 2016 in Bratislava (EU Slovakian Presidency). These consistent efforts triggered Member States to develop new appropriate policy initiatives.

The employment growth rate of ICT practitioners averaged 4% growth per annum since 2006 (more than twelve times higher than the average growth rate of total employment). There was an excess demand of 262.000 ICT professionals in Europe in 2014 (more than two times the annual number of ICT graduates). The gap may reach up to 756.000 until 2020. While increases in demand for management and business architecture level skilled ICT professionals and core ICT practitioners are very strong, there is a decreasing demand for lower skilled - ICT technician types of jobs.

The European e-Competence Framework is a standard across Europe for ICT practitioners' skills and competences. It is maintained by the European Standardisation Committee (CEN). In the Riga Declaration (13 March 2015), stakeholders confirmed their support to the development and the implementation of a European Framework for the ICT profession based on four building blocks: European e-Competence Framework; European ICT foundational

body of knowledge; European recognition of ICT certifications and qualifications; and shared professional ethics". The development of the European Framework for the ICT profession is making good progress (interim report released in May 2016) and results will be presented at a high-profile conference on 6 December 2016 in Brussels.

Leadership skills for digital and key enabling technologies (KETs): demand for leadership skills is closely coupled with highest skilled digital jobs, resulting in a demand for e-leaders of 620,000 in 2015 and increasing to 776,000 in 2020. The EU will need over 200,000 additional e-leaders by 2020. Pan-European guidelines for new curricula have been developed using stakeholder input and analysis of best practices in cooperation with Universities, and business schools. Demand for KETs skills in 2013 equalled an estimated total of 3,300,000 KETs professionals. Highly-skilled KETs employment accounts for 55% of total employment, followed by 37% medium-skilled employment and 8% low-skilled employment. Between 2013 and 2025 an additional 953,000 KETs professionals are needed. A potential gap in the range of approximately 21,000 to 83,000 highly-skilled KETs employees per year is estimated. An interim report has been released in May 2016. Detailed statistics and forecast as well as an agenda for the development of the leadership skills for digital and key enabling technologies will be presented in January 2017 at a high-profile conference in Brussels.

New developments in 2016

All these activities on e-skills have delivered very positive results and triggered considerable political interest. Digital skills will be a priority of the Commission's Communication on "New Skills Agenda for Europe" to be adopted in June 2016. The Commission will announce a new strategy to develop digital skills in Europe building on the achievements of the "Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs" (2013) and the Communication on "e-Skills for the 21st Century" (2007). This new strategy will aim at promoting a large digital talent pool and ensuring that all European citizens and the labour force are equipped with adequate digital skills.

The proposal for a European Framework for ICT Professionalism will provide a blueprint for maturing the ICT profession in Europe and a major detailed contribution to the activities of the European Standardisation Committee (CEN) and its CEN Technical Committee 428 on e-Competences and ICT Professionalism. The final report of the e-Skills for Jobs campaign will include a detailed description of all the activities and an in-depth evaluation of its impact. Together with the results of the work on Leadership Skills for Digital and Key Enabling Technologies they will contribute to the implementation of the "New Skills Agenda for Europe" (adopted on 10 June 2016) and the implementation of a new comprehensive EU strategy on digital skills which will be announced in the "New Skills Agenda".

The "e-Skills for Jobs" campaign will end in December 2016.

The statistics and information concerning the indicators will be available at the end of 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Service Contract – open call for tenders – E-Skills for Jobs campaign: EUR 1 987 042 with Digitaleurope and European Schoolnet.
2. Service Contract – open call for tenders - Development and Implementation of a European Framework for the ICT profession: EUR 451 718 with Development and Implementation of a European Framework for the ICT profession: Cap Gemini Nederland B.V and Ernst & young Financial Business Advisors s.p.a and IDC Italia SRL.
3. Service Contract – open call for tenders - Promotion of e-Leadership Skills in Europe: EUR 499 890 with Empirica Gesellschaft Fur Kommunikations- Und Technologiesforschung MBH.

3.2. CLUSTER INTERNATIONALISATION PROGRAMME FOR SMES

The programme focusses on the promotion of cluster internationalisation where interested consortia have the opportunity to develop a **joint international strategy and support SME internationalisation beyond Europe**, especially in emerging thematic areas. It also contributes to **facilitate international cluster cooperation** through the further development of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

The measure envisages the following actions:

Action 1. Cluster Go International

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

The ESCPs are composed of cluster and business network organisations from EU Member States and COSME participating countries. They **develop and implement a joint strategy to promote cross-sectorial cooperation** and to **facilitate SME internationalisation in emerging industries**, thereby supporting growth and employment in Europe. The partnerships are expected to develop a joint 'European' strategic vision with a global perspective and common goals towards specific third markets. This could include support services for the identification of strategic partners across Europe, development of a legal representation, preparation of a joint branding and marketing strategy and a roadmap for cooperation.

Strand 2) Supporting the further development and running of established European Strategic Cluster Partnerships

This could include **further preparatory actions** such as tailored analysis and fact-finding missions or assistance for opening of a joint office abroad, operational actions involving the cluster SMEs such as the organisation of international cluster matchmaking missions and follow-up actions providing assistance for the preparation of joint business and cooperation plans proposals.

Action 2. Support for international cluster and business network cooperation and promotion of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships through the further development of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

No results or impact in 2014 as the call for proposals for Action 1 and the call for tenders for Action 2 were published in December 2014. Twenty-nine proposals were received and 12 were awarded.

The service contract started in September 2015 for a period of two years and contributed to:

- The setting-up and further development of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) to facilitate cluster cooperation within the EU and to help clusters accessing international markets. A completely renewed web-platform was launched in March 2016 (see at: www.clustercollaboration.eu). It represents the main instrument for European cluster organisations to profile themselves, exchange experience, search for potential partners for transnational cooperation within and beyond Europe, and participate in major international matchmaking events. All European cluster organisations are invited to register their profile (currently 276 organisations are registered).
- The organisation of the EU-US Cluster Matchmaking Event at Hannover Messe in April 2016 by DG GROW and the U.S. Department of Commerce and in collaboration

with EEN. The event brought together over 70 EU and US clusters and Economic Development Organisations and contributed to set-up over 140 face-to-face meetings between EU-US organisations. The event was introduced by a policy discussion with policy leaders, including EU Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska, US Deputy Secretary of Commerce Bruce Andrews, and State Secretary of Germany Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy Matthias Machnig. The matchmaking sessions allowed the participants to discuss opportunities for R&D and business partnerships, enquire about potential for bilateral cluster to cluster Memoranda of Understandings to be concluded, plan for forthcoming study visits and soft landing packages for cluster SMEs.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

Action 1: The selection of proposals and signature of grant agreements were finalised in the 3rd and 4th quarters 2015 and the selected projects will then implement their activities over a 24-month period during 2016-2017.

The 1st call "Clusters Go International" contributed to support the establishment of 15 co-funded European Strategic Cluster Partnerships-Going International (ESCP-4i) gathering 88 cluster organisations across 21 EU countries and reaching out to more than 10.000 SMEs across Europe (with grants starting on 1 January 2016). The Partnerships are active in various industrial and cross-sectoral areas including health, aerospace, mobility and logistics, agrifood, energy, marine and environment, packaging, materials and photonics, ICT, construction and sports. The partnerships target cooperation with third countries' economies. Most partnerships have already identified their target markets, of which the main ones include Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico and USA. The full list is available at: <http://www.clustercollaboration.eu/escp-list>

Action 2: The selection of the service provider and signature of service contract was finalised in 3rd quarter 2015 and the action will be implemented over a 24-month period during 2015-2017.

The next Cluster matchmaking events planned to be organised by the ECCP platform in 2016 include:

- Mexico-EU Cluster and Business Matchmaking Event, at Green Expo in Mexico City on 25-27 October 2016 in cooperation with the Low Carbon Business Action in Mexico financed under FPI of EEAS. Mission open to clusters and SMEs from Europe and Mexico in the field Renewable energy, Energy efficiency, Waste management, Wastewater management;
- EU-Brazil Cluster and Business Matchmaking Event at Pollutec trade fair in Lyon (FR) on 29 Nov. – 1 Dec 2016 in cooperation with the Low Carbon Business Action in Brazil financed under FPI of EEAS. Mission open to clusters and SMEs from Europe and Brasil in the field of energy efficiency in buildings, solid waste management, renewable energy (solar, biomass) and biogas;
- Intra-EU cluster matchmaking event in Brussels on 30 November 2016, prior to the European Cluster Conference.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Combined budget of EUR 3.75 million + EUR 0.650 million (from 2014 budget leftovers) available for Action 1. Budget of EUR 1.25 million for Action 2.

3.3. CLUSTER EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME

The action will implement **benchmarking and training activities** addressed to consortia of cluster organisations and business networks in COSME participating countries, willing to engage in strategic collaboration on a joint industrial project with specific challenges, in order to help them:

- 1. Improve their management practices and market, competitive advantages and value-chain analysis capacities;**
- 2. Provide top quality services to their SMEs, especially on partnering, creativity, integration, internationalisation, exploitation of key enabling technologies (KETs), IPR protection and resource efficiency.**

The programme will contribute to **further promote cluster excellence and develop more world-class clusters in COSME participating countries** through well-tested benchmarking methodologies and training activities.

