COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EVALUATION

OF THE

THE IMPACT OF THE ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK 2008-2014

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to look at the macro-level impact of the Enterprise Europe Network between 2008 and 2014 in terms of its contribution to the goals of the Lisbon Strategy/EU 2020 strategy, namely the creation of growth and jobs for EU Member States and for the countries participating in the Network which also participated in the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). The analysis should also help the Commission understand how and to what extent SME feedback provided through the Network has impacted EU policy making. Another focus is laid on the meso-level, covering the value of the Network as such: Has this added value grown over the years, thus enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency? More operational aspects are covered when it comes to analysing complementarities with other EU and Member State activities, the perception of EU added value, the Network's ability to communicate EU policies to SMEs and – in general terms – lessons that can be learned from the Networks first seven years of implementation. At a micro-level, the immediate impact the Network has on its client-SMEs is covered in order to provide the comparative data for the macro level impact analysis.

The insights gained through this evaluation will feed into the 2nd and 3rd Specific Grant Agreements (SGA) of the 2nd Enterprise Europe Network (2015-2021), to be reached between the Commission and the Network Partners for the years 2017-2018 and 2019-21 respectively. The evaluation therefore assesses inter alia the effectiveness and efficiency of the Enterprise Europe Network in contributing to growth and jobs for Europe and suggests improvements in view of the SGA renewals of 2017 and 2019 respectively. It might also be used as an evidence basis for a possible later Impact Assessment of an Enterprise Europe Network 2022-2029.

Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation covers the 2008-2014 time period. The geographical scope comprises the 28 Member States of the European Union (including Croatia which – although it only joined the EU in 2013 – had been part of the Enterprise Europe Network from the start) and also the CIP countries participating in the Network in the period under evaluation (Macedonia (FYROM), Iceland, Israel, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Turkey).

External study supporting the evaluation

In order to prepare this Staff Working Document, the Commission has commissioned an "Evaluation of the impact of the Enterprise Europe Network 2008-2014" with the external contractor Technopolis Group. The contractor's "Report" and an "Executive Summary" are available in the EU Bookshop[1].

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[1] http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/final-evaluation-of-the-impact-of-the-enterprise-europe-network-2008-2014-pbET0415830/

In line with the Commission's standards regarding participation and openness to stakeholders' views an extensive consultation strategy has been developed to ensure a wide participation of relevant stakeholders. Since the Enterprise Europe Network provides targeted services to SMEs, the general public is neither directly nor indirectly affected by it. Therefore, an extensive targeted consultation of all relevant Network stakeholders has been conducted instead of a public consultation. Stakeholders have been consulted on all evaluation questions and their views have provided the cornerstone of the evaluation results.

The following stakeholders have been identified as being impacted directly or indirectly by the Enterprise Europe Network: SMEs who are clients of the Enterprise Europe Network; EU officials and contract agents dealing permanently or for specific activities with the Enterprise Europe Network; Network Partners; further stakeholders like e.g. Co-financing bodies of the Network

The external evaluation serves as the basis of this Staff Working Document. The Steering Group has assessed the external evaluation study and considered the evidence provided to be sufficiently robust to come to solid evaluation conclusions.

2   BACKGROUND TO THE INITIATIVE

The Enterprise Europe Network is a support network for SMEs. It was created in 2008 and was financed - in the period under evaluation (2008-2014) - by the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) with 352 million euros. At the time the Network consisted of some 600 partner organisations in 54 countries: 28 EU Member States (including Croatia), seven additional countries participating in the CIP (hereinafter 'CIP countries') and 19 further countries outside the EU. EU funding covered up to 60% of the costs of the Network in the EU Member States and in the CIP countries. In the 19 further countries outside the EU, no EU funding was provided. These countries do not form part of this evaluation. In these cases the Network Partners are called "Business Cooperation Centres".

"Host organisations" of Network Partners are for example chambers of commerce, innovation or enterprise agencies, regional development agencies, research institutes, universities, technology centres, innovation centres etc.

The Enterprise Europe Network (2008-2014) provided support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the EU and in the CIP countries. The following types of services were delivered by Network Partners: Information (EU Internal Market, funding opportunities, market access to third countries etc.); SME-feedback on EU legislative proposals; international business co-operation for SMEs; services for innovation and for the transfer of both technology and knowledge; services encouraging the participation of SMEs in the EU framework programme for Research and Innovation.

An earlier evaluation required by the legal act of the Enterprise Europe Network has been carried out in 2011 as part of the final evaluation[2] of the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation" programme (2007-2013), an operational pillar of the CIP. It had the following results:

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[2] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=4700

- Although the IT system is still under development, the Network is generally now back up to speed and is achieving an effective degree of integration of organisations with disparate backgrounds and experiences.

- The Network is well focused on its main objectives of promoting innovation, business co-operation and cross-border trading, but the basic information function is also important for clients.

- There is a high level of client satisfaction with the Network's services.

- With its integration into the business support system across Europe and the strength of the personal links between its members, the Network is a major policy asset for the EU's relationship with enterprises and has considerable further potential in terms of the engagement of SMEs with the objectives and actions of the EIP.

- The Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation has generated a clear sense of direction in the Network and generally provides an appropriate level of support.

Baseline

The Network was established via a Call for Proposals (2006) and started operating in 2008. It brought together organisations that had been members of two pre-existing networks, the Euro Info Centres and the Innovation Relay Centres, and also a number of organisations that had not previously been involved in business support at a European level.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs is responsible for the Network. The Commission has delegated the overall operational management of the Network to the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).

When it was founded, the Network aimed – among other things – to improve the EU support services offered to European SMEs by integrating and developing the former services of the Euro Info Centres and the Innovation Relay Centres, so that companies can access practical and effective solutions to their business needs whoever they first contact (the "no wrong door" principle). The baseline reflects the situation at the time of the transition of both former networks early 2008 to the newly created Enterprise Europe Network.

Objectives of the Network

According to Annex III (CIP[3]) the details of the serivces in support of business and innovation referred to in Article 21 (CIP) were:

(a) Information, feedback, business cooperation and internationalisation services

   —disseminating information relating to the functioning and opportunities of the internal market for goods and services, including signposting to tender opportunities,

   —promoting pro-actively Community initiatives, policies and programmes that are relevant for SMEs and providing information to SMEs on the application procedures for such programmes,

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[3] CIP decision: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D1639&rid=2)

— operating tools to measure the impact of existing legislation on SMEs,

— contributing to the carrying-out of impact assessment studies of the Commission,

— operating other appropriate means to engage SMEs in the European policy-making process,

— assisting SMEs to develop cross-border activities and international networks,

— supporting SMEs to find relevant partners from the private or public sectors through appropriate tools.

(b) Services for innovation and for the transfer of both technology and knowledge

— disseminating information and raising awareness regarding innovation-related policies, legislation, and support programmes,

— engaging in the dissemination and exploitation of research results,

— providing brokerage services for technology and knowledge transfer, and for partnership building between all kinds of innovation actors,

— stimulating the capacity of firms, especially SMEs to innovate,

— facilitating linkage to other innovation services including intellectual property-related services.

(c) Services encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Seventh Framework RTD Programme

— raising awareness among SMEs regarding the Seventh Framework RTD Programme,

— helping SMEs to identify their research and technological development needs and to find relevant partners,

— assisting SMEs in the preparation and coordination of project proposals for participation in the Seventh Framework RTD Programme.

Services provided by the Network

To meet these objectives, the Network offered the set of services described in the table below. The "categories of services" mentioned in column 1 were used throughout the evaluation surveys and interviews.

Category of service	Definition
Information	Providing information about the EU Internal Market and EU funding opportunities
Internationalisation beyond the EU	Providing information about entering new markets outside the EU

SME-Feedback	Collecting feedback from SMEs for the European Commission to ensure that future legislation corresponds to the needs of businesses
Business cooperation	Providing help with developing international commercial cooperation with other SMEs
Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge	Supporting SMEs in - becoming more innovative - establishing international research cooperations - achieving international transfer of technology and knowledge
Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the FP7 or Horizon 2020	Helping SMEs to participate in the EU programmes FP7 or Horizon 2020
"No wrong door" principle	SMEs either get help directly or are put in contact with other suitable providers of SME oriented services

Expected impact

The Enterprise Europe Network 2008 - 2014 was expected to contribute to a sustainable economic growth and additional jobs in the EU as well as in the CIP countries that participated in the Network.

3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

3.1 Effectiveness

- How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a stable or growing turnover and number of staff in EU-based SMEs, and in SMEs based in CIP countries that participate in the Network? (Evaluation question 1)

- To what extent have the services of the Network been considered useful by SMEs? (Evaluation question 11)

- Are certain of the following aspects of the Network (Information, Feedback, Business cooperation, Internationalisation beyond the EU, Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge, Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Community framework programme for RTD, Networking activities) more or less effective than others, and − if this is the case − what lessons can be drawn from this? (Evaluation question 5)

- How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a growing proportion of (1) Impact Assessment reports, and (2) EU legislative proposals that specifically take into account the needs of SMEs? (This should be attributable to the Network having consulted client-SMEs on these proposals.) Is the Network consultation of SMEs (the SME Panel) more or less effective in providing input from SMEs than the Commission's Public Consultations? (Evaluation question 2)

- To what extent (if any) has the Network been effectively contributing to the implementation of each of the 10 principles of the Small Business Act (SBA) at EU and Member State level, as set out in the SBA (2008) and its review in 2011? (Evaluation question 3)

- Did Network activities have any unintended, negative impacts? (Evaluation question 4)

3.2 Efficiency

- Are certain of the following aspects of the Network (Information, Feedback, Business cooperation, Internationalisation beyond the EU, Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge, Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Community framework programme for RTD, Networking activities) more or less efficient than others, and − if this is the case − what lessons can be drawn from this? (Evaluation question 6)

- To what extent has the Network been able to continuously enhance its own value in terms of

  o client-SMEs

  o sponsors (i.e. reputation of the Network with the Co-financing bodies in the Member States)

- o human resources (i.e. the Network staff's level of expertise)

- o processes (i.e. strategic planning and programming, provision of training, knowledge management, IT, branding etc.)

- o location (i.e. global distribution of contact points, regional coverage in the Member States, local cooperation with other relevant support service providers, regional cooperation with Managing Authorities (EU Cohesion policy))

(Evaluation question 7)

- The Network took on additional tasks ("specific actions") for which it received additional funds. To what extent has the Network been an efficient delivery mechanism for this type of (small) projects to reach SMEs - compared to a potential open call? (Evaluation question 8)

- How efficient is the Network in communicating the policies of the European Commission? How can the handling of this task be improved? (Evaluation question 9)

3.3 Internal monitoring

- To what extent are the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) used for monitoring the Network internally useful, what other (if any) KPIs should be used in the future? (Evaluation question 12)

3.4 (External) coherence and complementarity

- Does the intervention create synergies with/contradict other EU interventions that have similar objectives? (Evaluation question 13)

3.5 EU added value

- Are there indications that the services will still be delivered if the Enterprise Europe Network is discontinued one day? (Evaluation question 10)

- To what extent has the Network created EU added value? To what extent do the stakeholders actually attribute the perceived added value to the EU? (Evaluation question 14)

4 METHOD

This evaluation was run by the European Commission between summer 2014 and spring 2016.

Other Commission services have participated in the Steering Group as well as a partner of the Enterprise Europe Network who complemented the Steering Group.

The exercise began with an external evaluation study, carried out by the Technopolis Group between July 2014 and November 2015 under the Commisison's framework contract for evaluations. (For more detailed procedural information, see annex 1.)

The external evaluation study serves as the basis of the present Staff Working Document.

It consists of two main elements:

1) the analysis of secondary qualitative and quantitative data (a full list of the sources and evidence used is provided in annex 1);

2) a stakeholder consultation for the collection of primary data consisting of interviews, surveys and case studies.

In line with the Commission's standards regarding participation and openness to stakeholders' views, an extensive consultation strategy has been developed to ensure a wide participation of relevant stakeholders. (For more details on the stakeholder consultation, see annex 2.) Stakeholders have been consulted on all evaluation questions and their views have provided the cornerstone of the evaluation results.

In line with the Commission's standards regarding participation and openness to stakeholders' views an extensive consultation strategy has been developed to ensure a wide participation of relevant stakeholders. Since the Enterprise Europe Network provides targeted services to SMEs, the general public is neither directly nor indirectly affected by it. Therefore, an extensive targeted consultation of all relevant Network stakeholders has been conducted instead of a public consultation.

The following stakeholders have been identified as being impacted directly or indirectly by the Enterprise Europe Network: SMEs who are clients of the Enterprise Europe Network; EU officials and contract agents dealing permanently or for specific activities with the Enterprise Europe Network; Network Partners; further stakeholders like e.g. Co-financing bodies of the Network. Stakeholders have been consulted on all evaluation questions and their views have provided the cornerstone of the evaluation results.

For evaluation question 1, which deals with the economic impact of the Enterprise Europe Network, the effectiveness of the Network has been described by the client SMEs by asking them in the evaluation survey whether the services of the Network did help to safeguard or enhance the number of jobs or their turnover

The evaluation also provided a proxi of the effectiveness of the Network by computing the difference between the average growth rates of client-SMEs (as stated in the surveys) and the average growth rates of the average European SME (i.e. SME based in an EU Member State or a participating CIP country) (statistical data, for details see annex 1 (sources)). The robustness of the approach is described in full detail in annex 3 (methodology).

Ideally an effectiveness analysis of an EU action for SMEs would include a strict, defined and known group of participating SMEs and a control group that has very similar characteristics but has not been participating in the EU action. This would provide the opportunity to gather

information at micro level of both groups and perform a micro level counterfactual analysis. However for this evaluation this was not possible for several reasons:

- No list of named client-SMEs benefiting from the services of the Network is available and the definition of a client-SME is an issue (see annex 3.4 for details).

- It is impossible to say whether some SMEs in the group of "average EU SMEs" (i.e. in the statistical data analysed) actually benefitted from the services of the Network.

- A control group at micro level would have to focus on "internationally oriented" SMEs, which would strongly increase the overlap with client-SMEs of the Network.

- The existing databases that would have been available for constructing a micro control group often have less data available concerning SMEs.