Through this action, it is expected that a high number of SMEs in clusters and business networks will receive more professional business support services from their respective organisations.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

Launch of call for proposals: 22 July 2014

Re-launch of call for proposals: 13 May 2015¹⁴

New Submission deadline: 16 June 2015

Signature of grant agreements: November - December 2015

Start of selected projects: January 2016

End of selected projects: October 2017

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The initial budget of EUR 1.25 million provided by the work programme has been reinforced by EUR 250 000, in due respect of the 20% flexibility margin allowed by the financing decision.

Seventy-eight proposals were received for the first publication and 31 for the second. 6 proposals were awarded.

All the outputs of the actions are foreseen to be delivered in the second half of 2016 and 2017.

BENEFICIARIES

Consortia of cluster organisations and business networks in COSME participating countries: minimum 3 countries, among which 1 EU Member State

¹⁴ The call was re-launched in 2015 to correct a difference of interpretation of eligibility criteria.

3.4. PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR KEY ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES (KETS)

To support the implementation of the European Strategy for KETs, as outlined in the Commission Communication of June 2012, it was planned to sign in 2014 two service contracts covering the following domains of activity:

1. Analysis of industrial value chains in strategic areas: Identifying current and future application areas, existing industrial value chains and missing competences in the EU, in the area of additive manufacturing (3D Printing).

The aim is to detect gaps with regard to important future applications and to lay the ground for joint demonstration platforms across EU regions to accelerate market uptake of 3D printed applications. The specific contract under a framework contract with Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (WIFO) was signed in April 2015. In October 2015, a first Interim Report was delivered. The finalisation of the study is expected towards end of 2016. The study is foreseen to be performed between April 2015 and September 2016.

The value of the contract is EUR 297 800.

2. Study on the dual-use potential of Key Enabling Technologies:

The study identifies technologies with the greatest potential for applications in the defence sector and, on the other hand, identifies also technologies developed by the EU defence sector that could be further developed for civil use. The study also assesses the strategic importance of the selected technologies in terms of non-dependence on extra-EU sources for technologies critical for the security and/or the economic growth of the EU. The open call for tenders was published in December 2014. The contract was signed in July 2015 with a consortium formed by D'Appolonia, CEA, TNO and Oakdene Hollins (consortium).

The study is foreseen to be performed between July 2015 and July 2016.

The total value of the specific contract is EUR 249 706 covering all tasks executed.

The performance indicators for both studies will be available during 2016.

3.5. ORGANISATION OF THE EUROPEAN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM (MSF) ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - CSR

As a crucial milestone of the review process for the 2011-2014 Communication on CSR and the preparation of the subsequent strategy (2015-2020) on responsible business, the EU Multi-Stakeholder Forum on CSR successfully took place in Brussels on 3-4 February, 2015.

The event, which is the EC's flagship CSR conference held every five years, attracted more than 90 speakers and over 500 representatives from business, civil society, EU Member States, academics and international organisations. It demonstrated the Commission's continued political commitment to CSR based on the underlying principles of the existing strategy and cooperation across sectors and stakeholders.

The conference was considered informative and successful by all stakeholders.

The contract was signed on 15 December 2014 for a budget of EUR 254 363.

3.6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN **“CONSTRUCTION 2020”**

EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION OBSERVATORY

The observatory is a 3-years action that will provide European policy makers and stakeholders with regular analysis and comparative assessments of the market conditions and policy developments related to the competitiveness and sustainability of construction sector in EU-28. The analysis and evaluations will support the exchange of experience between Member States and stakeholders regarding the definition, implementation, monitoring and assessment of the impact of policy measures related to competitiveness of construction enterprises, including the engagement with sustainable development objectives.

The main deliverables are:

- Individual country profiles for each Member State regarding the market conditions and trends as well as national/regional strategies related to the five thematic priorities of Construction 2020;
- Fact sheets on individual national and/or regional policy measures related to the thematic priorities of Construction 2020, identifying the process of implementation and monitoring, the likely socio-economic effects on the various actors in the construction sector and the environmental impacts on society;
- Semi-annual analytical reports based on the individual country profiles and fact sheets, and other relevant sources, which clearly identify issues and formulate policy recommendations with respect to the socio-economic and environmental performance of the construction sector;
- Development, update and promotion of dedicated webpages.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The call was published in July 2014 and the contract was put in place in March 2015.

The contract was signed for EUR 279 975 with PWC, CARSA, London Economics and CBT.

The European Construction Sector Observatory website is on-line as of December 2015 on Europa (<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/construction/observatory/>). It provides currently information about 10 countries (United Kingdom, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Sweden, France, Spain, Germany, Romania and Hungary). During the first 3 months of operation, the website was visited 944 times and information was downloaded 1141 times. This has been achieved with no other dissemination activity than the existing website.

The information is also being used as a basis within the context of the EU Semester to analyse national developments with respect to Country Specific Recommendations. An analytical report has also been prepared about the investment landscape in construction markets with respect to the 10 countries included currently in the website. This report provides specific examples of policy practices that have influences the investment conditions for the construction sector in the analysed markets.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

As the methodological framework for the data analysis, the webpages development and for the promotion of the observatory is finalised, the number of country profiles and fact sheets available on the webpages will increase. In particular, it is expected that the communication strategy developed during 2015 – 2016 will significantly strengthen the impact and use of

information. It is expected that the ECSO will cover all EU-28 Member States by March 2017.

3.7. FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS ON THE COMMUNICATION ON SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

The contract provided the Commission services with the necessary support for the implementation, monitoring and assessment of the Construction 2020 Action Plan and related High Level Forum and thematic groups. Support was provided for the preparation and organisation of two rounds of Thematic Groups (10 meetings in total) and communicating and engaging with stakeholders (preparation of agendas, the invitation and briefing of speakers, the review of material, the mobilisation of stakeholders, the moderation of meetings, the briefing of and support to meeting chairs, the support to speakers during presentations, the reporting and the addressing of ad hoc requests).

Moreover, the contractor assisted the EC in policy analysis and the development of indicators to track the progress achieved by the Construction 2020 governance structure. The contractor addressed also ad hoc requests for analysis of subject matters regarding international trade, sustainable development, circular economy and resource efficiency, energy, social policy, investment and real estate.

The contract was established for the duration of one year with Ecorys Nederland BV and fully implemented during 2014. A budget of EUR 200 000 was originally foreseen and awarded for EUR 184 350.

The High Level Forum and thematic groups created within the context of Construction 2020 provided stakeholders from the construction sector with a better overview of EU policy developments and with the possibility to contribute to policy preparation. In particular, participation allowed stakeholders to express their opinions regarding property valuation ('Energy and resource efficiency'), dual training and apprenticeships ('Skills Agenda'), the recycling of construction and demolition waste ('Circular Economy'), the sectorial fitness check on construction ('REFIT') and access to non-EU construction markets.

Stakeholders gave also their input on the review and monitor EU policies, standards and instruments relevant to the construction sector, in particular regarding the energy efficiency legislation and product environmental footprint.

3.8. SUPPORTING STUDY FOR THE FITNESS CHECK ON CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

The Fitness Check on construction will assess the impacts of EU legislation on the competitiveness and sustainability of the construction sector.

The subject matter of this support study is to evaluate in-depth the impacts of different legislative texts related to the Internal Market and Energy Efficiency on the construction sector. The study should also consider representative case studies for construction services, products and professions with significant cross-border activity. The mapping should include,

inter alia, the cumulative burden arising from inconsistency, lack of coherence or duplication of legislative provision. Positive externalities as well as beneficial synergies will be also further brought forward. Finally, the study will identify synergies and inefficiencies within the group of legislative texts selected, covering both the costs and benefits attributable to EU legislation and national transposition.

The invitation to tender was published the 18/11/2014. The contract was signed on 26 May 2015 for EUR 400 000 with Economisti Associati together with Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Milieu Ltd, Building Performance Institute Europe (BPIE) and Danish Building Research Institute (DBRI) - Aalborg University and is planned to end in June 2016. The results of the study will feed into a Commission Staff Working Document that is expected to be presented by the Commission at the end of 2016.

The analysis is on-going. The legal texts to be analysed were discussed in September 2015. First interviews with sector associations have been launched. The public stakeholder consultation will be launched beginning of 2016 and the draft final results will be discussed in April/May 2016.

3.9. MEMBERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL RUBBER STUDY GROUP (IRSG)

The Participation of the EU in the IRSG as a member (Council Decision 2012/283/EU entails the payment of an annual contribution of up to EUR 125 000 EUR.

Participation in the IRSG supports the competitiveness of the European tyre & rubber industry, by rendering more predictable the developments on the world market of an essential input – natural rubber. the IRSG is going to carry out other projects, such as the projection of changes in rubber demand given the impact of new tyre legislation and the impact of expected changes in butadiene supply (brought about by the increased use of natural gas as feedstock for chemicals to the detriment of oil) on the production of synthetic rubber.

3.10. MEMBERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL STUDY GROUPS FOR NICKEL, COPPER, LEAD AND ZINC

With the membership, the Commission has access to data and material collected and produced by the study groups and the right to, participate in the meetings and vote in the committees. The information and data collected feed into Commission's activities and policy making.

The membership fees to these study groups total EUR 30 613.

3.11. RESOURCE EFFICIENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR SMES

The development of a self-assessment tool would enable European SMEs to increase their understanding of their resource efficiency performance and to know the measures that could increase their resource efficiency.

It would provide all European SMEs with an easy-to-use common tool that also enables benchmarking of SME resource efficiency across countries and sectors. The European tool would be based on an existing, proven tool and methodology that have the scope to be successfully adapted to a Europe-wide context.

The two-year service contract will deal with the adaptation and translation of the tool and the methodology but also with the development of a European Database with information on the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of different types of resource efficiency improvements (collected from SME self-assessments) as well as testing of the tool with SMEs.

The Tool is part of the actions foreseen under the Green Action Plan for SMEs adopted on 2 July 2014.

The action is part of COSME climate-related measures, foreseen in article 15 of the COSME regulation.

The work of the contractor, a Consortium led by Technopolis Group Belgium started in January 2015 ending in January 2017 and it is too early to measure impacts or results.

During 2015, the tool will be developed and the database established. In 2016, the tool will be extensively tested with SMEs from different sectors across EU Member States. It will be launched on-line by the European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre in early 2017.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The value of service contract is EUR 383 950, and the in-house IT development had a budget of EUR 100 000.

3.12. SME PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The SME performance review focuses on the implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe and consists of **annual reports, the SBA country fact sheets and studies**.

The 2015 annual report includes an overview of the size, structure and importance of European SMEs, outlines the major trends and provides a summary of recent policy developments. It also includes a specific chapter dedicated to the contribution of SMEs to job creation.

The SBA fact sheets (35) provide more in-depth information on the country level. They are structured according to the 10 principles of the SBA and are based on core indicators which relate the individual Member States to the Union average.

A tender was launched in August 2014 for the next cycle of the SBA country fact sheets and the annual EU-SME report 2014/2015. Three tenderers submitted offers which had been evaluated in the meantime. The contract was signed with the Consortium CARSA in November 2014 for EUR 894 740. Works started immediately thereafter with the final delivery date of the outputs being the SME assembly in Luxembourg on 20 November 2015.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The final results of the SME Performance Review 2014/2015 were published during the 2015 SME assembly on 19 November in Luxembourg. They comprise of the final versions of the Annual report and 35 SBA country fact sheets.

Intended impact:

Influencing SME policy makers: The report and the fact sheets are directly presented and discussed with the MS delegates in a dedicated working group on "policy-relevant research on entrepreneurship and SMEs"; the nature of the discussion with delegates during the working group as well as during the SPR production process and post-release would establish the impact on policy-making (complemented by additional issues such as the referencing of the SPR in national policy documents, etc);

The SME performance review provided information to the Competitiveness Council in February 2016 dedicated to fast-growing firms and scale-ups.

It also contributes to evidence-based policy making and economic policy coordination aimed to achieve key Europe 2020 goals. It feeds European Semester Report, the Country Specific Recommendations and the country visits and discussions with the member States. For example, in the last mission to Slovenia, the the Slovene national authorities paid a lot of attention to SMEs and to the issues stated in the 2015 fact sheets. In subsequent meetings, they submitted their action plans for addressing the issues stated as the SME policy priorities in the SBA fact sheet.

Outreach to the wider public: the SPR 2014/2015 was, as in the years, before launched with a high-profile press conference during the SME assembly; a maximal media coverage reflected in a high number of press articles, social media references as well as his and downloads from the SPR website would be a potential indicator of the outreach impact;

Influencing secondary policy research and informing stakeholders by making the complete data set and policy database publicly available to researchers; subsequent third-party articles citing the results of the SPR would be an expected impact in this domain.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The SME Performance Review is repeated every year with a duration of 12 months, so the next cycle for the SPR 2015/2016 has already started.

Meetings of the expert group on SME policy research discussing the SME annual report and the SBA country fact sheets: June 2015 and January 2016 in Brussels

BENEFICIARIES

SME Policy-makers on the EU as well as national level, press and general public as well as SME stakeholders and researchers (see also 3). This measure contributes to the production of valuable, up-to-date data and analysis on EU-wide- as well as MS-level on latest SME trends and SME policy developments as a basis for evidence-based decision-making in this area, in particular with a view to the SBA implementation.

3.13. FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT (SBA) IMPLEMENTATION

The measure follows-up the implementation of the SBA and in particular aims to improve its governance by monitoring EU and Member State activities, ensuring and organising the systematic exchange of best practice through events, online tools and experts meetings.

In particular it covers **the SME Envoys network meetings, the implementation of the SME Envoys network work programme, the SME Week and the annual SME Assembly including the European Enterprise Promotion Awards (EEPAs)**. It will furthermore cover **meetings of the SBA National Contact Points (Sherpas to the SME Envoys), the SME Week coordinators and the EEPA single points of contact**.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

SME Envoys/SME Assembly

- 4 Meetings of the Envoys; subjects: licensing, e-government, clusters, 2nd chance;
- SME Assembly (1-3 October 2014), Naples: 840 participants; 88% of delegates found the SME Assembly useful or very useful);
- SBA implementation conference: March 2015, Athens.

European SME Week

- 1,091 local events organised in 2014 within the SME Week umbrella campaign.
- A joint meeting of the SME Week and European Enterprise Promotion Awards (EEPA) coordinators to shape and launch the 2015 editions of SME Week and EEPA exercise (28 November 2014).

European Enterprise Promotion Awards (EEPAs) 2014:

- 31 countries participated in the 2014 edition - all 28 EU Member States as well as Iceland, Serbia and Turkey(a record: 30 countries in 2012; 28 countries in 2013);
- 358 national entries (402 in 2012, 317 in 2013);
- 58 national winners submitted to European level;
- Award ceremony: 2 October 2014, Naples (SME Assembly) the seven winners, 12 runners up and three special mentions were announced.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

SME Envoys/SME Assembly

- Two meetings of the SME Envoy network in 1st and 2nd quarters 2015;
- The continuation of the SME Envoy network activities (including the preparation of the report to the Competitiveness Council); meetings already being scheduled for 2016 (1st quarter 2015, The Hague);
- Meeting of the SBA Sherpas (1st quarter 2015);
- SME Assembly 2015 to be held from 18 to 20 November in Luxembourg under the auspices of the Luxembourg Presidency.

European SME Week:

- Broadening the scope of European SME Week events by integrating local debates on the Single Market issues relevant to SMEs;
- Meeting of SME Week national co-ordinators to be held on 23 October 2015.

European Enterprise Promotion Awards (EEPAs):

- The 2015 Award ceremony to be held at the SME Assembly in Luxembourg (19

November 2015);

- Meeting of EEPA single points of contact planned for January 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Meetings (SME Envoys, SBA National Contact Points, SME Week coordinators and the EEPA single points of contact): EUR 200 000 committed
- SME Assembly in Naples and SBA implementation conference in Athens: EUR 1 413 000.

INDICATORS

1. Number of meetings organised:

- 4 SME envoys meetings in 2014 (plus two meetings in 2015- topics: SME test, Access to Finance);
- 1 SME Assembly;
- 1 joint SME Week co-and EEPA single points of contact meeting.

2. Number of participants:

- SME Assembly: 840;
- Envoy network every time around 60;
- SME Week/EEPA meeting 49 attendees.

3. Timely dissemination of the results:

- Envoy network: all presentations and other documents are disseminated to participants and rendered public via the working group register of the Commission;
- SME Assembly: all results are rendered available to all participants in real time via the conference application;
- SME Week: publication of events in the database immediately after the approval by national co-ordinator;
- EEPA: publication of the jury proceeding results within one week after the jury meeting;

4. Progress achieved in the implementation of the measures in the 10 key areas of the SBA:

- 10 good practices identified within the EEPA 2014 process (7 winners and 3 special mentions)

3.14. SMALL BUSINESS ACT IMPLEMENTATION: OUTREACH TOOLS

The objective is to provide communication and information tools to promote the SME policy and its implementation in the Member States and inform SMEs, SME stakeholders and relevant public authorities about SME policy, economic developments and available support at EU and Member States level, including the quantitative the SME performance review.

The measure includes:

- Monitoring implementation of SBA and SBA review & promotion (i.e. Business Planet TV magazine 4th season);
- Small Business portal;
- Outreach activities SME policy and SBA implementation - brochures, campaigns (reported in a separate fiche).

RESULTS AND IMPACT

- **Business Planet** (Euronews TV magazine), the 4th season started on 12 June 2015 (5 magazines broadcast so far);
- **Small Business portal**: update of the content; publication of 12 success stories in 21 languages (on-going activities under the specific contract);
- **Publication of guidebooks** on support to SME policy from structural funds.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

- **Business Planet**: The continuation of the 4th season (19 more episodes to be produced and broadcast until June 2016); possible continuation with the 5th season (depending on the availability of the new FPA).
- **Small Business portal**: Terms of references for the call for tender for editorial maintenance. Further revamping of the small business portal. New contract for editorial maintenance): November 2015-November 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

- 5 May 2015 – signature of a specific grant agreement with Euronews (EUR 628 729).
- Small Business portal: a new contract for EUR 60 000 signed in the 4th quarter of 2015.

INDICATORS

1. Timely production of tools (web-based, audio-visual and/or printed leaflets, social media campaigns): all Business Planet magazines produced and broadcast according to schedule.
2. Effective dissemination of tools and use in major events: Business Planet magazines disseminated via the Small Business portal and EC social media; broadcast of the Business Planet magazines envisaged during the SME Assembly in Luxembourg.