Therefore, the approach adopted for this evaluation was to compare the growth rate of employment and turnover of client-SMEs (treatment group) – as visible in the sample covered by the survey and interview data – with the growth rates of the whole population of SMEs (group of average EU SMEs, which also may include client-SMEs). The spread or difference between both rates could be considered a proxy of the effectiveness of the Network in terms of employment or turnover. Data on client-SMEs directly originated from the SMEs survey. Data sources for the general population of SMEs (i.e. the "average EU SME group") are described in annex 3.1.

Using macro-level data (i.e. figures related to the general population of SMEs) for the comparison figures allows a comprehensive coverage of benchmark SMEs in the studied countries instead of a partial view of the population. Furthermore, comparison figures were treated to take into account time and country variability, they focus on SMEs only (i.e. the evolution of large firms does not interfere with the control figures) and were weighted to match the sample of client-SMEs in terms of distribution of employment/turnover size.

A full description of the methods and approaches which have been deployed during the external evaluation is provided in annex 3.

5 ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This chapter presents in detail the answer to evaluation question 1 on the economic impact of the Network. The answers to the remaining 13 evaluation questions will be summarised under the respective evaluation category. Details on the stakeholder input provided via surveys and interviews can be found in annex 2 in the entries for the respective evaluation questions.

5.1 Effectiveness

How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a stable or growing turnover and headcount in EU-based SMEs, and in SMEs based in CIP countries that participate in the Network? (Q1)

When asked in the evaluation survey whether the services of the Network did help the SME to safeguard or enhance the number of jobs or their turnover, 36% and 37% respectively of the surveyed client SMEs, who answered these particular questions and who had used at least one of the Network's services, answered yes. This figure grows to 65% or respectively 68% for the SMEs that used all the categories of services offered by the Network.

More general indications support these findings: The evaluation also provided a proxi of the effectiveness of the Network by computing the difference between the average growth rates of client-SMEs (as stated in the surveys) and the average growth rates of the average European SME (i.e. SME based in an EU Member State or a participating CIP country) (statistical data, for details see annex 1 (sources)).

According to this comparison, clients of the Network performed 3.1 percentage points better in terms of growth in turnover and number of staff than the average European SME (control group).

Impact of the Network on employment and turnover
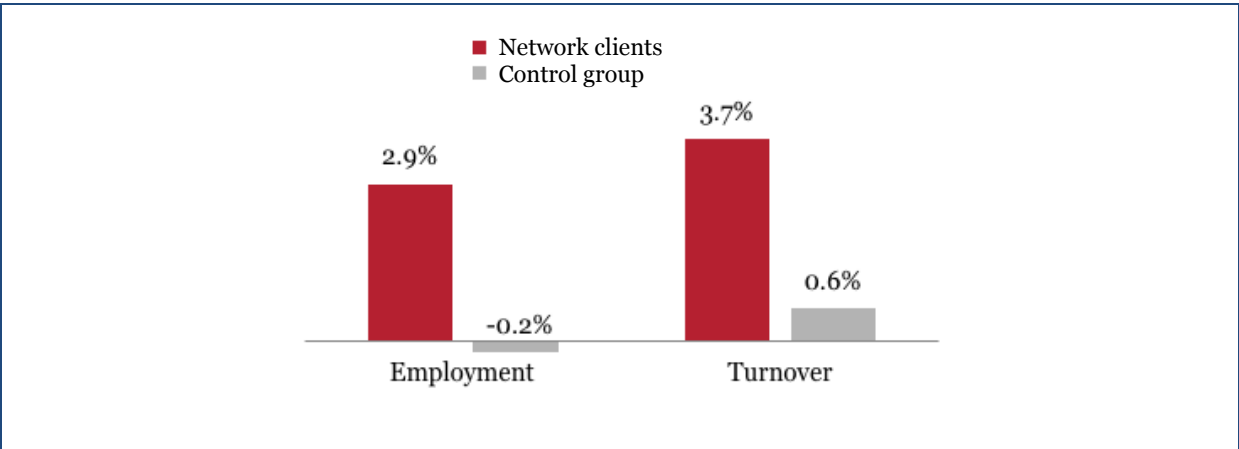
Sources: SME Survey, Eurostat, national sources

These results have been crosschecked and confirmed against data from Flash-Eurobarometer No. 421 of October 2015. (For details on the sources, see annex 1; the methodological approach and its robustness is described in full detail in annex 3).

In terms of time span, the SME survey identifies firms by cohorts that are associated to the year they first used the services of the Network. The analysis examines the evolution of employment and turnover until 2014 by computing annual average growth rates over the period. The first cohort, cohort 2008, includes client SMEs that started to use the services of the Network in or before 2008 (i.e. via the predecessor networks). The last cohort "cohort 2013" includes firms that started to use the services in 2013 (cohort 2013). A correction for the bias due to unobserved termination of SMEs over the 2008-2014 period was implemented.[4]

Average annual growth rate of employment by cohorts (N = 1730)
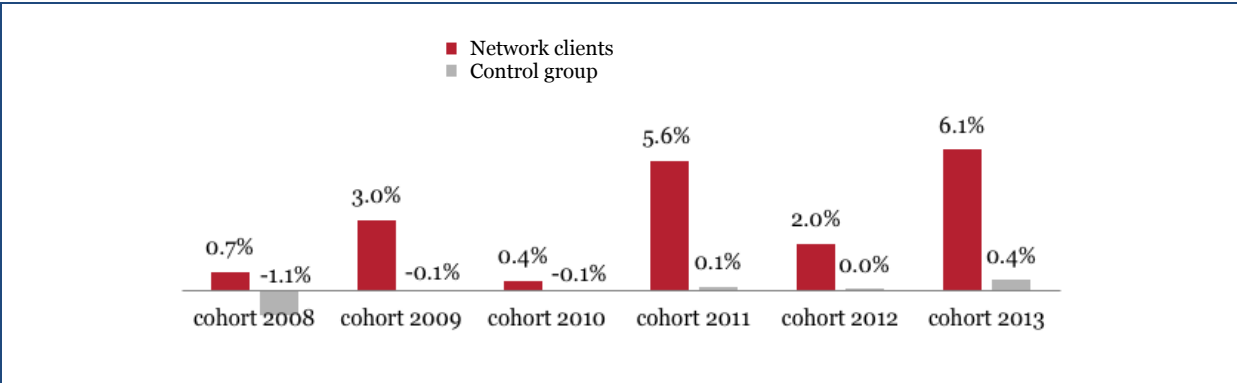
Sources: SME Survey, Eurostat, national sources.

Average annual growth rate of turnover by cohorts (N = 1573)
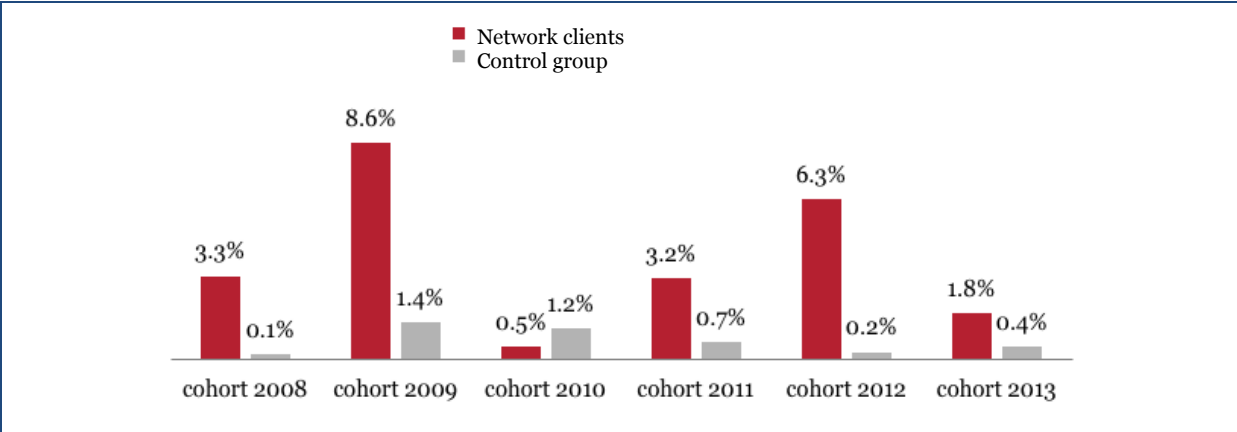
Sources: SME Survey, Eurostat, national sources.

For both employment and turnover, client-SMEs covered by these 6 cohorts present average growth rates that are 3.1 percentage points superior to the "average EU SME" group.

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4 The death rates of SMEs by country, size and time period were collected and subtracted from the employment and turnover figures from the SMEs survey. On average, this correction resulted in a 2% decrease of the growth rates of client SMEs.

It is not possible to establish a fully quantifiable causal link between the different growth figures and the Network services. Company characteristics may influence the observed differences between the Network clients and the "average EU SME" group. Also it has been noted that the "average EU SME" group might include client SMEs: however given that the client SMEs statistically only constitute extremely small percentage of the "average EU SME" group, the latter effect is neglectable.

The evalation found a direct causal link between the activities of the Network and growth figures of client-SMEs even if the percentage of growth contributable to the Network could not be quantified by the client SMEs. Several questions of the SME Survey have been used to establish a relationship between the different services offered by the Network, the growth figures of the client-SMEs in terms of turnover and/or employment and the services actually used by the client SMEs, as measured in the client-SME Survey. (For details, see annex 2 "Stakeholder consultation", sub-chapter on the inputs provided by the Network's client SMEs to evaluation question 1).

The Commission's own Benefit Survey (addressed to client SMEs via the Network partners) is in line with the positive results from the Technopolis Group survey and indicates a positive effect of the Network even if comparable data is only available for the 2010-2013 period. Data from the Benefit surveys over this period show that between 19% and 27% of the clients are positive about the impact of the Network on maintaining or creating jobs, while 44% to 50% of them confirm the impact of the Network on their turnover. However, the Benefits Survey does not quantify the impact on turnover and jobs.

Interviews with client SMEs confirm the positive effect of the Network on employment and turnover: A total of 63 interviews were conducted with client SMEs. These clients were selected by Network Partners, which inevitably resulted in a certain bias. About 80% of these interviewed client SMEs indicated the services have had a positive effect on the turnover of the company. About 60% of these interviewed client SMEs indicated the services had a positive effect on employment. Both are significantly more positive than the results from the Technopolis Group Survey and the Benefit Survey. (For details, see annex 2 "Stakeholder consultation", sub-chapter on the inputs provided by the Network's client SMEs to evaluation question 1.)

Summarised answers to the remaining evaluation questions concerning "effectiveness"

The most important services **(Q11)** according to surveyed client-SMEs are business cooperation services (i.e. providing help with developing international commercial cooperation with other SMEs); with 60% of client-SMEs declaring that they are very important in the sense that they contribute to their business success and 30% considering them to be somewhat important. The least important services are feedback services, with about 24% of client-SMEs indicating that they are of little importance or not important at all for their business' success.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the individual services provided by the Network **(Q5)**, a relationship has been established between the different services offered by the Network, the growth figures of the client-SMEs in terms of turnover and/or employment and the services used, both measured in the client-SME Survey. (For technical details on the econometric method used, see annex 3.) As a result of this computing exercise, while almost all services of the Network prove to be effective in the sense that they contribute to achieving the desired impact, "Information on internationalisation beyond the EU", and "Innovation and transfer of technology/knowledge" are found to be more effective than the other services.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the Network in contributing SME feedback on proposed EU legislation **(Q2)**, this evaluation has looked at five Network consultations (links see annex 1) all of which had a public consultation running in parallel and were followed by an Impact Assessment and by a legislative proposal.

The reach of the Network consultation among SMEs was found to be at least 226% higher than the reach of the public consultations in that particular group. The Network consultations are therefore more successful in reaching SMEs.

This evaluation also checked

- if any inputs from the Network consultation have been explicitly used;

- in how many cases the Network consultation was used;

- in the case of a legislative proposal, if these inputs were merely used to claim the need for the proposal, or if they also shaped the direction of the legislation.

The individual responses to the Network consultations are not publicly available. They were, however, made available to the external consultant for the purpose of this evaluation.

Effects of the Network consultations on the legislative proposals and Impact Assessments

	Consultation mentioned in proposal?	Consultation mentioned in IA?	How many inputs were taken up in the proposal and IA combined?	Did it shape the direction of the proposal?
SMC	✔	✔	6	✔
Transparency SMEs	✗	✗	0	✗
Dataprotection	✔	✔	3	✔
EUContractlaw	✔	✔	1	✔
NLFAlignment	✔	✔	5	✔

The way in which the legislative process takes place and is presented, it is very difficult to fully identify the impact of the Network consultations on legislation. Both the Impact Assessment and the legislative proposals are not explicitly explaining how the Network

consultations have impacted the policy direction. It is therefore not possible to determine how effecive the Network is as a means to achieve a growing proportion of Impact Assessment reports, and EU legislative proposals that specifically take into account the needs of SMEs.

The Network is perceived to have contribtuted to the implementation of all 10 principles of the Small Business Act (SBA) **(Q3)**. The interviewed Co-financing bodies found that the Network contributed most effectively to the principles "Encourage and support SMEs to benefit from the growth of markets", "Ensure benefit for SMEs offered by the European Singel Market" and "Promote SME activities in education/training and innovation".

The interviewed Co-financing bodies, umbrella organisations and potential competitors identified no unintended negative impacts of the Network **(Q4)** but instead expressed their view that the objective of the Network to offer complementarities with other relevant service providers in the EU and in the CIP countries has been fulfilled.
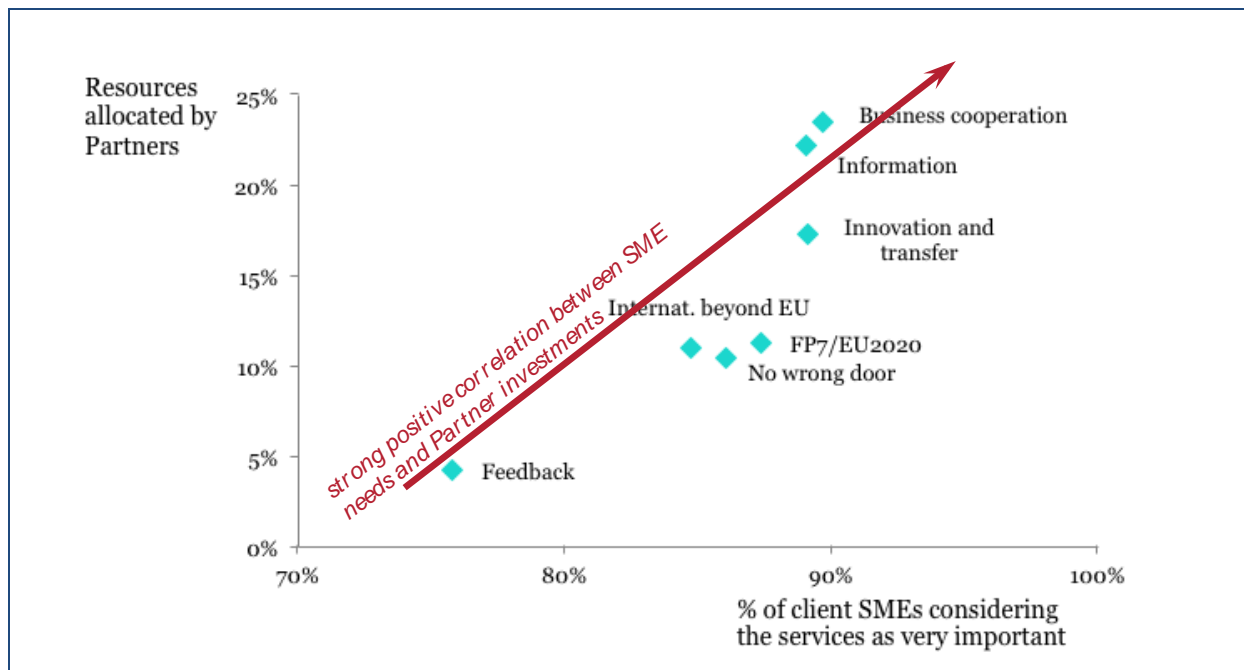
5.2   Efficiency

To measure efficiency at the level of individual services **(Q6)**, this evaluation used a two-step approach. The findings are based on data from the SME Survey and the Network Partner Survey, as well as on interviews.

Firstly, it was checked if budgets are allocated to specific services in a rational manner by correlating the allocation of resources by the Network Partners over the various services provided (as a measure of inputs) with the usefulness that the partners attribute to each of these services.

The Network Partners seem to allocate resources in an efficient manner. Budgets spent per service are more or less in line with the usefulness that the partners attribute to each service. According to these calculations, efficiency is more or less equal between services.

Secondly, the evaluation looked at the correlation between the resources spent per service by Network Partners and the extent to which client-SMEs actually find these services important. The budget allocations by Network Partners for each service appear to be in line with the needs of client-SMEs:

Allocation of resources and importance of the services for the client-SMEs (N = 264)

Source: Network Partner Survey and SME Survey

Without changes in the overall planned budget, the Network has been able to continuously enhance its own value **(Q7)** when it comes to numbers of SMEs served (20% per year increase).

Client-SMEs state that the quality of the services provided by the Network has increased over the past six years. More than two thirds of the client-SMEs indicate in the surveys that the quality provided to them have increased 'somewhat' (more than 50%) or even 'to a great extend' (17%). The interviews with client-SMEs show similar results. 56% of the interviewed SMEs notice that the services of the Enterprise Europe Network have become more appealing over the past six years.

About 88% of the surveyed Network Partners report improvements of the human resources of their own organisation. This is more or less confirmed by the interviewed Network Partners, of whom 75% confirms that the human resources assigned to the Network continuously improved between 2008 and now. This is also confirmed by client-SMEs. About 62% of the interviewed client-SMEs noticed an 'increase of the quality of the Network advisors over the past years'. Most often,they signal increased client-orientation, and in-depth knowledge of the field.

The large majority of Network Partners (91.7%) indicates that the internal processes within their Partner organisation (such as the use of strategic planning and programming in the Network, provision of training courses, knowledge management tools, IT tools, branding) have improved since 2008. This is confirmed in the interviews, where the Network Partners indicate that the processes mentioned have been improved to a great extent (38%) or to some extent (47%). This result is one indication that the Network is delivering on its objective to increase synergies among the Network Partners, because well functioning processes enable Network partners to jointly deliver on their core task of helping SMEs to establish business partnerships across borders.

The large majority of surveyed Network Partners (88.7%) and the interviewed Network Partners (74%) indicate that the regional coverage of their services has significantly increased since 2008 due to improved cooperation partnerships with other relevant support service providers in the region.

Overall, these results confirm that the Network succeeded in delivering on one of its main objectives, namely to maintain and continually improve the regional coverage, quality and professionalism of the integrated services it provides. It did so without changes in the overall planned budget.

The Network took on additional tasks ("specific actions") for which it received additional funds. Two specific actions concerning the environment were chosen as examples for this evaluation in order to analyse to what extent the Network has been an efficient delivery mechanism for this type of (small) projects to reach SMEs – compared to a potential open call. **(Q8)**. These two examples are referred to by their action acronyms Env1 and Env2[5]

The evaluation evidence found that both actions did indeed aim to help European SMEs "turn environmental challenges into economic opportunities, to spread environmental expertise within the Network and to develop a support and service delivery structure in cooperation with environmental service providers", as requested from the Enterprise Europe Network by the EIP Work Programme 2010.

The main activities under both specific actions included regional preparatory studies on existing support programmes, identification of Environmental Service Providers (ESPs), identification of target SMEs, setting up local cooperation agreements with ESPs, building regional service concepts, organising workshops and seminars, developing and maintaining websites and other communication tools, mediation between local SMEs and ESPs and spreading best practice and tools among all partners of the Enterprise Europe Network.

According to interviewees in the Commission, alternative open calls of the Commission come with higher costs. Interviewees, however, did not quantify this. Also, the implementation of these specific actions via the Network had the advantage that the environmental skills and good practices were upgraded in the Network so that they can now be the basis for a continued and regular service provisioning toward SMEs.

Carried out by specific partners in the Enterprise Europe Network, both environmental actions combined reached a total of 13 700 SMEs. The sum invested for these activities was €12.93m.

The Network Partners are positive about Env1 and Env2. They indicate that the activities have yielded good local visibility, and reached many participants.. According to the Network Partners, Env1 and Env2 helped SMEs to become more "green" in their operations. They were, however, not able to quantify this.

These results show that the Network was effective in raising awareness – in particular among SMEs – regarding Community policy issues and concerning the services it offers to improve environmental awareness and ecoefficiency among SMEs. However, it is difficult to judge whether the activity can be considered to be efficient in view of the €12.93m spent.

Efficiency is defined as the ratio of useful output to total input per service. When analysing the efficiency of the Network in communicating the policies of the European Commission

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[5] ENT/CIP/09/B/N02S00; ENT/CIP/10/D/N02S00

(Q9), total outputs of the communication efforts were made operational for this evaluation as the extent to which client-SMEs report an increased understanding of the policies of the European Commission. Secondary data on resources spent on this specific communication were not available. Qualitative and tentative insights on resources spent come from the interviews with Network Partners and from the case studies.

The Network seems to have found an efficient way of communicating the policies of the European Commission: About two thirds of the Network Partners (66,3%) state that they spent resources on the communication of the Commission policies to their clients. These distributions are backed by both the Network Partner Survey and by the Network Partner interviews. The case studies and the interviews with Network Partners show that due to the integration with other services, the communication of the policies of the European Commission is generally done without spending much budget. In order to assess the efficiency of these communication activities, one needs to rely on an objective measurement of resources spent. However, such information on resources spent on communication of EC policies to client SMEs is not available, probably due to the interaction with other services identified by the Network Partners. One therefore has to rely on a more qualitative approach.

The surveys filled out by SMEs indicate that these efforts show effects. When they were asked if the Network also helps individual SMEs to better understand the policies of the European Commission, 61% of the client-SMEs indicated that the services helped 'somewhat', or 'to great extent'.

Almost half of the SMEs interviewed (48%) explicitly or implicitly stated that they were not interested in learning more about the policies of the European Commission. However, of the 52% that are interested, the large majority (91%) actually did receive such information from their Network Partner.

5.3   Internal monitoring

The external evaluators were asked to to comment on the usefulness of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) applied internally for monitoring the Network (see annex 3.5) **(Q12)**. The evaluators found these KPI to a large extent useful. Only one indicator (local/regional stakeholder cooperation) is advised to be dropped. Several output indicators can be improved by slightly changing their definition (regional/local events organised; participants in regional/local events; SMEs/clients in brokerage events/company missions; clients in feedback/related actions). The single outcome indicator (achievements) can be improved by splitting the indicator into several specific outcome indicators (signed partnership agreements; loans/grants received; intellectual property rights obtained). The new indicators proposed would lead to no or little extra work for acquiring data, since they already formed part of the initial aggregated achievements indicator.

5.4   (External) coherence and complementarity

The Network does to some extent create synergies with other EU interventions that have similar objectives **(Q13)**. Contradictions were not found in this evaluation.

Interviewees report clear synergies between the Network and Business Centres and other business support networks co-financed by the European Commission in Asia. The Network Partners themselves see the best synergies with the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative, even though there are opportunities to better include sectoral cluster organisations, which is a valuable channel to reach out to SMEs in Europe that is not used to full potential. They are a bit more sceptical about synergies between the Enterprise Europe Network and the ERDF. The case studies show that much can be gained from a good coordination between ERDF Operational Programmes that focus on SMEs, and Network Partners' strategies in these regions.

5.5 EU added value

In case the Enterprise Europe Network would be discontinued one day **(Q10)**, 83% of the surveyed Network Partners would stop the delivery of one or more services. SME feedback would be stopped by 83% of the Network Partners and Business co-operation services would be stopped by 66%. Since the full range of Network services has to be provided by each consortium and consortia consists of sometimes only 1 or 2 Network partner organisations; and since the Network aims at a full geographical coverage in the participating countries, this could entail a serious threat to the functioning of the entire Network.

To what extent has the Network created EU added value? To what extent do the stakeholders actually attribute the perceived added value to the EU? **(Q14)** The answers to these questions are based on the surveys filled out by the Co-financing bodies and on the interivews with the same stakeholder group. Inputs to evaluation questions 1[6] and 10[7] also played a role in answering these evaluation questions.

EU added value is defined as 'the value resulting from an EU intervention which is additional to the value that would have been otherwise created by Member States alone'.[8] The answers to evaluation questions 1 (economic impact of the Network) and 10 ("would the services still be delivered if the Network were to be discontinued one day?") are therefore key sources when assessing the European added value of the Network.

The answer to the evaluation question on the economic impact of the Network shows that the value resulting from the EU intervention is clear: When asked in the evaluation survey whether the services of the Network did help the SME to safeguard or enhance the number of jobs or their turnover, 36% and 37% respectively of the surveyed client SMEs, who answered these particular questions and who had used at least one of the Network's services, answered yes. This figure grows to 65% or respectively 68% for the SMEs that used all the categories of services offered by the Network. More general indications support these findings (see chapter 6.1).

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[6] Q1: How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a stable or growing turnover and headcount in EU-based SMEs, and in SMEs based in CIP countries that participate in the Network?

[7] Q10: Are there indications that the services will still be delivered if the Enterprise Europe Network is discontinued one day?

[8] Commission Staff Working Paper "The added value of the EU budget" SEC (2011)867 final.

The answer to the evaluation question concerning the effects of a possible discontinuation of the Network shows that a pivotal role of the Commission in animating and managing the Network is vital for the Network to function well.

One can conclude that a clear value has been created by the Network in the 2008-2014 period, and this would not have been created otherwise by the Member States alone. The Network has brought together more than 600 partners form Member States and from third countries, and their joint effort has helped client-SMEs to increase their innovation capacity and successfully extend their business into the EU Internal Market and into growth markets worldwide. As a result, the Network's client-SMEs were found to reach growth figures that are above the benchmark figures. Apart from this, the Network has helped the European Commission and the Member States implement the Small Business Act (SBA), it has helped communicate the policies of the Commission to SMEs and it has given SMEs a voice in EU policy making processes.

This added value is recognised as such by the Co-financing bodies. They clearly attribute the perceived added value to the EU (see annex 2.5 on Q14). The large majority of the Co-financing bodies consulted indicate that the added value of the Network is to be attributed to the EU. These outcomes were confirmed by the interviewed Co-financing bodies. They state that related efforts have been largely national before the Network was set up and that these have now been partly brought together, which can also be attributed to the European Union. The added value of this upscaling is clear.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Effectiveness

The overall question on the economic effectiveness of the Enterprise Europe Network has been answered positively: When asked in the evaluation survey whether the services of the Network did help the SME to safeguard or enhance the number of jobs or their turnover, 36% and 37% respectively of the surveyed client SMEs, who answered these particular questions and who had used at least one of the Network's services, answered yes. This figure grows to 65% or respectively 68% for the SMEs that used all the categories of services offered by the Network.

More general indications support these findings: The evaluation also provided a proxi of the effectiveness of the Network by computing the difference between the average growth rates of client-SMEs (as stated in the surveys) and the average growth rates of the average European SME (i.e. SME based in an EU Member State or a participating CIP country) (statistical data, for details see annex 1 (sources)). According to this comparison, clients of the Network perform 3.1 percentage points better in terms of growth in turnover and number of staff than the average European SME (control group).

Interview and survey data about the relative importance of the services provided found that SME clients attribute the highest importance to the services of the Network that deal with business cooperation, innovation support and technology transfer. SMEs ranked lowest the possibility to provide to the Commission their feedback on proposed EU legislation.

No unintended negative impacts of the Network have been identified by the interviewed Co-financing bodies, umbrella organisations and potential competitors. Generally, these stakeholders stress the complementarity of the work done by Network Partners vis-à-vis the

work done by other support service providers for SMEs. Only about 28% of the Co-financing bodies believes that there is very little unfair competition, or that there is unfair competition to some extent. The interviewed umbrella organisations and non-Network service providers did not mention unfair competition by the Network.

Efficiency

To measure efficiency at the level of individual services, this evaluation used a two-step approach. The findings are based on data from the SME Survey and the Network Partner Survey, as well as on interviews.

Firstly, it was checked if budgets are allocated to specific services in a rational manner by correlating the allocation of resources by the Network Partners over the various services provided (as a measure of inputs) with the usefulness that the partners attribute to each of these services.