3.15. ENHANCING EUROPEAN TOURISM'S COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

In line with the Lisbon Treaty, the actions launched under COSME 2014 aimed at contributing to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially by focusing on the enhancement of the competitiveness and sustainable growth of the tourism sector in Europe.

The supported activities, implementing the actions announced in the Commission Communication on Tourism¹⁵ of 30 June 2010, aimed in general at:

- Encouraging, directly or indirectly, the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in the tourism sector;
- Promoting trans-national cooperation, particularly by: the exchange of good practice, by increasing the demand, diversifying the offer and improve quality of tourism supply, and also by mainstreaming tourism in the EU policies and funds.

More specifically, the following activities have been implemented in 2014 under the five main operational objectives:

1) INCREASING TOURISM FLOWS IN LOW/MEDIUM SEASONS

This action aimed at facilitating the increase of tourism flows during the low and medium seasons between EU Member States and/or non-EU inbound markets, targeting in particular specific groups, such as seniors (notably through specific active and healthy ageing activities) and youth.

127 proposals (from a total of 736 entities – public & regional administration, European tourism associations, SMEs) were registered following the call for proposals launched in October 2014. Given the high number of proposals submitted, the award decision/signature of the contacts has been postponed to July-August 2015 and the implementation of the projects started between 1st July and 1st September 2015. 8 projects have been co-financed (6 with focus on seniors target group and 2 on youth). Projects implementation will last from 12 to 18 months, hence the impact of this action will be known at the beginning of 2017.

2) DIVERSIFYING THE EU TOURISM OFFER AND PRODUCTS

This action was implemented through several calls for proposals:

Support to projects developing and promoting sustainable transnational tourism products.

83 proposals (from a total of 556 entities – public & regional administrations, European tourism associations, SMEs) were registered following the call for proposals launched in July 2014, showing the great interest of different tourism-related stakeholders in developing and promoting sustainable transnational tourism products focusing on sport or wellness activity tourism related to coastal or maritime or mountain or rural tourism. Given the high number of proposals, the award decision/signature of the contacts took place in May 2015 and the implementation of the projects started in June 2015. Given the available budget, 5 projects

¹⁵ COM(2010) 352/3, <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0352:EN:NOT>

have been co-financed for the duration of maximum 18 months. The impact of this action will be known at the end of 2016/beginning of 2017.

Support to European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) – selection

20 proposals from National Tourism ministries/organizations have been registered following the call for proposals launched in April 2014, showing the interest of 20 countries to select the European Destination of Excellence in this edition of the EDEN competition focusing on tourism and local gastronomy. Due to the setting up of the new IT environment for COSME contacts managed by EASME, the award decision/signature of the contacts has been postponed to March 2015 and the implementation of the projects started in March 2015 (for some countries retroactively January 2015). 18 projects have been co-financed for the duration of 18 months (Greece has decided to step out and did not sign the grant agreement while Romania has decided to participate at its own costs, without the EU co-funding). The direct impact of this action will be achieved by the end of 2015 when 18 new selected EDEN destinations will be known and in addition will be awarded at European level during the EDEN Award Ceremony in Brussels (16 December 2015).

Diversification of tourism offer through synergies with creative and high-end industries

11 proposals (from a total of 99 entities – public & regional administrations, European tourism associations, SMEs) were registered following the call for proposals launched in June 2014, showing the great interest of different stakeholders from the field of tourism in developing and promoting tourism offer based on creative and high-end industries. One project, CHIELI (Chocolate Heritage in European Life and Identity – The European Chocolate Way), was selected for co-financing. It aims at creating, developing and promoting a new European itinerary, connecting tourism and the high-end industries producers of excellent chocolate in 6 Member States (Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, UK). The grant agreement was signed in June 2015 and the implementation of the project started in August 2015. The project's duration is 12 months. The impact of this action will be known at the end of 2016.

3) ENHANCE TOURISM QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, SKILLS, INFORMATION AND INNOVATION

The main actions implemented under this objective consisted of:

- The production of contents for the ICT and Tourism Business Support Portal;
- organisation of events, meetings and actions targeting public and private stakeholders as well as tourists to spread information about funding opportunities, policy initiatives and other actions developed for the benefit of the sector.

A call for tenders was launched to select a contractor for the production of contents for the Tourism Business Portal.

On 31 December 2014 a call for tender was published on e-TED for a service contract aimed at stimulating digital entrepreneurship by raising awareness on ICT potentialities and enhancing digital skills of European businesses in tourism. The specific objectives were: to assess via a survey the degree of digitalisation of tourism SMEs and support the SME's in acquiring the right digital skills, to facilitate the understandings of latest trends and opportunities through optimised content of Tourism Business Portal (http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tourism-business-portal/index_en.htm) and to provide a platform for exchange of views between the stakeholders active in digital tourism. The contract was signed in October 2015 and would be implemented during the following 24 months.

A number of events and meetings were organised to inform public and private stakeholders as well as tourists on funding opportunities and policy initiatives benefiting the tourism sector, among others:

- European Tourism Forum (in cooperation with the Italian Presidency), Naples, 30-31 October 2014;
- European Tourism Day, Brussels, 1st December 2014;
- 9th Meeting of the Network of European Destination of Excellence, 21 October 2014;
- Info Day on EU funding for Tourism presented the EU programmes and support available under the 2014 - 2020 financial framework for initiatives in the tourism sector, Brussels, 20 March 2015;
- Several targeted experts' meetings on, among others, the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for sustainable management of tourist destinations, low/medium season tourism, clusters on coastal and maritime tourism, IT and tourism, cultural heritage etc.

4) IMPROVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE SECTOR

The main actions implemented under this objective consisted of:

The annual Eurobarometer survey on “Preferences of Europeans towards tourism”;

The 2015 Eurobarometer survey provided data on the attitudes of tourists towards holidays and contributed to the tourism socio-economic knowledge base with regards to trends in tourism demand. It is an important forecasting instrument for the following tourism seasons. The results of this survey were ready in March 2015 and are published on: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/vto/eurobarometer>

The Virtual Tourism Observatory website (VTO)

In order to enhance and update the content of the platform a specific work contract under DIGIT FWC (ESP-DESI III) was signed in December 2014 with an Intramuros expert for the duration of 1 year, starting 1st of March 2015. The following actions are currently carried out:

- Revamp of the menu and the landing page with the insertion of a set of interactive charts
- Development of a new indicator to measure and benchmark the degree of seasonality in the tourism sector (Gini index);
- Develop a new section collecting links on the main policies that apply to tourism in the EU;
- Production of short reports on themes relevant to the programme of the Unit;
- Perform ad hoc research to feed infographics to be used in social-media campaigns;
- Brief ad hoc analysis to support the unit policy initiatives in tourism;
- Monitoring of the VTO site analytics.

<https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/vto/>.

Production of the “Tourism Trends and Policies 2016” report

The bi-annual agreement with OECD foresees a new joint EU-OECD publication on "Tourism Trends and Policies 2016" which will be produced as a contribution to the

international tourism policy debate and will focus on transport and tourism and on the emergence and impact of the sharing economy in tourism. The cooperation allows for those EU member states and candidate countries which are not members of the OECD to be included in the scope of the publication. Moreover papers and/or reviews on the following topics are foreseen in the framework of this cooperation: Innovative financing approaches to support tourism SMEs; Large-scale events as catalysts for tourism, local development, jobs and growth. The implementation of the ad hoc agreement started in January 2015 for the period of 2 years.

5) INCREASING EUROPE'S VISIBILITY AS A TOURIST DESTINATION AS WELL AS OF ITS DIVERSE DESTINATIONS

The main actions implemented under this objective consisted of:

An international tourism communication campaign

The contract for an information and communication campaign on the European Commission's support for tourism in the EU was signed on 10/08/2015. The duration of the contract will be of 18 months.

The information campaign shall contribute to promoting the image of Europe as a collection of diverse, sustainable and high quality tourist destinations and experiences towards selected target groups of potential tourists. The main target will be the European citizens who will be motivated to take their holidays in the EU and possibly in more than one country. Part of the budget will be devoted to address potential travellers from third countries.

Promotion of European Cultural Routes in cooperation with the Council of Europe (ad hoc agreement with the Council of Europe).

The agreement's main objective is to contribute to the touristic visibility and quality of European Cultural Routes certified by the Council of Europe or preparing for certification. The concrete activities to be implemented during 18 months of implementation of the ad hoc grant starting in September 2015 are mainly about promotion and capacity building (improving the online map of cultural routes; blogger's trips; specific, thematic training courses for route managers; marketing study to identify routes sufficiently developed for promotion with tour operators). This action is the follow-up of three previous joint management agreements implemented together with the Council of Europe under a specific Preparatory Action promoted by the European Parliament (Promotion of European and transnational tourism products with special emphasis on cultural and industrial products).

RESULTS AND IMPACT

To increase tourism flows in low season, 8 new projects (public-private partnerships) have been co-financed with partners from 17 countries. In terms of impacts, the projects will contribute to increasing the number of nights spent by EU tourists in other Member States during the low season.

To diversify the EU tourism offer and products, 5 new projects (public-private partnerships) have been co-financed **to support and promote development of sustainable transnational tourism products** with partners from 15 countries. 16 SMEs are directly involved in the consortia receiving grants. In terms of impacts, the projects will contribute to diversifying European offer of transnational tourism products. In the long terms, the projects can trigger an increase in the number of tourists travelling transnationally.