The Network Partners seem to allocate resources in an efficient manner. Budgets spent per service are more or less in line with the usefulness that the partners attribute to each service. According to these calculations, efficiency is more or less equal between services.

Secondly, the evaluation looked at the correlation between the resources spent per service by Network Partners and the extent to which client-SMEs actually find these services important. The budget allocations by Network Partners for each service appear to be in line with the needs of client-SMEs:

The evaluation clearly confirms that the Network succeeds in maintaining and continually improving the access, proximity, quality and professionalism of the integrated services it provides and to raise awareness – in particular among SMEs – regarding Community policy issues without changes in the overall planned budget.

The efficiency analysis does not include an analysis of whether the EEN contributed to the partner organisation's efficiency. Neither does it quantify costs of inputs and compare it with the value of the benefits. It also does not assess the potential for simplification.

(External) coherence and complementarity

The Network does to some extent create synergies with other EU interventions that have similar objectives. Contradictions were not found.

However, the evaluation shows that the synergies with the European Structural & Investment Funds are far from optimal. This is a pity as, in many regions, the objectives of the Enterprise Europe Network and the objectives of the Operational Programmes, set up by the Managing Authorities to implement the European Structural & Investment Funds – especially the European Regional Development Fund – can complement each other when it comes to supporting SMEs. The Enterprise Europe Network can play an important role in supporting Managing Authorities and agencies in charge of the development of Smart Specialisation Strategies, by assisting themselves or by mobilising SMEs to participate in these processes, both in the design and implementation phase. The Network can also provide important market intelligence in the preparation of these strategies, especially on regional innovation support or internationalisation.

The Commission would therefore recommend that individual Network Partners should strive for more direct contacts with the Managing Authorities in their country and offer to contribute

the Network's SME-related expertise as additional input when the Operational Programmes are drafted and Smart Specialisation Strategies are drafted and implemented.

The evaluation also looked at the Business Centres and other business support networks co-financed by the European Commission in Asia. These were set up with the aim of increasing the presence of European companies in certain emerging economies. EU support is provided via grants to locally based consortia of existing Member States' activities for business support. In the period under evaluation, only two out of the ten countries covered by these centres or networks were also covered by the Enterprise Europe Network.

EU added value

The evaluation illutrates that the Network provides EU added value: This EU intervention complements Member State SME support because it can build on the experience of a large network, has a pan-European dimension and focusses on cross-border and international SME cooperation. Individual Member States do not offer this scale of pan-EU expertise and coverage.

The answer to the evaluation question concerning the effects of a possible discontinuation of the Network shows that a pivotal role of the Commission in animating and managing the Network is vital for the Network to function well. Apart from this, the Network has helped the European Commission and the Member States implement the Small Business Act, it has helped communicate the policies of the Commission to SMEs and it has given SMEs a voice in the EU policy making processes.

If the Network would cease to exist, there would be no more pan-European cooperation between business and innovation support organisations located in all regions of the EU providing integrated services to SMEs to help them increase their competitiveness in the Single Market and beyond.

Comparison to the CIP final evaluation[9] (2007-2013)

In general, this evaluation confirms the findings of the evaluation of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme for the period 2007-2013.

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[9] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=4700

ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Leading Commission service

This evaluation was run by Directorate H "COSME programme", Unit H2 "Enterprise Europe Network and SME Internationalisation" of the European Commission's Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs . The Agenda Planning reference is 2016/GROW/067.

Organisation

A partner of the Enterprise Europe Network has complemented the ISG. This group met regularly to comment upon the different steps of the external evaluation:

29 October 2014	Kick off meeting
9 January 2015	Inception Report meeting
17 April 2015	First Progress Report meeting
22 June 2015	Second Progress Report meeting
31 August 2015	First Findings and Recommendations Report meeting
4 November 2015	Final Report meeting

External Expertise

The exercise began with an external evaluation study – carried out by the Technopolis Group between July 2014 and November 2015 – which consisted of two main elements: an analysis of secondary qualitative and quantitative data and a stakeholder consultation for the collection of primary data consisting of interviews, surveys and case studies.

Timing

External evaluation: July 2014 to November 2015.

Data sources used for this evaluation

For evaluation question 1 (economic impact of the Network) the recent performance of the Network's client-SMEs (treatment group) was compared to the overall performance of all SMEs in the EU and CIP countries ("average EU SME" group). The following sources were used to establish the data set concerning employment and turnover for the "average EU SME" group:

Name of source	*Explanation*
National	This means that the statistics were found at national level. All national sources used are documented in the two following tables.
Eurostat	This means that Eurostat statistics were used from the tables "Non-financial business economy by size class of employment".
SPR	This means that data were used from the European Commission's SME Performance Review (SPR). The database is publicly available including explanation of the methodology used.
SPR est. (estimation)	These figures also come from the SME Performance Review (SPR), they are however not measured but estimated. Their method, in short, calculated the ratio between the amount of companies and the number of employees of previous years. This ratio was then used to calculate the number of employees based on the number of companies of recent years.
Imputed SPR	The ratio between the amount of companies and the turnover of previous years was calculated. This ratio was then used to calculate the turnover based on the number of companies of previous years. The statistics of the European Commission's SME Performance Review (SPR) were used to make these imputations.
Imputation	Some custom imputations were needed for Turkey. As Turkey is not covered in the SPR database in the same way as EU28 countries are covered, the indictors were far from complete. The national statistics were completed using custom imputations: Employment figures were imputed using the elasticity of employment in SMEs with respect to GDP. Which (to some extent) can be interpreted as the ratio between growth rate of employment and growth rate of GDP. Turnover figures were imputed using the ratios between turnover and the imputed employment and turnover and the imputed number of companies or recent years.

Source: Technopolis Group

In addition, the following documents and data were used in preparing this evaluation:

Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (2007-2013)

Impact Assessment of the CIP (2005):
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2005/sec_2005_0433_en.pdf

(CIP decision: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D1639&rid=2)

Ex-post evaluation of the CIP (2011):
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=918937

(Executive Summary: http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=924014)

Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (2007-2013)

Enterprise Europe Network Call for proposals (2006):

Call for proposals for the Enterprise Europe Network, OJ C 306/07, 15.12.2006

Interim evaluation of the Enterprise Europe Network (as part of EIP) (2009):
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=3294

Evaluation of EIP indicators (2010)
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=4100

Final evaluation of the Enterprise Europe Network (as part of EIP) (2011)
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=4700

(Executive Summary: http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=4701)

Enterprise Europe Network Call for proposals (2014):
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/cosme/files/een-call_en.pdf)

Enterprise Europe Network - Call for Proposals 2006

Call text

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:C2006/306/07&from=EN

Submission set

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/contracts-grants/files/call-for-proposals/themes_2007/submission_set_revised_second_call_en.pdf

Enterprise Europe Network specific (internal) reports

Progress report 2013

This report gives a general overview of the performance of the Network at the mid-term of the SGA3.

Enterprise Europe Network activity report 2008-2012

This report gives a general overview of the performance of the Network in its five years of operation (2008-2012). Emphasis was put on the indicators of the partnership process, of prime interest as they reflect the impact of the Network on its clients' business.

Benefits survey

The aim of the Benefits Survey is to collect data to assess the impact and benefits to client SMEs of the activities of the Network.

Client satisfaction survey

Client satisfaction surveys enable the Commission to assess to which extent the final beneficiaries of the Network services, the enterprises, are satisfied with the services provided by each Network Partner to help them building partnerships and strengthening their competitiveness and as a consequence to improve the quality of the services provided to them. The Network Partner collects data on the basis of questionnaires filled in by the customer companies that attend events, participate in activities or benefit from the services offered.

Archives - Performance Enhancement System (PES) 2008-2010

The PES is a management system put in place by the Commission to monitor the evolution of the Enterprise Europe Network. In essence, the PES relies on a set of "Data Items" or "Performance Indicators" (PI) to track the activities and achievements of each Network Partner towards stated target values.

Final Report 2008-2010

Based on the data collected in the PES an in-depth analysis report has been produced. This report gives an overview of the performance of the Enterprise Europe Network in its first three years of operations (2008-2010). The document presents statistics and analysis built on figures given by Partners in their final reports on the different services provided to the SMEs.

Consultation of SMEs on proposed legislation

The following list contains only those five Network consultations that had a public consultation running in parallel and that were followed by an Impact Assessment and a legislative proposal.

Consultations that were run through the Network - surveys and results (internal websites):

1. **SMC** - Single-member limited liability companies

2. **Transparency SME** - Transparency of measures relating to pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products

3. **Dataprotection** - Personal data protection issues

4. **EUcontractlaw** - Impacts of a European Contract Law

5. **NLFalignment** - New legislative framework for the marketing of products: proposal to align 10 product harmonisation directives to Decision

Online access to public consultations that were run in parallel:

1. http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2013/single-member-private-companies/index_en.htm

2. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/healthcare/public-consultation/index_en.htm

3. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0006_en.htm

4. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0052_en.htm

5. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=4289&lang=en

Online access to the respective Impact Assessment reports (taking up or not taking up the consultation results):

1-5: All Impact Assessment reports were available under the same link:
http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia_carried_out/cia_2014_en.htm

1. (Link above) 2014: Internal Market and Services – 1st entry

2. (Link above) 2012: Industry and Entrepreneurship – last entry

3. (Link above) 2012: Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship – last 2 entries

4. (Link above) 2011: Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship – 4th entry (on SALES law, though…)

5. (Link above) 2011: Enterprise and Industry – 4th entry

Online access to the respective legislative proposal (taking up or not taking up the consultation / Impact Assessment results):

1-7: All documents below could be accessed via EUR Lex:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en

1. COM(2014)212

2. COM(2012)84

3. COM(2012)11; COM(2012)10; SEC(2012)72; SEC(2012)73

4. COM(2011)635; COM(2011)636

5. COM(2011)763

Small Business Act

Small Business Act for Europe (2008)

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0394:FIN:EN:PDF

Review of the "Small Business Act" for Europe (2011)

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/files/sba_review_en.pdf

ANNEX 2: SYNOPSIS REPORT - STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

In line with the Commission's standards regarding participation and openness to stakeholders' views an extensive consultation strategy has been developed to ensure a wide participation of relevant stakeholders. Since the Enterprise Europe Network provides targeted services to SMEs, the general public is neither directly nor indirectly affected by it. Therefore, an extensive targeted consultation of all relevant Network stakeholders has been conducted instead of a public consultation. Stakeholders have been consulted on all evaluation questions and their views have provided the cornerstone of the evaluation results.

1   Stakeholder mapping

The following stakeholders have been identified as being impacted directly or indirectly by the Enterprise Europe Network:

- SMEs who are clients of the Enterprise Europe Network
- EU officials and contract agents dealing permanently or for specific activities with the Enterprise Europe Network:
- Network Partners
- Further stakeholders
    o Co-financing bodies of the Network
    o Members of the Network's "Consultative Forum"
    o SME Envoys
    o Managing Authorities
    o Non-Network service providers
    o Directors of EU-sponsored activities in third countries with which the Network collaborated

2   Consultation methods

Given that the general public is not directly or indirectly affected by the functioning of the Network, targeted surveys and interviews have been implemented with the different stakeholder groups.

Surveys were conducted in English. Interviews by the core evaluation team were conducted in English. Interviews by the country correspondents were conducted (as much as possible) in the local language to facilitate an optimal response (especially among SMEs).

The feedback provided in the surveys and interviews was used to answer the following evaluation questions. For better readability, in this chapter we use only the numbers below to designate the respective evaluation questions:

1	How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a stable or growing turnover and headcount in EU-based SMEs, and in SMEs based in CIP countries that participate in the Network?
2a	How effective is the Network as a means to achieve a growing proportion of (1) Impact Assessment reports, and (2) EU legislative proposals that specifically take into account the needs of SMEs? (This should be attributable to the Network having consulted client-SMEs on these proposals.)
2b	Is the Network consultation of SMEs (the SME Panel) more or less effective than the Commission's Public Consultations in providing input from SMEs?
3	To what extent (if any) has the Network been effectively contributing to the implementation of each of the 10 principles of the Small Business Act (SBA) at EU and Member State level, as set out in the SBA (2008) and its review in 2011?
4	Did Network activities have any unintended, negative impacts?
5	Are certain of the following aspects of the Network (Information, Feedback, Business co-operation, Internationalisation beyond the EU, Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge, Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Community framework programme for RTD, Networking activities) more or less effective than others, and – if this is the case – what lessons can be drawn from this?
6	Are certain of these aspects of the Network more or less efficient than others, and – if this is the case – what lessons can be drawn from this?
7	To what extent has the Network been able to continuously enhance its own value in terms of • client-SMES • sponsors (i.e. reputation of the Network with the Co-financing bodies in the Member States) • human resources (i.e. the Network staff's level of expertise) • processes (i.e. strategic planning and programming, provision of training, knowledge management, IT, branding etc.) • location (i.e. global distribution of contact points, regional coverage in the Member States, local cooperation with other relevant support service providers, regional cooperation with Managing Authorities (EU Cohesion policy))
8	The Network took on additional tasks ("specific actions") for which it received additional funds. To what extent has the Network been an efficient delivery mechanism for this type of (small) projects to reach SMEs – compared to a potential open call?
9	How efficient is the Network in communicating the policies of the European Commission? How can the handling of this task be improved?

10	Are there indications that the services will still be delivered if the Enterprise Europe Network is discontinued one day?
11	To what extent have the services of the Network been considered useful by SMEs?
12	To what extent are the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) used for monitoring the Network internally useful, what other (if any) KPI should be used in the future?
13	Does the intervention create synergies with/contradict other EU interventions that have similar objectives?
14	To what extent has the Network created EU added value? To what extent do the stakeholders actually attribute the perceived added value to the EU?

During the interviews and surveys it became clear that the individual stakeholder groups were not always able to provide an informed opinion on all the questions the evaluation team had foreseen for them. Because of the big size of the stakeholder sample, this did not impact the evaluation findings.

3 *Summary of all relevant consultations and their results*

3.1 SMEs who are clients of the Enterprise Europe Network

The exact number of Network clients is not known. From the monitoring data of the Commission it can be concluded that more than 400 000 services are provided by the Network per year. From the Technopolis evaluation report it can be concluded that the Network's client base rose gradually from 65 000 in 2009 to 160 000 in 2014. These figures are, however, the result of an imputation done by the consultant (for details on the methods used for this imputation, please see annex 3.4).

The surveys were sent to around 50 000 SMEs in Europe based on the client information of around 60 Network Partners. Around 160 Network Partners requested that they themselves send the survey to their own client base. 5 492 survey responses have been received. In addition, 62 telephone interviews have been conducted with client-SMEs. The survey questions contributing to answering the evaluation question on the economic impac of the Network (Q1) were not mandatory, in order to obtain answers to the other evaluation questions even if SMEs did not want to or were not able to answer the survey questions concerning evaluation question 1.

Surveys with this stakeholder group contributed to answering evaluation questions 1, 5, 7, 9 and 11, and the interviews contributed to answering evaluation questions 1, 7 and 9.
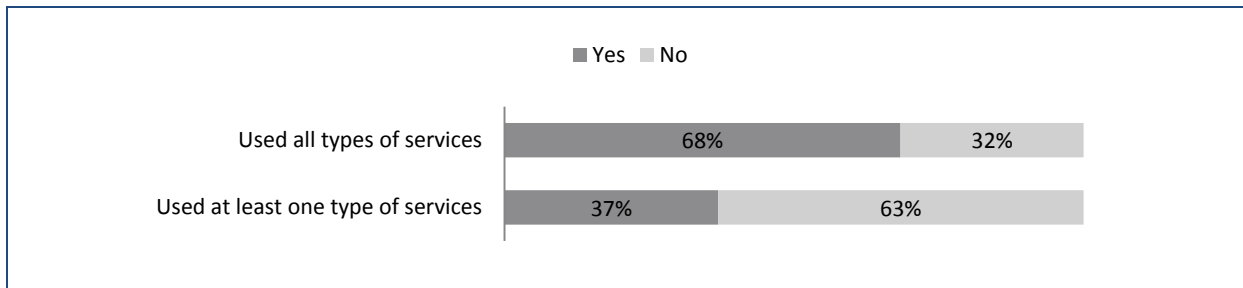
Main results of the surveys:

Q1:

Did the services of the Network help to safeguard/enhance jobs? (N = 2801)
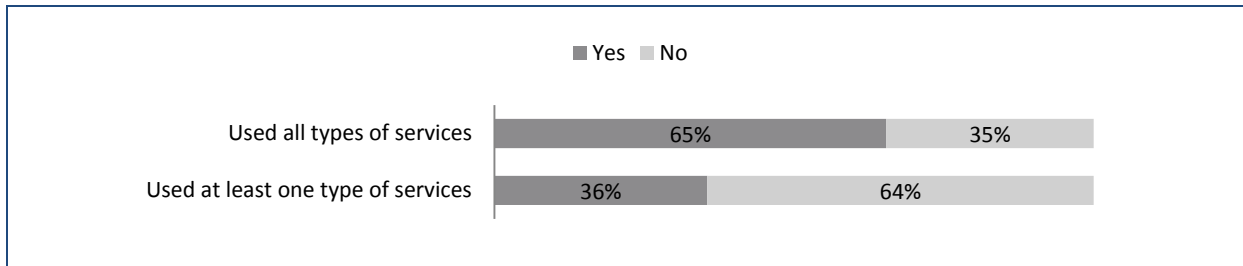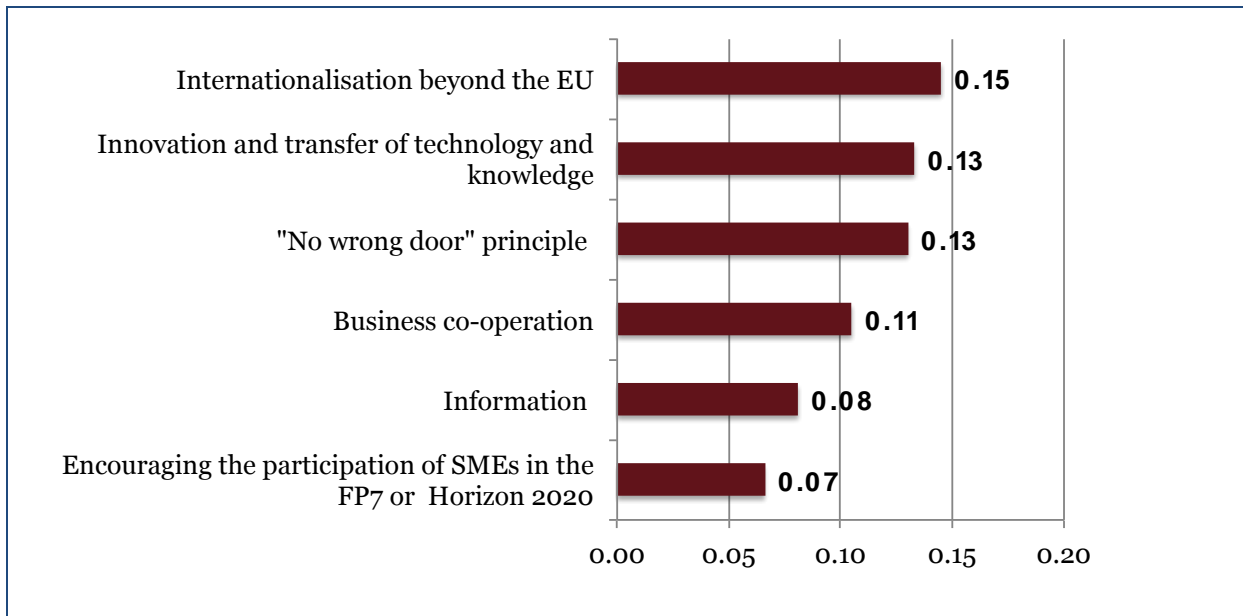

Source: SME Survey.

Did the services of the Network help to safeguard/enhance turnover? (N = 2428)

Source: SME Survey.

Q5:

Ranking of services according to impact on employment and/or turnover

Internationalisation beyond the EU — 0.15

Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge — 0.13

"No wrong door" principle — 0.13

Business co-operation — 0.11

Information — 0.08

Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the FP7 or Horizon 2020 — 0.07

(Scale: 0.00, 0.05, 0.10, 0.15, 0.20)

Source: Several questions of the SME Survey (A relationship has been established between the different services offered by the Network, the growth figures of the client-SMEs in terms of turnover and/or employment and the services used, both measured in the client-SME Survey.) SME Feedback is left out as a source as it is used by the very large majority of client-SMEs, which makes it difficult to disentangle the effect of feedback from the effect of other services.

Q7:

In general client-SMEs state that the quality of the services provided by the Network have increased over the past six years. About 17% of the client-SMEs indicate that quality of the services has increased to a great extent. More than half of the client-SMEs indicate that the quality of the services provided to them have increased 'somewhat'. Only 12% of the client-SMEs have not witnessed any increase in quality of services.

Client-SMEs coincide with the Network Partners in that they are very positive about the HR developments in the Network since 2008. Almost half of the client-SMEs state that the quality of Network staff has increased 'somewhat', since 2008, while almost one quarter of the surveyed SMEs (23.5%) state that the quality of staff has increased 'to great extent'. Smaller portions of client-SMEs noticed no improvement (11.7%), or 'very little improvement' (15.6%).

Q9:

The surveys filled out by SMEs indicate that the efforts or the Network Partners to communicate the policies of the European Commission show some effects. When they were asked if the Network also helps individual SMEs to better understand the policies of the European Commission, 61% of the client-SMEs indicate that the services helped 'somewhat', or 'to great extent'. 39% of the surveyed client-SMEs indicated that the services helped 'not at all', or 'very little'.

Q11:

Importance of the services for the business of SMEs (percentages of responses by category of appreciation)
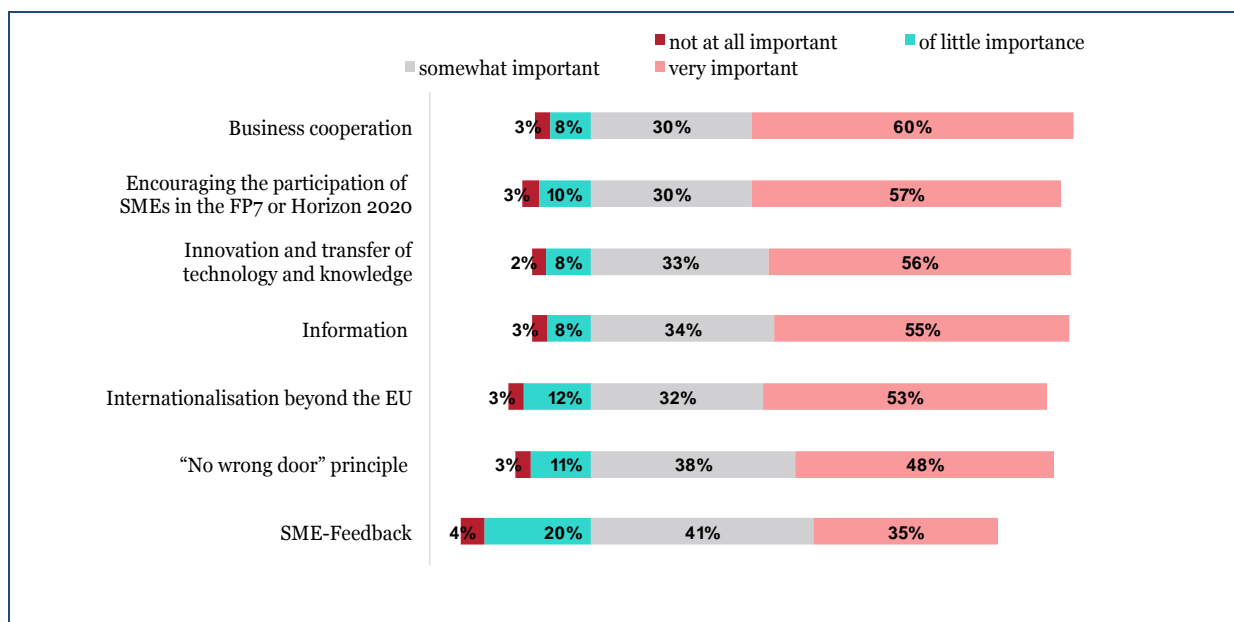
Source: SME Survey.

Main results of the interviews:

Q1:

The majority of interviewed client-SMEs (just as is the case with the mayority of surveyed client SMES – see further above in this chapter) report effects in terms of turnover (80%) and job growth (60%). Some insights from the interviews are presented in the figure below:

Some insights from the interviews on the effects witnessed in client-SMEs

- *"My company developed a lot because of the connections, therefore I needed more people. Being connected to an operator from Germany created new jobs, I needed employees who could speak German for the German tourists."* (small SME from Romania)
- *"The company moved its focus from Ireland to international markets; we started offering courses in different languages and therefore we needed other people who could speak these languages (e.g. Spanish). The Network also created a much more global and stable environment for us."* (micro-company from Ireland)
- *"It did result in job growth. It allowed us to efficiently identify tender opportunities available, increase our capacity to identify tenders and respond to opportunities."* (large SME from the UK)
- *The Network and the participation in Horizon 2020 helped to preserve the jobs of researchers in the company.*
- *"The turnover remained stable, or a very small improvement was registered."* (medium-sized SME from Latvia)
- *"The services of the Network are helping to find new clients and partners to import products in Belgium, so the company is growing and hiring more people."* (micro-company from Belgium)
- *"Although no project has been achieved via the Network, we believe it is another stepping stone in our development. The company started with only 1 employee, now we have a team of 5 additional resources." (*micro-company from Romania)

36

In a minority of cases, the client-SMEs of the Network who were interviewed did not yet perceive any effects on employment (40%) and turnover (20%). Some typical reasons are presented in the figure below:

- *"There was no direct financial impact. There are some potential new clients that were met through the network in Belarus, but no sales have yet been made."* (medium-sized SME from Poland)
- *"It did not help for the moment. But the research contract we have managed to sign will lead to a new product and if we succeed in its development and commercialisation phases this will have a big impact on our turnover."* (small SME from Spain)
- *"We learned a lot and met valuable contacts, but did not expand our business to other countries yet. With one of the contacts we met - a Polish company - we applied for an European grant, but did not win the grant."* (micro-company from The Netherlands)
- *"The impact was not very visible. The Network facilitated the start of a new collaboration with Denmark, but it was not concluded."* (medium-sized SME from Italy)
- *"We have participated in a few match-making events organised by* [Network Partner]*. One was a trade mission to Turkey, in which* [Network Partner] *has had contact with their counterpart in Turkey to arrange meetings with companies in Turkey that are interesting for us. They helped us learn new markets and possible customers or cooperation partners. It did not lead directly to business, but it has taught us that we have to improve our message."* (medium-sized SME from The Netherlands)
- *"The services used were mainly informational services, no specific actions/projects resulted from them."* (micro-company from Poland)
- *"As no partnerships have materialised yet, there has been no increase in staff."* (micro-company from Germany)
- *"My requests are only for information I do not see how this could impact jobs."* (small SME from France)

Several client-SMEs indicate that the use of services was simply too recent to measure material effect on turnover and employment. They do, however, indicate the importance of less material effects, such as gaining tacit knowledge or the provisioning of information that results in a decision not to invest. Also, some SMEs found it hard to distinguish between the services provided by a Network Partner on the one hand, and by the host organisation of the Network Partner on the other. After all, both entities might have interacted with the SME through one and the same consultant. The interviews showed that there is certainly room to improve the visibility of the Network in such cases.

Q7:

The interviews with client-SMEs show similar results as the surveys. About 56% of the interviewed SMEs notice that that the services of the Enterprise Europe Network have become more appealing over the past six years.

Generally, client-SMEs are satisfied about the improved quality of services provided and they notice a constant increase in that respect. This is also confirmed by the 2011 and 2012 Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS) that shows increased satisfaction rates for all services but the events, which stayed equal.[10]

Concerning the quality of human resources in the Network, interviews with client-SMEs confirmed the findings of the surveys with the same stakeholder group (see above): About 62% of the interviewed client-SMEs noticed an 'increase of the quality of the Network advisors over the past years'. Most often, the interviewed SMEs signal increased client-orientation, and in-depth knowledge of the field. Typical explanations include:

Some insights from the interviews on the increase HR levels in the Network

- *"Even in this short period of time we can see that Network advisors are more* ['proactive', Technopolis Group] *in introducing the EU programmes which is good as it reaches a lot of companies. I have attended several events and they keep on getting better."* (small SME from Turkey)
- *"The Network has improved visibly in terms of knowledge and competence with regard to opportunities and how they can be exploited. It is important that these people do not change too often and longer-term relationship can be developed."* (small SME from Poland)
- *"Absolutely, there are clear improvements all over the network. They increase their contacts and improve the quality in the guidance of how we can formulate and how to understand the market. They help us with contacts, and the loop of communication is quicker than before."* (small SME from Sweden)

Q9:

Almost half of the SMEs interviewed (48%) explicitly or implicitly stated that they were not interested in learning more about the policies of the European Commission. However, of the 52% that are interested, the large majority (91%) actually did receive such information from their Network Partner.