18 destinations have been selected as **European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)** in gastronomy from 18 participating countries. In terms of impacts, this initiative increased awareness about and gave additional visibility to lesser known/emerging destinations and gastronomic tourism offers in Europe.

To enhance tourism quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills, information and innovation, the actions implemented and events organised contributed to the increased awareness about and visibility of the key opportunities, policy initiatives and other actions developed for the benefit of the sector. The positive feedback from numerous stakeholders confirms the usefulness of events and educational tools (guides, webinars) made available for the tourism sector.

The actions **to improve socio-economic knowledge of the sector** received a positive feedback from tourism industry stakeholders / national tourism administrations on quality, relevance and added-value of documents produced confirms the importance of this action for the sector.

61 reports/studies were included in the VTO knowledge base.

The web analytics on the usage of the VTO (January 2015-to date), more precisely:

- Visits: 4 871 (of which 1 534 returning visits).
- Page views: 17 763, of which the most visited: country fact sheets (1 898).
- Actions per visit: 3.7.
- Downloads (unique): 203 of which the most downloaded: Flash Eurobarometer Report (26).

To increase Europe's visibility as a tourist destination as well as of its diverse destinations, numerous communication events have been organised e.g. through support to Council of Europe's programme on cultural routes.

Moreover the integrated campaign to promote tourism in the EU was launched in June 2016. The campaign shall contribute to promoting the image of Europe as a collection of diverse, sustainable and high quality tourist destinations and experiences towards selected target groups of potential tourists. The main targets are the European citizens who will be motivated to take their holidays in the EU. It is expected the campaign will reach directly 5.7 million people. Number of articles in the media and traffic increase to EC tourism portals is monitored as the campaign is currently ongoing. Part of the budget will be devoted to address also potential travellers from third countries, by the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination at an international fair in the USA in January 2017.

More information on past and on-going work as well as outputs can be accessed through the website: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/index_en.htm

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

Following the publication of calls for proposals/ calls for tenders funded through the 2014 COSME Work Programme, the implementation of many actions is now ongoing and others in Autumn 2015. Most of the results and deliverables were submitted during the last quarter of 2015 and throughout 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The total budget committed in 2014 amounts to EUR 8 052 474.

More specifically:

- Increasing tourism in low/medium seasons - call for proposals EUR 1 794 595 (EUR

- 1 800 000).
- Sustainable transnational thematic tourism products - call for proposals EUR 1 112 251 (EUR 1 150 000).
 - EDEN EUR 633 748 (EUR 750 000).
 - Diversification of tourism offer through synergies with creative and high-end industries – call for proposals EUR 400 000 (EUR 400 000).
 - Enhance tourism quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills and innovation – EUR 164 925 (EUR 180 000).
 - (Events & meetings) Enhance tourism quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills, information and innovation – Information and awareness on funding opportunities, policy initiatives and other actions developed for the sector EUR 358 918 (EUR 346 000).
 - Eurobarometer Survey EUR 536 457 (EUR 500 000).
 - Production of the “Tourism Trends and Policies 2016” report (under an ad hoc grant agreement with OECD) EUR 497 217 (EUR 500 000).
 - Virtual Tourism Observatory website (VTO) content provision and management EUR 126 083 (EUR 272 000).
 - An international tourism communication campaign advertising Europe as a unique set of very different destinations EUR 2 148 280 (EUR 2 150 000).
 - Increasing Europe's visibility as a tourist destination as well as of its destinations (support to Council of Europe's programme on cultural routes) EUR 280 000 (EUR 280 000).

INDICATORS

At this stage of implementation, data is available only on some indicators. Other indicators could be measured only after the end of the implementation period after evaluating the final results of the actions.

1. Increasing tourism flows in low season

- Number of co-financed projects: 8
- Number of countries participating in transnational cooperation projects: 17
- Number of created public-private partnerships and number of stakeholders participating in transnational cooperation projects: 8

2. Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products

- Number of co-financed projects: 5
- Number of countries participating in transnational cooperation projects: 15
- Number of SMEs directly involved in the development of transnational cooperation projects: 16 European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)
- Number of emerging destinations selected as destinations of excellence in gastronomy: 18 winners and up to 4 runners-up per 18 participating countries
- Number of participating countries: 18

4. Improving socio-economic knowledge of the sector

- Number of reports/studies (co-)produced and included in the VTO knowledge base: 61 (Eurobarometer survey).
- Web analytics on the usage of the VTO (January 2015-to date), more precisely:
 - Visits: 4,871 (of which 1,534 returning visits).
 - Page views: 17,763, of which the most visited: country fact sheets (1,898).
 - Actions per visit: 3.7.

- Downloads (unique): 203 of which the most downloaded: Flash Eurobarometer Report (26).

BENEFICIARIES

National administrations in charge of tourism, regional administrations, European tourism associations, SMEs, not for profit associations, public and private entities etc.

3.16. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN "A MORE EFFICIENT DEFENCE SECTOR FOR A MORE SECURE EUROPE"

Action 1: To assess critical raw materials for the EU defence sector

An administrative arrangement with the Joint Research Centre was signed in September 2014 for EUR 150 000. On 30/10/14 the JRC launched a preliminary study aimed at collecting data needed for the assessment that has been carried out in 2015.

The work on raw materials & defence has advanced well following a close coordination of the activities between the JRC and DG GROW. The JRC is expecting to deliver a final report, including operational and policy recommendations by end September 2015, setting out a methodological approach on how to assess criticality of raw materials in the area of defence as well as a first assessment and indication of a way forward.

Action 2: The dual-use support guide,

Released by the Commission in October 2014, into French, German, Italian and Spanish languages, the publication and dissemination of the guide-book is a key action in support of SMEs and Regions in the action plan.

The guide was disseminated at:

- European Seminar on regions and dual-use technologies in Bordeaux on 11-12 June 2015.
- The EDA seminar on ESIF in Rome on 5-6 October 2015.
- The conference with the region of Andalucía on 27-28 October 2015.

All available language versions are available on:

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/defence/industrial-policy/smes/index_en.htm.

The guides are being well received by defence-related clusters and SMEs. The translations had a cost of EUR 9 951.

Action 3: Workshop on "Strengthening Europe's industry: dual-use and smart clustering".

This action fits with the wider objective to raise awareness about dual-use funding opportunities at EU level to relevant stakeholders.

Over 120 participants attended the event organised in Brussels on 25/11, together with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European association of development agencies (EURADA). A first session outlined how COSME, H2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) could be used in support of dual-use projects. A second session allowed stakeholders from defence-related clusters to share their experiences and associated challenges. A third session focused on ways to develop dual-use opportunities at EU level with interventions from ECSEL JU, Enterprise Europe Network and EDA. The event was concluded with a successful B2B session which consisted of about 60 pre-arranged bilaterals.

The workshop revealed a huge interest from defence-related clusters and SMEs in dual-use funding opportunities at EU level. It provided great insight and thus helped to shape the workshops the Commission has been/is organising in 2015 in Bordeaux and Seville. EDA, with Commission involvement, also organised a follow-up meeting on 26/11/14 to brainstorm on possible follow-up actions.

The organisation of the event totalled EUR 9 871.

3.17. HIGH-LEVEL GROUP ON ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The High Level Group on Administrative Burdens (HLG AB) was set up in 2007 as part of the Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the EU. Its mandate ran until October 2014, with a focus on administrative burden reduction, especially for SMEs, and on efficient public administration. This measure therefore continued on-going work under the EIP and for the last year (2014) has been financed by the COSME programme.

Under its last mandate the HLG AB looked into the national implementation of administrative burden reduction measures in order to examine whether the reductions in administrative burdens have reached businesses 'on the ground', identified best practice and looked for further possibilities to implement EU legislation in the least burdensome way.

The Commission also paid for studies and the development of IT tools on issues of regulatory burden reduction, including on the best methods to measure the costs and benefits of EU regulation, testing these methods and the impacts of EU regulation, with a particular focus on SMEs.

At the end of the mandate on 31 October, 2014, a final report has been published confirming all the work done, opinions and reports produced within its period of office.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

- A budget of EUR 150 000 has been committed to cover expert's reimbursements for travels, accommodation allowances and all the costs linked to the organisation of the meetings and events. A remaining amount of EUR 35 000 was left and de-committed in 2015.
- A budget of EUR 200 000 has been committed for maintenance and development of IT tools, such as the Administrative Burden Calculator or other screening IT tools.

RESULTS/IMPACTS

The Commission has successfully completed its Action Programme for reducing administrative burdens for businesses in the EU: altogether, the measures adopted so far at EU level have brought estimated annual savings for business in the region of EUR 33.4 billion, which represents a reduction of the burden by 27%. **The Commission has therefore exceeded the 25% reduction target, set in the Action Programme.**

In 2014, 7 plenary meetings of the high-level group have been held and 12 visits to Member States organised for the chairman and the members.

The HLG AB drafted a final report which summarises the work done, opinions and reports produced by the HLG AB.

A final conference; "Smart Regulation in the EU – Building on a strong foundation" was also held in Brussels on 14 October 2014, with the participation of President Barroso and Dr Stoiber with more than 500 participants.

3.18. MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

The objective is to carry out an evaluation concerning the following 2 targets:

- First an 'ex-post' evaluation on the effectiveness of the 'Supply Chain Initiative' on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- The second is constituted by the voluntary initiatives/national stakeholders' platforms set up at national level since 2011. The influence, which the adopted principles of good practice or the 'Supply Chain Initiative' might have had on the creation, rules, design, comprehensiveness (involvement of operators representing the whole food supply chain) and working methods of potential voluntary initiatives will be also investigated.