3.2 EU officials / contract agents dealing permanently or for specific activities with the Network

17 EU officials and contract agents have been interviewed. Interviews with this stakeholder group were meant to contribute to answering evaluation questions 8 and 13.

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[10] One should be cautious to use these data on a stand-alone base as wording is not consistent throughout the years, and the selection bias is assumed to be very substantial.

Main results of the interviews:

Q8:

The Commisison confirmed the point of view of the Network Partners that the specific actions were a success. Interviewees indicate that with an investment of €12.93m a large group of SMEs was reached, which resulted in all targets being met. An open call would allow the reach of a new population of SMEs, yet the costs would be considerably higher as the Network infrastructures could not be used. These alternative costs, however, have not been quantified by the interviewees.

Q13:

The representatives of the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative see room for two types of improvement:

- The Enterprise Europe Network Partners are invited to not only provide their information services directly to their client-SMEs but also to use the cluster organisations as intermediaries who can distribute information to their own client-SMEs.

- The Cluster Internationalisation Initiative would welcome the opportunity to use the information channels of the Enterprise Europe Network in order to reach out to additional SMEs.
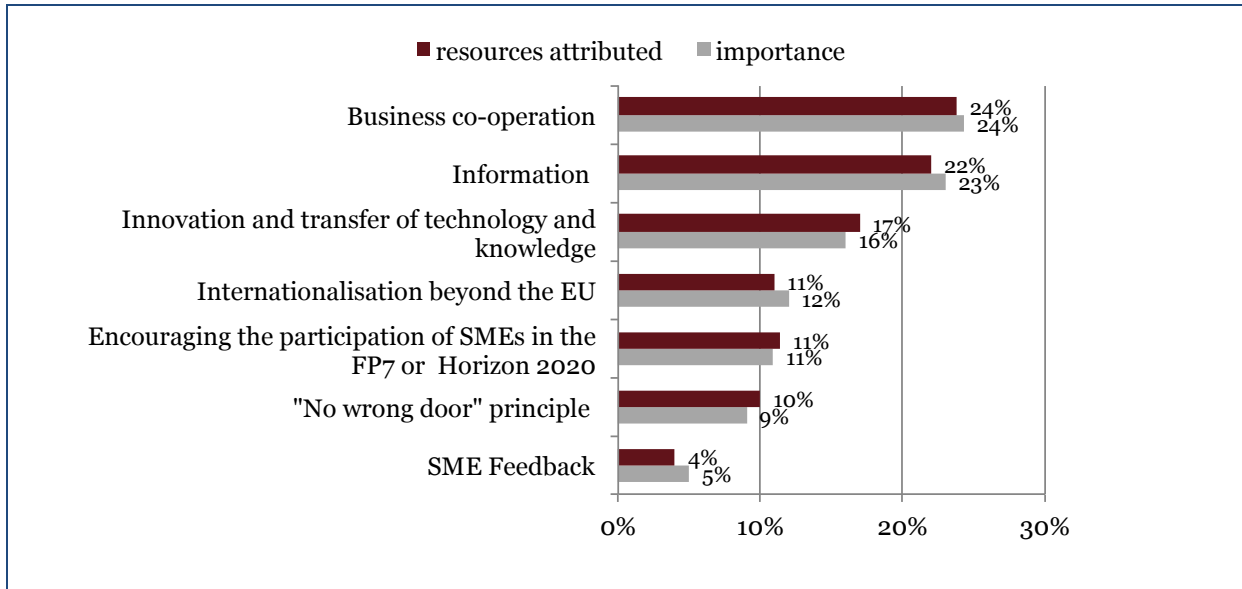
3.3   Network Partners

In the period under evaluation, the Network had more than 500 partners in the Member States and in countries participating in the CIP programme. In order to ensure anonymity, the Network Partner Survey did not contain any elements for individual identification or country specification. Survey links were technically personalised so that multiple responses from a single Network Partner were excluded. Total response was 382. Questions were not mandatory, so that the non-ability or the non-willingness to answer one question would not impact the other questions.

Surveys with this stakeholder group were meant to contribute to answering evaluation questions 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14 whereas the interviews provided answers to evaluations questions 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13.

Main results of the surveys

Q6:

Allocation of resources and importance of the services for the partners (N = 264)

resources attributed   importance

Business co-operation	24% / 24%
Information	22% / 23%
Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge	17% / 16%
Internationalisation beyond the EU	11% / 12%
Encouraging the participation of SMEs in the FP7 or Horizon 2020	11% / 11%
"No wrong door" principle	10% / 9%
SME Feedback	4% / 5%

Source: Network Partner Survey

Q7:

About 88% of the surveyed Network Partners report improvements of the human resources of their own Partner organisation.

The large majority of Network Partners (91.7%) indicates that the internal processes within their Partner organisation (such as the use of strategic planning and programming in the Network, provision of training courses, knowledge management tools, IT tools, branding) have improved since 2008.

The large majority of surveyed Network Partners (88.7%) indicates that the regional coverage of their services has significantly increased since 2008 due to improved cooperation partnerships with other relevant support service providers in the region.

Q9:

About two thirds of the Network Partners (66,3%) state that they spend resources on the communication of the Commission policies to their clients. These distributions are backed by both the Network Partner Survey and by the Network Partner interviews.

The case studies and the interviews with Network Partners show that due to the integration with other services, the communication of the policies of the European Commission is generally done without spending much budget.

Q10:

More than 83% of the Network Partners indicate that the support from the European Commission is cardinal for most services offered by them under the umbrella of the Enterprise Europe Network, and that discontinuation of the Network would result in abandoning one or more of the services offered by them. The figure below shows what the expected impact of discontinuation would be for each of the services provided.

The percentage of individual Network Partners that would no longer offer a specific service if the Network would be discontinued one day
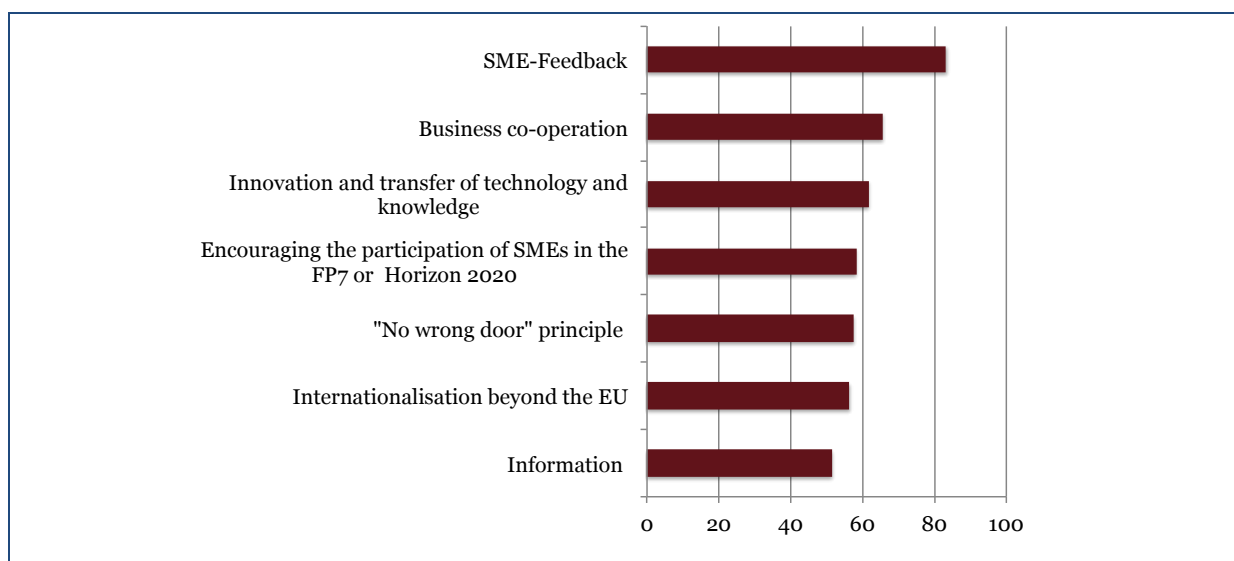
Source: Network Partner Survey

Not all services will continue to be offered if the Network would be discontinued one day. The SME Feedback Service[11] would be hit the hardest (82%). Business cooperation[12] would also be hit hard (66%).

Q11:

Network Partners have slightly different thoughts on the importance of the respective services, compared to client SMEs, SME Envoys and Co-financing bodies. They consider business cooperation services to be the most important service for SMEs. The interviews do not provide additional insights in these differences.

Q13:

The figure below shows how the European Network Partners see the synergies with the Business Centres and other business support networks co-financed by the Commisison in Asia. The figure indicates that 64% see such synergies.

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[11] Provide feedback to the European Commission to ensure that future legislation corresponds to the needs of businesses

[12] Receive help with developing international commercial cooperation with other SMEs

Network Partners' views on synergy with the Business Cooperation Networks in Asia
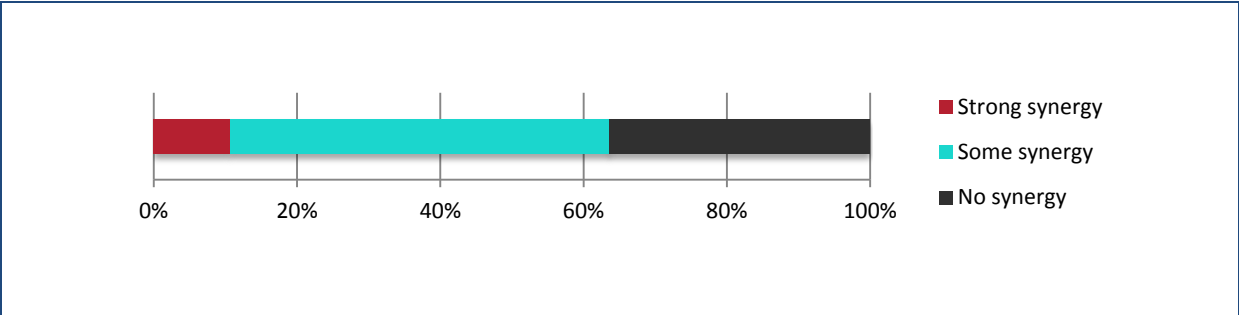
Source: Network Partner Survey

The figure below indicates that more than 80 per cent of the Enterprise Europe Network Partners are positive about the synergies with the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative.

Network Partners' views on synergy with the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative
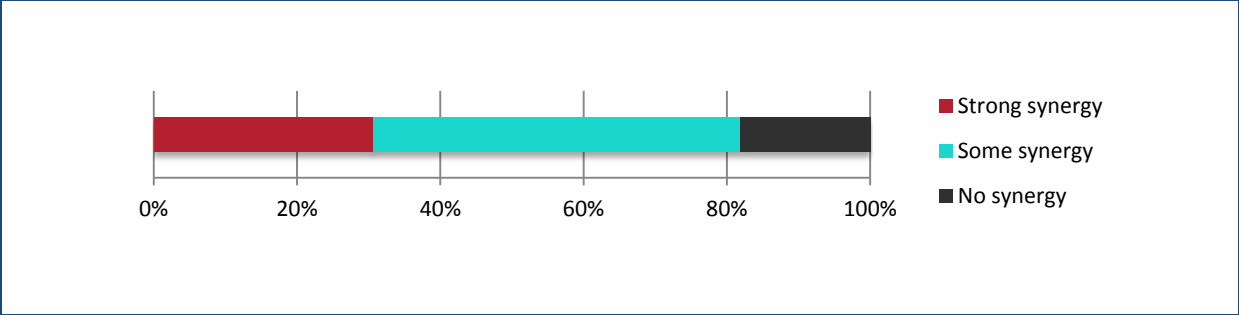
Source: Network Partner Survey

In view of the shared regional outreach of both instruments and the significant size of the ERDF, the surveyed Network Partners indicate that there is still room for improvement when it comes to synergies between the two instruments. Even though about 30% of the Network Partners sees 'strong synergies', another 25% sees no synergy at all. The majority sees 'some synergy'.

Network Partners' views on synergy with the European Regional Development Fund
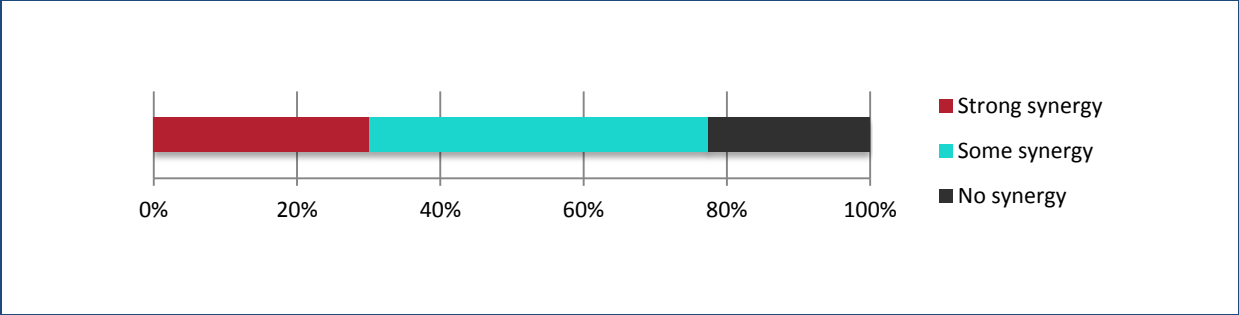
Source: Network Partner Survey

Q14:

EU added value is defined as 'the value resulting from an EU intervention which is additional to the value that would have been otherwise created by Member States alone'.[13] The answers to evaluation questions 1 and 10 are therefore key sources when assessing the European added value of the Network.

Main results of the interviews:

Q7:

The result from the surveys with Network Partners concerning human resources (see above) is more or less confirmed by the interviewed Network Partners, of whom 75% confirms that the human resources assigned to the Network continuously improved between 2008 and now.

The result from the surveys with Network Partners concerning processes (see above) is confirmed in the interviews, where the Network Partners indicate that the processes mentioned have been improved to great extent (38%) or to some extent (47%). Interviews with the Commission confirm this increase.

Some insights from the interviews on the improved processes within the Network

- *"There is a huge difference. 2008 was close to a catastrophe, two old networks were combined, and they spend way too much time on combining the indicators from these two networks and learning how to cooperate, instead of assisting companies. The development can also be seen in the number of "Partnership Agreements" (…) on a yearly basis."* (Network Partner from Scandinavia)

- *"The Intranet has improved, reporting is stable. Difficulties are mostly with the business co-operation tool which has not improved and is very complex."* (Network Partner from Western Europe)

- *"I think the ambitions to improve are high and clear. It is a large network and it takes time to get everything to function in one joint system."* (Network Partner from Scandinavia)

- *During the years, the most visible improvement has been recorded in relation to the IT tools. The Intranet among Network Partners improved and it facilitates the work.* (Network Partner from a country participating in the CIP programme)

- *There have been general improvements, but a negative aspect is related to the validation and publication of technology profiles. The Chamber of Commerce is promoting this service in our country, but SMEs are not motivated to take part in the service, because the timing is too lon*g. (Network Partner from Eastern Europe)

- *We have acquired new online tools for providing certain services, as well as gained additional experiences. The improvement of processes (online tools, reporting, dissemination activities, etc.) largely benefit the recognition and services of the Network in our country*. (Network Partner from Eastern Europe)

The results of the Network Partner Survey concerning regional coverage (see above) were more or less confirmed by the Network Partners that were interviewed, 74% of whom noticed

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[13] Commission Staff Working Paper "The added value of the EU budget" SEC (2011)867 final.

a similar increase. Several reasons were indicated for this, and some important ones are presented in the figure below.

- *"We opened a local office in an additional town located in the region. There is one advisor working there. This increased our regional presence."* (Network Partner from Eastern Europe)

- *"The members of our consortium are the same from the project start until today, but the regional coverage of the project has improved to some extent. Our Network Partners are continuously dedicated to finding new clients and promoting project to the wider audience in our region"* (Network Partner from Scandinavia)

- *"The participation to the network has increased and, as a consequence, the opportunities for partnerships and cooperation in our country, and outside. The network is now reaching a "critical mass", which allows for more potentialities in terms of services provided."* (Network Partner from Southern Europe)

Q8:

The Network Partners are positive about Env1 and Env2. They indicate that the activities have yielded good local visibility, and reached many participants. According to the Network Partners, Env1 and Env2 helped SMEs to become more "green" in their operations. In addition to the general information provision, the specific actions allowed the Network Partners to target SMEs in new and international combinations of Network Partners and with new service portfolios. This was done in a more efficient way than would have been possible in an open call, according to the interviewed Network Partners.

Q9:

About two thirds of the Network Partners (66,3%) state that they spent resources on the communication of the Commission policies to their clients. These distributions are backed by both the Network Partner Survey and by the Network Partner interviews.

Q12:

Generally, the Network Partners indicate that they appreciate an increased focus on SMEs, and moving the indicators a bit away from what is referred to as "the context of the work". In the words of one particular Network Partner: "overall the performance measurements should be more (…) on SMEs and on their performance". An example is the number of participants in regional/local events (indicator 2). "Business and other bodies can take part in these events, but this does not assure that any collaboration is pursued, and exchange is promoted", according to one Network Partner. There seems to be a risk of Network Partners spending considerable time on getting SMEs to these events, although this does not necessarily add to the impact of the Network.

A similar effect is reported when it comes the number of partnership profiles produced (indicator #7, see annex 3.5). These profiles have to be checked for their quality, otherwise there is a risk that partners try to produce quantity, rather than quality.

The same applies to the Expression of Interest Indicators (#8; #9). The Commission should consider to use these indicators as a indication for the efficiency of the partnering process (good profiles should lead to many high quality Expressions of Interest) rather than to monitor the individual partner's performance.

Most Network Partners indicate that the typical "result-like indicators"[14] work well. These are the indicators that stand the closest to the objectives of the Network. In particular, the "partnership agreement" indicator is mentioned by many (16 of the 36 interviewed partners) as a very useful one.

Q13:

In the two countries where both the Network and the Commission's business centres activities are present, the interviewed Network Partners report a clear synergy between both actions: the Enterprise Europe Network is actively involved in business-to-business meetings and matchmaking events.

Interviewees regret that the Network is not (yet) present in other Asian countries covered by the Commisison's activities to perform the same matchmaking services in the other countries as well, e.g. in the context of the "Mission for Growth". These missions always consist of – inter alia – a matchmaking event in the target country.

Under the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative matchmaking events have been organised since 2012. For these matchmaking events there has been strong collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network.

For several "Missions for Growth" the Enterprise Europe Network has been hosting events for business-to-business meetings. Thanks to the collaboration of the Network with the Cluster Internationalisation Initiative, there were also cluster-to-cluster and cluster-to-business meetings organised at the same events, creating economies of scale on the one hand and additional opportunities for the individual SMEs participating in the events on the other. Representation of SMEs, however, has a clear risk.

According to the Network Partners consulted on this topic, participation in a Network event becomes 'too easy' for an SME when it becomes possible to be represented by a cluster organisation. Participation in brokerage activities should require investments from several sides, including that of an SME. Representation should therefore only be a fall back solution if an SME is not able to attend.

Concerning synergies with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), out of the seven cases considered in the context of the case studies, five did not reveal any synergies between the Network and the ERDF. Two cases revealed clear synergies.

In the first consortium of these two case studies, the integration between the Network consortium and the EU regional policies for the respective region were facilitated by the fact that a large number of organisations of the regional administration also form part of the Network Consortium. This interdependence was set up deliberately. The Network formally provided information on the opportunities offered for business in the context of several funding programmes, including the ERDF. Where Network Partners and the regional bodies in charge of managing EU Structural Funds[15] do not coincide, other options are considered:

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[14] such as #3; #7; #8; #9 (see annex 3.5)and the new achievement indicator that is not discussed in this paper.

[15] In the current programming period: European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds).

e.g. in one case there has been a written agreement between the consortium and the regional administration in 2008, aimed at joint information and communication activities.

In another case, an ERDF Managing Authority introduced vouchers, distributed via the Network, enabling SMEs to acquire specialised advisory services to take part in EC research projects and create international partnerships.

The vouchers, funded through the ERDF, represented a complementary measure to the information and communication activities of the Network on the EC research and innovation programs. Because the number of organisations that were present in both programmes was large, various activities were undertaken.

The ERDF Managing Authority in the country of the second case study is also the Network's consortium coordinator in this country. The interviewee indicated that there were synergies in organisational terms: The two instruments cooperate seamlessly – the Structural Funds are supposed to 'breed' the companies, help them start, grow up and be prepared for internationalisation, while the Network aims at 'offering more sophisticated services' when they are ripe for internationalisation.
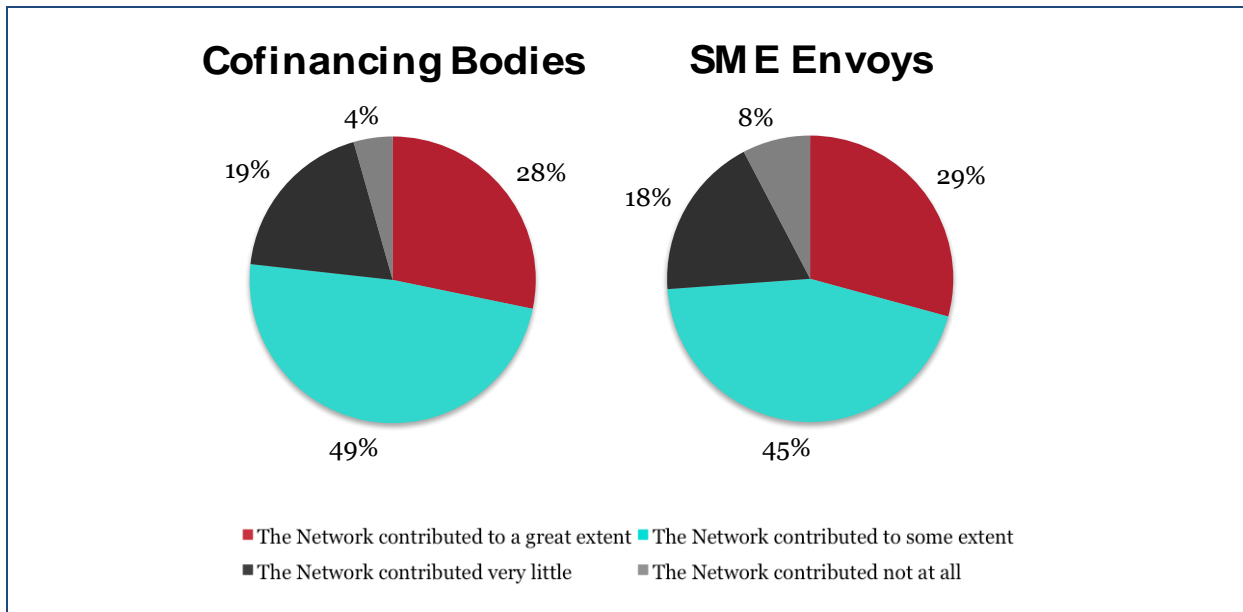
3.4   SME Envoys

The network of SME Envoys was set up in 2011 as part of the review of the Small Business Act. Each EU country has nominated a national SME Envoy to complement the role of the EU SME Envoy who chairs the network. The group of SME Envoys makes up an SBA advisory group that promotes SME friendly regulation and policy making in all EU countries. This group consists of 28 persons, all of whom were contacted. Because of time constraints, not all were able to answer the survey or offer an interview. The survey was open for one month. To ensure anonymity the Envoy survey did not include a question on the country of origin.16 reponses were recived and 1 interview took place.

The survey was meant to contribute to evaluation questions 3 and 11.

Main results of the surveys:

Q3:
Co-financing bodies (see sub-chapter below) and SME Envoys on the added value of the Enterprise Europe Network to the Small Business Act

Source: SME Envoys Survey and Co-financing bodies Survey

Thoughts of the SME Envoys on the importance of each of the ten principles (most important ones on top), combined with the contribution of the Network to the implementation of each of the ten principles, according to the Co-financing bodies (dotted lines show the linkages between the principles)
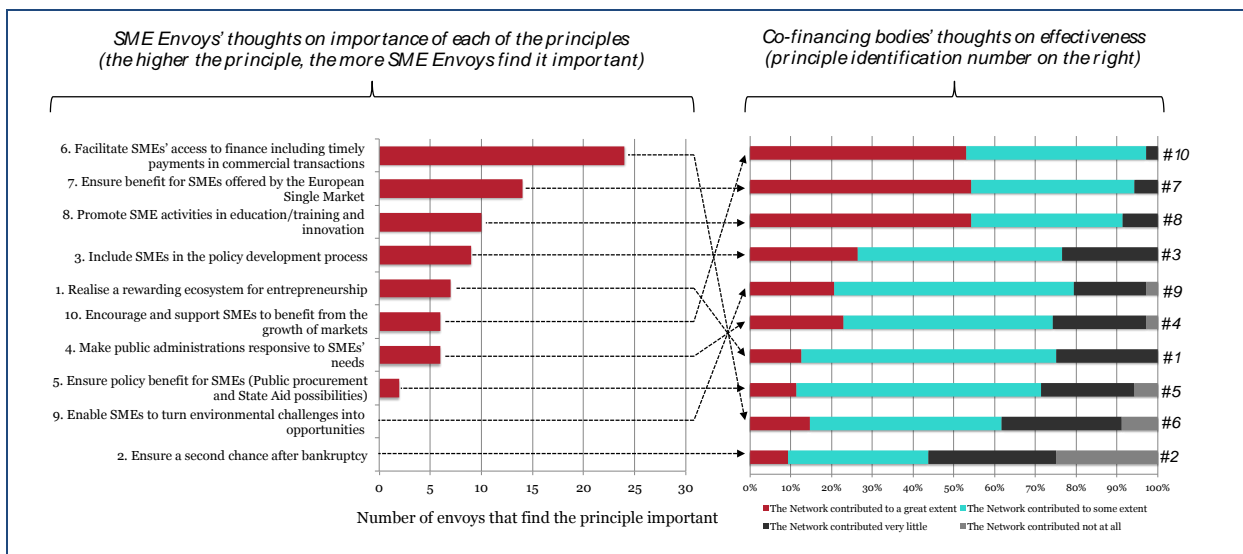
Source: SME Envoys Survey and Co-financing bodies Survey

Q11:

SME Envoys indicate an order of priorities that was more or less overlapping with the one indicated by client-SMEs and SME Envoys. The only difference is that business cooperation is considered to be of highest priority by them, followed by information services.

3.5   Co-financing bodies of the Network

This group consists of an unknown number of organisations in the individual countries. Theoretically, each Network Partner can have their own co-financing body. In reality, and in the smaller countries, it is often only one co-financing body that covers an entire Network consortium. 48 con-financing bodies replied to the survey questionnaire. In addition, 13 Interviews with Co-financing bodies of the Network from DE, IE, ES, IT, FR, CY, LU, AT, PL, PT, FI, SE, UK and TR have been conducted between March and July 2015.

Surveys with this stakeholder group were meant to contribute to answering evaluation questions 3, 4, 5, 7, 11 and 14 and the interviews contributed to answering evaluation questions 4 and 14.

Main results of the surveys:

Q3:

See sub-chapter on SME Envoys above.

Q4:

No unintended negative impacts of the Network have been identified by the interviewed Co-financing bodies, umbrella organisations and potential competitors. Generally, these stakeholders stress the complementarity of the work done by Network Partners vis-à-vis the work done by other support service providers for SMEs. Only about 28% of the Co-financing bodies believes that there is very little unfair competition, or that there is unfair competition to some extent. The interviewed umbrella organisations and non-Network service providers did not mention unfair competition by the Network.