The contract was signed for a value of EUR 188 750 after an open call for tenders. Three offers were received and the contract was awarded to Areté Srl (Italy).

RESULTS/IMPACTS

The study report was published and presented to the Sherpa group of the High level forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain in February 2016.¹⁶

The action was one of the main sources of information that was used to prepare the Commission report on unfair business-to-business trading practices in the food supply chain of 29 January 2016 (COM/2016/032 final). Based on the findings, the Commission has suggested changes to improve the effectiveness of self-regulatory initiatives against unfair business-to-business trading practices in the food supply chain. The Commission's High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain will monitor how those suggestions are taken up by the stakeholders.

3.19. EXCHANGES OF GOOD PRACTICES TO SUPPORT EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS

Member States were consulted in autumn 2013 on a list of circa 5 themes and open ended suggestions. The main objective of each individual exchange is to:

- Identify the key factors that are conducive to best performance in the selected area;
- Allow stakeholders to exchange expertise and experience;
- Formulate recommendations that could serve as guidance for policy makers when designing reform measures.

There were two exchanges on:

- **Market Surveillance Activities Related to Non-Food Consumer Products Sold Online**
- **R&D Tax Incentives**

Each exchange consisted of the following stages:

1. **Review of literature** and existing surveys of best practice, overview of existing Member States' policies, identification of potential countries with the best

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8652&lang=en&title=Publication%3A-Monitoring-of-the-implementation-of-principles-of-good-practice-in-vertical-relationships-in-the-food-supply-chain

performance or those that most-improved in the specific policy area selected (main output: inception paper feeding the work of the expert group);

2. **Expert working group** – an ad hoc working group (practitioners from national administrations, private sector, academics, OECD, etc.) carried out an in-depth technical analysis of a selected number of countries to identify key factors, elements and institutional drivers that are linked to best performance in the specific area (main output: analytical follow-up paper outlining possible good practice recommendations and policy outlook);
3. **Technical seminar** – the findings of the working group were discussed at a seminar attended by representatives from the relevant departments of Member State administrations.
4. **Results:** Based on the outcome of the first 3 steps, final policy/good practice/policy recommendations were drawn up and are available at: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/competitiveness/reports/index_en.htm

The first exchange's aim was to identify good practices in market surveillance activities related to non-food consumer products sold online and to evaluate their effectiveness for an exchange. It aims to promote an understanding of the policy principles and show what they mean in practice in a way that can assist other countries to develop similar approaches. A report was produced built around 18 cases of good practice in three categories: monitoring and detection; consumer awareness raising; and business awareness raising.

The report produced for the second exchange describes the R&D tax incentives available in 33 countries, presents the findings of the existing academic literature on the effectiveness and efficiency of tax incentives, and provides a framework for defining good practices. The vast majority of studies surveyed in this report conclude that R&D tax credits are effective in stimulating investment in R&D. There is limited evidence for a positive impact of R&D tax incentives on innovation. The estimates of the size of this effect are widely diverging and are not always comparable across countries.

The total budget used was EUR 173 050.

4. PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

4.1. ERASMUS FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Erasmus for Entrepreneurs is a mobility scheme that allows potential or newly established entrepreneurs to spend a period of time collaborating with an experienced entrepreneur in another participating country.

These mobility actions aim to help the entrepreneurs enrich their experiences as well as learn and network with entrepreneurs in other participating countries. This measure will expand and strengthen the existing network of Intermediary Organisations (IO) which acts as local contact points in participating countries. The IOs are in charge of recruiting and matching the entrepreneurs and facilitating the mobility actions. They also promote the programme and its benefits at local and national level.

This measure is a follow-up of the preparatory action carried out in 2009-2011 and under the EIP objective Entrepreneurship and Innovation Culture in 2012 and 2013.

The interim evaluation of the preparatory action has confirmed the added value of this action and the lack of similar schemes at national level. It also confirms the efficiency of the operational set up to fulfil the pursued objectives and the quality of the exchanges carried out.

The cross-border nature of the action makes it unique as a way of promoting entrepreneurship and is directly relevant to a key EU policy objective of internationalisation and helping new and growing businesses to take advantage of the EU's Internal Market.

The initiative is implemented via Call for Proposals. Expected applicants are consortia composed of at least 5 entities from at least 4 participating countries. Entities can be public or private entities whose core activity is in the field of business support. The submitted proposals are evaluated by external evaluators.

The rate of Union co-financing is up to 90 % of eligible costs incurred by the Intermediary Organizations. The contribution shall not exceed 75 % of the programme management costs but may be up to 100 % of the sum allocated by beneficiaries (Intermediary Organizations) to third parties (sub-grantee, i.e. new entrepreneurs) participating in a mobility action. Financial assistance to new entrepreneurs participating in a mobility action takes the form of a scale of unit cost of maximum EUR 6,600 per entrepreneur within the limit of EUR 500 000 by grant.

Promotion of the benefits and achievements of the Erasmus for Young entrepreneurs and technical support to users is provided by the Support Office that further assists the Commission in the promotion, the coordination of the IOs' network and the day-to-day support. Activities to support the network are carried out, including regular meetings with the IOs to foster networking.

This activity is implemented by a Service contract awarded to the "Support Office".

RESULTS AND IMPACT

So far^[1], over 13 000 entrepreneurs' profiles have been registered and over 4100 matches involving 8 200 entrepreneurs established. A survey shows that more than a third of the would-be entrepreneurs who took part actually started a business; and two thirds of the experienced entrepreneurs participating gained new ideas or technical know-how, tapped into new markets and increased their turnover. Furthermore, 56% of host and 30% of new

^[1] Figures collected in 2015.

entrepreneurs hired new staff after their exchange. The long-term results prove that the exchange is a decisive experience for start-up entrepreneurs. 78% of the new entrepreneurs who created their company after their exchange consider that the programme contributed significantly to their ambition to set up a business.

1) EYE - Call for Proposal

The call for proposal was published in May 2014 and the deadline for submitting the applications was August 2014. The evaluation of the proposals was done with the assistance of external experts. The final budget available at the end of 2014 was EUR 6 571 464 with which the EASME could co-finance 15 projects, out of the 110 applications received, each having a project duration of 24 months (01/02/2015 – 31/01/2017). It is expected that with this projects about 2,200 new and host entrepreneurs would be involved (matched).

The 2nd 6-monthly monitoring report was received for all 15 projects for reporting period (1/8/2015-31/1/2016) and an evaluation of results is currently ongoing. The global impact will be known at the end of the implementation period, after January 2017.

2) Support Office – Call for Tender

The key role of the Support Office is to assist and support EASME and the European Commission in the management of the EYE Programme and to contribute to promotion and communication activities. The Support Office coordinates the activities of the European Partnerships (EPs) and Intermediary Organisations (IOs) of the EYE Programme.

The Call for Tender was published in October 2014 with a deadline for submitting the applications, November 2014. 8 offers were received and the contract with Eurochambres was signed at the end of April 2015 for a period of 24 months until end of April 2017 for EUR 598 025.

During the implementation period the Support Office should send different deliverables and an Interim Report in May 2016. The final report is due at the end of April 2017.

The global impact will be known at the end of the contract, namely after April 2017.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

Following the publication of the call for proposals and of the call for tenders in 2014, the implementation of the actions started in the first half of 2015. The results and deliverables will be submitted during 2015, 2016 and 2017.

INDICATORS

At this stage of implementation, partial data is available on some indicators. Other indicators could be measured only after the end of the implementation period after evaluating the final results of the actions:

- 749 relationships achieved by end of January 2016;
- 174 intermediary organisations involved in the implementation of the programme;
- 32 countries are covered by the Intermediary Organisations.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries include the following groups of legal entities:

- Public entities responsible for or active in the fields of economic affairs, enterprise, business support or related issues,
- Chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of handicrafts or similar bodies,
- Business support organisations, start-up centres and incubators,

- Business associations and business support networks,
- Public and private entities offering business support services.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Exchange between Maurizio Ortiz (France) - NE and Benedikt Preisler (Germany)- HE

Maurizio is engineer who was leading a research project in cerebral palsy. He decided to concentrate his efforts on developing new life-improving solutions for children: a technology designed to make therapy funny and which can be used at home. His research materialised in a patented medical device which focuses on wrist rehabilitation. His company WRIHA became an innovative startup in 2012. To commercialise and distribute his medical equipment Maurizio decided to participate in the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and went to Germany the first largest European medical device market. Thanks to this stay abroad he made new commercial relations and sold the wrist rehabilitation device abroad. He also signed an agreement and made the device available to 150 disabled children and their families. More on: <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/page.php?cid=09&id=350>

- Exchange between Erdman Samuel Doumbè (Belgium) - NE and Cecilia Mosze Tham (Spain)- HE

The idea of starting-up JUST MAKE HIT during his time in a recording studio in Paris. It took him few years to prepare his project as he needed first to learn how to become an entrepreneur. To this aims he attended various training sessions in business management, workshops of which one was dedicated to Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and also had a prior entrepreneurial experience in Brazil. Erdman found a suitable host in Barcelona. During his stay abroad Erdman had the opportunity to work on the WeCode BCN event co-organise by MOB & IronHack. As project manager for this event, Erdman was responsible for sponsorship and the communication strategy that the prepared together with the head of communications. For Erdman, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs was an enriching experience at both levels: professional and personal.

‘Organising such a project enabled me to strengthen my entrepreneurial qualities, to identify and improve my weaknesses, and above all to learn from working in peer with my host entrepreneur, Cecilia Tham.’ said Erdman.

The exchange was a chance for him to put into practice the theoretical knowledge he has acquired during training sessions. In addition to this, the experience and best practices shared with other entrepreneurs enabled him to improve some aspects of his business plan. Last but not least he found partners with whom he currently works. More on: <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/page.php?cid=09&id=376>

- Exchange between Diogo Cruz (Portugal) – NE and Tim Lagerpusch (Germany) – HE

Sharing entrepreneurial knowledge through real-life experience is essential for Tim Lagerpusch who has been a business owner since 2006 and co-founder of [SugarTrends](#) an online marketplace offering products brought from local shops across the world in 2012.

Thanks to the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs exchange SugarTrends benefited from a remodelling of its business plan and a new online marketing strategy. This significantly increased the business’ visibility and brought around 35 new local shops into its market place and an early stage increase in sales of 300%.

"New entrepreneur Diogo had the entrepreneurial abilities and skills we were looking for to develop our business further. Moreover with his degree in business and engineering he was the best candidate for this challenge." said Tim.

The fresh ideas of the new partner greatly contributed to the progress of Tim's business by creating solid business processes and the development of new IT systems to support the daily activities. The fruitful cooperation did not stop at the end of the exchange and the two entrepreneurs continue working on the development of SugarTrends into a global venture. More details at: <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/page.php?cid=09&id=278>

- Exchange between David Hahn (Germany)- NE and David Tronchoni (Spain) – HE

David with his team, he developed an advertising surface which can be used to charge smartphones safely. After this first entrepreneurial experience, David decided to pursue his business idea and applied for the 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs' programme, to be able to develop his business plan further with the help of an experienced business owner.

David needed to get some knowledge on how to start up, lead and develop a company. He wanted to learn more about lean management and optimization of business processes. The programme helped him to get in touch with host entrepreneur from Valencia, Spain. During his stay, new entrepreneur David had the possibility to engage in a wide range of activities such as the introduction of new concepts for the development of the host company abroad, including new concepts for the website, developing marketing, commercial and communication strategies in view of expanding Edinn Global to the German market. Both entrepreneurs continue to collaborate and new entrepreneur David is now working on new sales channels for Edinn Global on the German market. He is even planning on turning this newfound opportunity into his own business and becoming the German sales channel for other startups from abroad. For the two Davids, the exchange has lead not only to a very productive collaboration but also to a friendship to last for a while. More info at: <http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/page.php?cid=09&id=327>

4.2. SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Three actions have been implemented to support the entrepreneurship policy

1. Conference on Boosting the Business of Liberal Professions

The objective was to **follow-up to the 2013 working group on liberal professions** and to provide the appropriate forum for discussions on the draft policy paper: "Action Lines for Bolstering the Business of Liberal Professions" containing proposals for measures to support liberal professions, especially in business development, internationalisation and access to finance, and on the dissemination of the key messages.

The conference contributed to peer-learning across Member States, consolidation and unification of efforts, a joint approach to entering markets outside the European Union, and establishing a level playing field for liberal professions within Europe concerning support measures. It gathered 103 representatives of national and European organisations of liberal professions across Europe.

The results of the conference served as a basis for the next meeting of the Working Group on Liberal Professions in the SME Assembly in October 2014 in Naples. For the first time the representatives of Liberal Professions attended the SME Assembly.

The Italian EU Presidency strongly supported the further development of policy for Liberal Professions. ADEPP and EurelPro organised a meeting on "The role of liberal professions for European growth" on 2/10/2014 in Naples, as a follow-up.

The European Parliament continues to show strong interest to the further promotion of liberal professions (See Question for oral answer 000080/2015 and Hearing on Liberal Professions).

The European Economic and Social Committee adopted Opinion INT/687/2014 on Liberal Professions and conducted a study on their role.

2013-2014: the Working Group "Bolstering the Business of Liberal Professions" met four times throughout this period.

9 April 2014: Conference on Liberal Professions, Brussels

30 September 2014: Last meeting of the Working Group, SME Assembly 2014, Naples, Italy.

2015 -The final version of the Action Lines for Bolstering the Business of Liberal Professions to be adopted by the Commission (discussions are ongoing).

Planned budget: EUR 300 000. Commitment: EUR 178 358.

2. Conference on Second Chance for Honest Failed Entrepreneurs

The objective of this action was to **follow-up to the Commission expert group from 2010 and the 2007 Communication overcoming the stigma of failure** and to take stock of the developments in the Member States in terms of overcoming the stigma of failure and giving honest failed entrepreneurs a second chance to re-start their business as well as identifying good practices and defining future actions.

The conference gathered approx. 280 representatives from European and national administrations, business stakeholders, support services and academia to explore possibilities on how to improve the support to enterprises / entrepreneurs in distress and/or create a chance for a re-start of honest failed entrepreneurs and to craft concrete actions based on the results of the conference.

The following topics were addressed during the conference:

- Legal framework of the rescue culture in Europe
- Entrepreneurship education – preparation for failure
- Access to finance for a second chance
- How to learn from dealing with failure in other areas - aviation-health-nuclear-audit
- Support /advisory services for failed entrepreneurs
- Lessons learned from failure and second start – testimonials from entrepreneurs.

Each workshop contained a panel of half a dozen or so speakers, chaired by a moderator. Their presentations were followed by discussion and input from the floor. Each session resulted in specific conclusions for further action in its particular area. This report contains a summary of the day's proceedings and the recommendations which emerged.

As a follow-up to the conference the Commission will work in 2016 on a European network of early warning and advisory services that will help businesses in distress to either avert a bankruptcy or mitigate the effects of a crisis if liquidation cannot be avoided.

Planned budget: EUR 200 000. Commitment: EUR 149 140.

3. Conference on Transfers of Business

The objective of this action was to **follow-up to the Commission expert group in 2013 and earlier Communications and recommendations** and to promote findings of the Evaluation of the implementation of previous Commission recommendations (1994) and Communications (2006) on business transfers conducted in cooperation with the Commission expert group throughout 2013. It has identified good practices in fields such as regulatory and financial issues related to transfers, effective support the use of on-line platforms for business transfer, including testimonials from policy makers, entrepreneurs and support service providers,

The one-day conference gathered over 100 participants representing decision-makers at national and regional levels, representatives of institutions active in business transfer, including chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, business transfer professionals, matching platforms' operators; business support providers, entrepreneurs who went through transfers (representing both buyers and sellers) from EU Member States and COSME participating countries. Two plenary sessions and four parallel workshops included a scene-setter and practical examples and case studies of existing support measures and solutions that could possibly be replicated elsewhere.

It contributed to peer-learning across Member States, awareness rising for the topic at a European level and as a mid-term review and exchange of experiences related to the implementation of projects awarded under the call for proposal on business transfers (award decision in December 2013). The conference was considered highly relevant, informative and successful by both participants and organisers.

The budget planned for the event was EUR 200 000 and the real cost was EUR 149 140.

BENEFICIARIES

Representatives of institutions active in the field of liberal professions, second chance for bankrupts entrepreneurs and business transfers, including chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, business associations, professionals, matching platforms' operators; business support providers, decision-makers at national and regional levels.

4.3. DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MONITOR

The measure will result into state-of-play evidence on latest technology and market trends, evolution of industrial value chains and new business models leading the digital transformation of industry. It will benchmark national policies on digital transformation of industry, develop a digital transformation scoreboard. The measure will allow to measure country and industry progress and provide country-specific policy recommendations.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

The call for tenders was published in August 2014. The Digital Entrepreneurship Monitor started in February 2015. The work advances according to schedule.

The existing methodology, developed for the pilot phase of the digital entrepreneurship monitor, has been reviewed and updated. Three draft technology reports have been produced on ‘mobile and mobility’, ‘3d printing’, and ‘the internet of things’. The reports provide a deep dive on each technology by addressing their disruptive nature, the challenges for adoption, particular drivers and barriers and the new business models and opportunities that can arise.

Similarly, three draft industry reports have been produced on the automotive, the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries and mechanical engineering. These technology and industry reports incorporate a series of success stories which showcase identified businesses that have effectively used the new disruptive technologies described in the technology reports to transform the way they operate in the industries highlighted in the markets reports.

Three industry based surveys take place on a yearly basis inquiring companies in three different industries (1st round of 2016: health and pharmaceuticals, automotive and mechanical engineering) per edition. By the end of the third year of implementation, a total of 9 industries should have been represented in the scoreboard. The structure of the annual issues of the scoreboard was reviewed and the next publication is foreseen for autumn 2016.

The ‘high-level conference on the digital transformation of Europe’s industry and enterprises’ took place in Brussels on 16 February 2016. Hosted by commissioner Bieńkowska and bringing together three other members of the commission – Vice-President Katainen, commissioners Moedas and Oettinger – and more than 400 participants and 30 speakers, this event illustrated that the commission works together to enable European industry seize the unprecedented opportunities of the high-tech era. The conclusions of each session were brought together in a conference declaration which calls for immediate action by Europe’s business leaders and policymakers in seven areas.

Since March 2015, four strategic policy forum on digital entrepreneurship meetings and two member states board on digital entrepreneurship meetings have been organised. A first draft of the strategic policy forum’s recommendations has been provided on 10 March 2016. The final deliverables of the forum will be published in the following months and will include:

- The European blueprint for cities and regions as launch pads for digital transformation which will be presented at the open innovation 2.0 conference in Amsterdam on 23 May. This customized blueprint will provide specific knowledge and instructions based on the particular needs of the stakeholders (e.g. city mayors).
- The purpose of the report on “accelerating the uptake of big data and building competitive digital platforms in Europe”, published in April 2016, is to provide an understanding of the economic and social impact on Europe of the rise of digital platforms in industrial value chains, and of how the adoption of digital platforms and big data can boost the competitiveness of European industries
- The report on “reskilling the workforce: digital skills for industry” will be released in

the coming weeks and develop recommendations on actions to be taken to impart the necessary e-skills to drive the digital transformation of European industry, and how people can be motivated to take advantage of the available resources.

- The deliverable for the “become a digital ambassador experiences” will take the form of a toolkit that will allow users to interact with each disruptive technology and provide key materials to organize a successful digital pop-up experience.

Digital technologies and digitalization can make an increasingly important contribution towards meeting today's most pressing societal challenges (including climate change objectives) and supporting economic growth, by delivering new knowledge, products and services. Making full use of new technologies, in particular ICT, will be the key to building a more sustainable and energy efficient future to fight against the climate change. Digital technologies affect the full product lifecycle. They bring substantial gains in terms of carbon and energy efficiency. They also enable the management of end-of-life products in a smarter and energy-efficient way.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

It is planned to further develop and expand suitable mechanisms to observe and analyse the current diffusion and adoption dynamics of novel digital technologies, especially in the fields of mobile, cloud, social media, data analytics, digitisation, design, prototyping, testing and proof of concept, and collaborative technologies based on the experience of the digital entrepreneurship monitor. Together with the KETS-observatory both tools will regularly nurture the entrepreneurial discovery process of the smart specialisation strategies of European regions and countries with sound and objective statistical evidence, notably to support their regional SMEs & innovation ecosystems. This action will provide relevant data on how regional authorities can facilitate the uptake of promising technologies by their local SMEs.

The DEM action is accompanied by the awareness campaign for digital transformation and speeding up digital transformation and the uptake of advanced technologies at regional and local level (WATIFY - CIP 2013 & awareness raising campaign for the modernisation of Europe's industry - COSME 2015).

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The Digital Entrepreneurship Monitor will run until February 2018

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Service Contract – open call for tenders – Digital Entrepreneurship Monitor: EUR 2 389 443.

CONTRACTOR

A consortium composed of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Luxembourg, Carsa, ESN & IDATE

4.4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION (PAN-EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING INITIATIVE)

The project has been renamed "The European Entrepreneurship Education NETwork" (or EE-HUB.EU). In line with proposals included in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, the initiative aims to support a virtual hub on entrepreneurial learning at European level. This is driven by policy makers and experts with a strong knowledge of the topic and who commit themselves to facilitate progress and increase coordination of the efforts made by Member States and regions. The action encourages and supports networking of policy makers and practitioners across Europe with a strong interest in the development of entrepreneurship education and in deepening of cooperation at EU level in this area.

The main work areas are to support national policy frameworks and to recommend teacher training and support. Two work streams look into how businesses, private associations, regional authorities and organisations can support the uptake of entrepreneurship education. The network intends to map and analyse the entrepreneurship education ecosystem, including instruments to collect and assess information

RESULTS AND IMPACT IN 2014

The action is on-going. The launch event took place on 5-6 May 2015, and a network of 47 experts from different countries was set up to contribute to the activities. Work was started to identify exemplary practices as possible models for wider dissemination and mutual learning.

Four proposals were received and the beneficiary of the grant is JA Europe (coordinator of the project).

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE AFTER 2014/2015?

The implementation of the action will last till 2018.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

- Publication of the call for proposals – 11 June 2014
- Start of the action – 17 March 2015
- Duration of action – 36 months

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Planned budget: EUR 350 000. Commitment: EUR 349 998.

INDICATORS

Number of countries covered by the awarded organisation: The project was awarded to trans-national organisations that already provide and promote entrepreneurship education across Europe, covering all EU countries and countries participating in COSME. In particular JA Europe operates in 39 European countries, while SEECEL covers 8 South East European countries including pre-accession countries.

Number of countries that will participate in the activities of the network: All EU and COSME countries will be able in principle to participate and benefit from the Network.

Number of participants in the network: So far a network of 47 experts was created. More data will be available on the indicators at the end of the project.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of the grant are JA Europe (coordinator of the project), EUROCHAMBRES, SEECEL and EUproVET. The final beneficiaries (end-users) of the

activity will be National and regional authorities, policy makers, educational institutions and educators,

4.5. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP - EUROPEAN ON-LINE E-PLATFORM FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

The measure consists of a call for tender to create a European on-line e-platform for female entrepreneurship. The platform will be an e-one stop shop for female entrepreneurship, which will bring together all relevant stakeholders, the European network of female entrepreneurship ambassadors and mentors. **This platform will provide information on training, mentoring and access to finance, to start up and grow a business, data and good practices on female entrepreneurship as well as appropriate sectorial information.**

No results or impact so far as the work started in the 1st quarter 2016 and the E-platform will run as of October 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Twelve offers were received after the open call for tenders and the service contract was signed for 1 million with European Service Network (Belgium) with as co-tenderer Everis Spain S.L.U.

BENEFICIARIES

Women entrepreneurs; would be entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurship stakeholders

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

- 1st Advisory Committee meeting on structure and building of the e-platform: on 4 February 2016
- 2nd Advisory Committee meeting on content : 20 April 2016
- 3rd Advisory Committee meeting on content and launching event: 30 June and 1 July 2016
- Launching event of the e-platform in Brussels on 30 September 2016

4.6. SENIOR ENTREPRENEURS BEST PRACTICE EXCHANGE

The 'Senior entrepreneurs: Best practice exchanges' project is designed to contribute to the overall EU Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan by directly addressing the third objective of developing role models and reaching out to specific groups, while also indirectly contributing to the other two pillars, the provision of education and training and the creation of a favourable environment for entrepreneurs, through related actions. Supporting the transition of seniors to become entrepreneurs (or mentors to younger entrepreneurs) presents an important segment for potentially increasing economic and innovation activity.

This measure regarded the organization of two Laboratories with the participation of experts to share approaches and details of actions where retired or senior entrepreneurs serve as mentors, coaches or advisers to new entrepreneurs, or are given support and advice to enable them to become entrepreneurs for the first time themselves.

The two European “Laboratories” took place last year. They served served as tool for the active exchange of experiences. The Laboratories took place in London (UK) on 16-17 June 2015 and in Barcelona (Spain) on 17-18 September 2015. These events offered a platform for organisations and individuals to share practices and to develop partnerships, as evidenced by the Facebook page created by participants¹⁷.

The Laboratories produced evidence, recommendations and guidance to be disseminated to interested administrations and organisations (e.g. business support providers, social support organisations, etc.). The outcomes are presented in a Good Practice Manual on Senior Entrepreneurship. It includes a collection of good practices presented during the two laboratories, additional good practice examples provided by the participants and practical recommendations and guidelines for support to senior entrepreneurship (a total of 24 good practices). The Manual has already been delivered by the contractor and it will be published very soon.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

1. The Good Practice Manual on Senior Entrepreneurship is estimated to be published in June/July 2016.
2. Dissemination of the Manual.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

- 16-17 June 2015: First 'Laboratory' on seniors as mentors for young/new entrepreneurs – London
- 17-18 September 2015: Second 'Laboratory' on seniors as entrepreneurs - Barcelona
- 15 April 2016: the final version of the Good Practice Manual was delivered.
- 3rd quarter 2016: Manual to be disseminated.

FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The budget was committed for EUR 436 734. Six offers were received after an open call for tenders and the contract was signed with Development Solutions Europe Ltd, UK.

¹⁷ The Facebook page is an active platform for ongoing exchange of information and ideas, allowing individuals and organisations to stay connected. The page can be found under the name ‘Senior Entrepreneurs - Young Entrepreneurs’ at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/901823413231219/>

BENEFICIARIES

Representatives of institutions active in the field senior entrepreneurship, including economic development agencies, business associations, chambers of commerce, business support providers, decision-makers at national and regional levels as well as seniors who would like to become entrepreneurs themselves or get involved as mentors for young/new entrepreneurs.

4.7. PROMOTION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY IN EUROPE

Organisation of the International Conference “Social Entrepreneurship: a tool for addressing local development, youth unemployment and social needs”.

The high level International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship was held in Herakleion Crete by the Hellenic Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare and the European Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry) under the auspices of the Hellenic Presidency of the EU Council the 10 and 11 June 2014. The Presidency supported this Conference as a contribution to raising awareness on the social value of social entrepreneurship, regarding in particular vulnerable groups and the youth, to the activation of all actors, public and private, involved in the development of social entrepreneurship sector and to the dissemination of information on different ways of access to funding. Wishing to promote the idea of a competition regarding social entrepreneurship business plans, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare organized a student competition, with the support of Greek Educational Institutions with significant experience in this field.

The Greek Presidency’s conference on social entrepreneurship gave participants a panorama of developments and initiatives in social enterprises across Europe.

Budget implemented: EUR 86 500.