Q5:

In contrast to the client SMEs, the Co-financing bodies attribute highest importance to the Network's information services, followed closely by business-cooperation services.

Q7:

Almost all sponsors of the Network indicate that the Network has been able to enhance its own value in the 2008-2014 period. About 58% of the Co-financing bodies indicate that their appreciation and understanding of the Network has grown to great extent between 2008 and 2014. Almost two out of five (38.2%) state that their appreciation of the work of the Network has increased to some extent. Particularly approved by the Co-financing bodies, are items such as 'the broad information pool', the increased visibility among the business community with measurable results, as well as the striving for of 'quantifiable results'. It is also appreciated that the Network staff focuses solely on SMEs with the potential and willingness to expand their business internationally.

This allows staff to grow in this specific expertise. The possibility to dedicate highly skilled staff to such issues is well appreciated by many Co-financing bodies. Co-financing bodies also appreciate the help they receive from the Network in order to better understand the needs of businesses.

Q11:

The survey of Co-financing bodies shows that the Co-financing bodies generally share the ideas of the SMEs on the usefulness/importance of individual services. They consider the information services to be the most important service provided by the Network, followed closely by business-cooperation services. Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge; internationalisation beyond the EU; and encouraging the participation of SMEs in the Framework Programmes are considered to be less important. The least important services according to the Co-financing bodies are the Network's "no wrong door" principle, as well as SME feedback on EU legislation.

Q14:

The EU added value of the Enterprise Europe Network is recognised as such by the Co-financing bodies. This is shown in the figure below. The large majority of the Co-financing bodies consulted indicate that the added value of the Network is to be attributed to the EU.

Extent to which Co-financing bodies attribute the added value of the Network to the EU (% of replies)
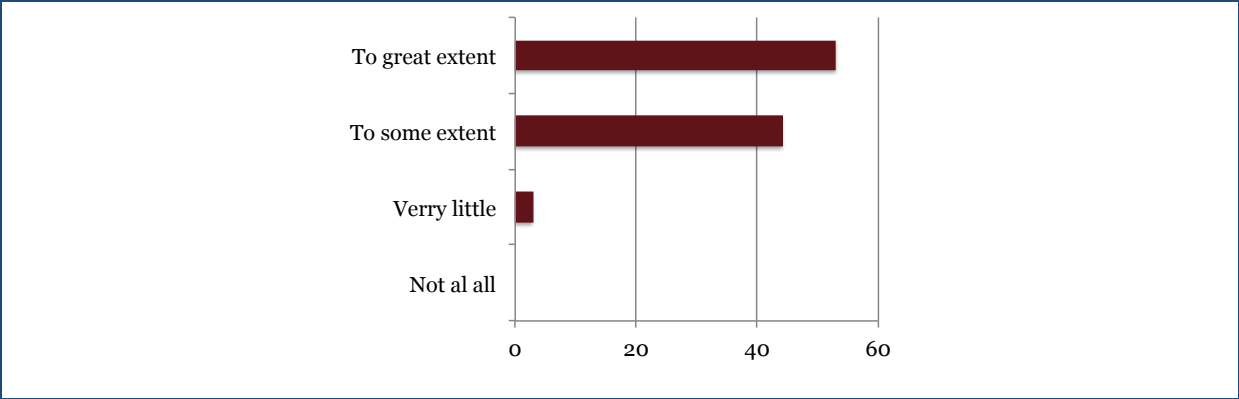
Source: Co-financing bodies survey

Main results of the interviews:

Q4:

The interviewed Co-financing bodies are more explicit than the Co-financing bodies that filled out the survey. None of them believes that the Network creates an unfair competition for other public or private service providers that can also help SMEs in their country internationalise. Most of them are convinced that a stronger cooperation with the Network will strengthen all service providers in the arena. That is especially the case in Poland where both services are considered 'rather complementary to each other'. In Poland, the Co-financing bodies believe that because of the Network's presence in their country, 'many obstacles are getting solved like for instance language barriers that sometimes the competitors face'. Another co-financing body clearly stated that 'there 'is space for all of us, we do not use the same tools. Our work is complementary rather than competitive. We communicate in order to find synergies and we work together'. Another co-financing body said he was 'glad

to see that in the new call there is a stress of collaboration with the local professional environment. It should not be something exclusive'.

Q14:

Interviews confirm the results of the surveys with the same stakeholder group (see above): Co-financing bodies state that related efforts have been largely national before the Network was set up and that these have now been partly brought together, which can also be attributed to the European Union. A co-financing body states that "the same network at a national scale would definitely not have the same impacts in terms of market opportunities and development and thus impact on turnover. Besides that the European Commission provides a great input in terms of coordinating the project and financing it. It is very important to have someone to manage and coordinate this at EU scale, to organise trainings and annual conferences, etcetera. Only the Commission can do this." A second Co-financing body reported that "it would not be possible without the EU to set up such a far reaching infrastructure replicated in so many countries, as this needs large public sector support and an overarching structure to do so".

3.6   Members of the Network's "Consultative Forum"

This group consists of nine organisations, eight of which were consulted.

Interviews contributed to answering evaluation question 4.

Main results of the interviews:

Q4:

The umbrella organisations interviewed do not see explicit unfair competition for service providers that are not part of the Network. Some, however, stress that there are countries, where the SMEs reached by the Network are more limited in number than in others. This is determined in part by the models in practice where in some cases, SMEs are more likely to liaise with certain chambers of commerce or other support service providers. If these chambers of commerce or other service providers decide not to apply for partnership in the Network, this has consequences for their member SMEs as they cannot benefit further from the services offered by the Network.

3.7   Managing Authorities

This stakeholder group outside the Network was relevant for answering evaluation question 13. This group was consulted in the context of a limited number of case studies. Seven interviews have been conducted with Managing Authorities from DE, IE, IT, AT, PL,FI and UK .

Main results of the interviews:

Q13:

Out of the seven interviewed managing authorities in the context of the case studies, five did not reveal any synergies between the Network and the ERDF.

In the first consortium of these two case studies, the integration between the Network consortium and the EU regional policies for the respective region were facilitated by the fact that a large number of organisations of the regional administration also form part of the Network consortium. This interdependence was set up deliberately. The Network formally provided information on the opportunities offered for business in the context of several funding programmes, including the ERDF. Where Network partners and the regional bodies in charge of managing EU Structural Funds[16] do not coincide, other options are considered: e.g. in one case there has been a written agreement between the consortium and the regional administration in 2008, aimed at joint information and communication activities. In another case, an ERDF Managing Authority introduced vouchers, distributed via the Network, enabling SMEs to acquire specialised advisory services to take part in EC research projects and create international partnerships.

The ERDF Managing Authority in the country of the second case study is also the Network's consortium coordinator in this country. The interviewee indicated that there were synergies in organisational terms: The two instruments cooperate seamlessly – the Structural Funds are supposed to 'breed' the companies, help them start, grow up and be prepared for internationalisation, while the Network aims at 'offering more sophisticated services' when they are ripe for internationalisation.

3.8   Non-Network service providers

This stakeholder group outside the Network was relevant for answering evaluation question 4. This group was consulted in the context of a limited number of case studies. Nine interviews with such service providers from DE, IT, PL, UK and TR have been conducted.

Main results of the interviews:

Q4:

All interviewed potential competitors of the Enterprise Europe Network are aware of the services offered by the Network. Even though they consider themselves competitors of the Enterprise Europe Network, many of them also collaborate with the individual Partners in the Network. One of the competitors interviewed worked closely together with a Network Partner to provide to SMEs information on markets beyond the EU. These collaborations were formally allocated outside the Network, and there were clear synergies. Another potential competitor sees the Network as an important provider of information on internationalisation

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[16] In the current programming period: European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds).

as well as business co-operation opportunities. Even though he considers his organisation as a competitor of the Enterprise Europe Network, he believes he makes good use of the public services offered by the Network. Although the services of the Network are formally directed to SMEs, he also benefits from them. Some potential competitors of Network Partners sign cooperation agreements with the Network Partners to make sure they have access to information of the Network. Six of the eight interviewed potential competitors are positive about the cooperation with the Partners of the Network and they clearly try to seek a complementary position vis-a-vis the Network.

3.9 Directors of EU-sponsored activities in third countries with which the Network collaborated

This stakeholder group was relevant for answering evaluation question 13. It consisted of two persons, representing two EU sponsored activities in third countries, namely China and India.

Main results of the interviews:

Q13:

In terms of synergies there is a clear difference between the synergies associated with the activities in China and India and the activities in the other Asian countries. The two interviewees report a clear synergy between both the Network and the discussed EU activities in China and India: the Enterprise Europe Network is actively involved in business-to-business meetings and matchmaking events. For instance, in India over 50 EU SME participants met with over 100 Indian SME participants at a brokerage event in Delhi. The biggest value in the synergy is therefore the connection of the Network's client SMEs in Europe to the SMEs in India and China. Interviewees indicate that the connection of Europe to China and India is valuable for both parties, as the connection to European technology is very valuable for the fast development of China and India, which creates opportunities for EU-based SMEs. For European SMEs, expanding to the Asian markets generally requires a lot more expertise and support than expanding within the European internal market. The Network's Business Cooperation Centres (BCCs) in India and China organise matchmaking events and provide related market access information. Interviewees stress the importance of introducing EU-based SMEs to these challenging markets.

1   Secondary quantitative data analyses

The work conducted on secondary quantitative data consisted of the cleaning and treatment of these data, which originate from the Benefit surveys (BS), Client satisfaction surveys (CSS), Performance Enhancement System (PES) and Eurostat (Structural Business Statistics – SBS – combined with national sources and SME Performance Review – SPR).

Eurostat, national sources and SPR

Combining data from Eurostat, national sources and SPR allows annual growth rates to be computed over the 2008-2014 period. These growth rates were used for research question 1 in order to define the development of the "average EU SME" group and compare it to the development of the "treatment group" as defined by data from the SMEs survey. Further down in this annex the sources for the annual growth rates of the "average EU SME" group will be described in detail. As a result, complete time series over 2008-2014 were constructed for almost all countries. For a few countries (Albania, Iceland, Israel and Liechtenstein), turnover was not available and there are gaps concerning the employment indicator.

When considering the median growth of all countries, SMEs have experienced a negative growth of their employment figures in 2009, 2010 and 2012, with 2009 being the worst year. Growth rates for turnover indicate a strong decrease of turnover in 2009 followed by a recovery that peaks in 2011 before downturning from 2012 on.

Median annual growth rates for turnover and employment
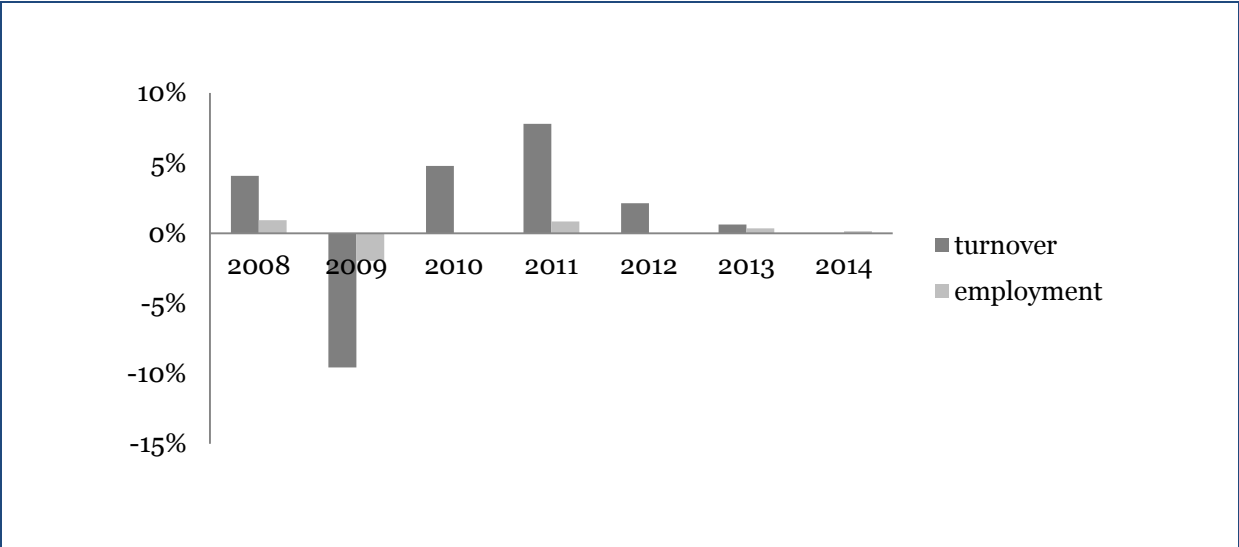
Source: Eurostat

Description of individual data sources:

Eurostat data

Eurostat data were extracted from the Structural Business Statistics (SBS) database, which captures the structure and performance of businesses across the European Union (EU). It covers industry, construction, trade and services. Data are presented according to the NACE activity classification[17]. They are also broken down by size of company allowing thus the isolation of SMEs (derived from a combination of "From 10 to 19 persons employed", "From 20 to 49 persons employed", "From 50 to 249 persons employed"). Geographically the database covers the EU Member States and CIP countries. The period the database covers is from 2008 to 2012 but the coverage varies by country. The main indicators within SBS are generally collected and presented as monetary values.

These data were collected in order to construct indicators on the evolution of employment and turnover within the population of SMEs over the most recent period available. The number of companies and value added were collected as well. The most recent period with information on SMEs for these indicators in SBS is 2010-2012. However, it is possible to combine the up-to-date data in SBS with data from national sources and the work conducted in 2014 for the SME Performance Review (SPR).

SME Performance Review

The SME Performance Review (SPR) is a tool used by the European Commission to monitor and assess countries' progress in implementing the Small Business Act (SBA). It is done on a yearly basis and consists of an Annual Report on European SMEs and SBA country fact sheets. Geographically the database covers SMEs in EU Member States and another 8 partner countries[18]. The period covered by the database is 2008 to 2014, containing estimated figures for all countries with missing data and forecasted values for the years 2013 and 2014. For the econometric methods used to assess the Network's impacts on the turnover and headcount of its client-SMEs, please see below the sub chapter on "Econometric methods used for evaluation question 1".

Benefit surveys

Results from the four Benefit surveys (2010-2013) were analysed in order to inform question 1 further in terms of impact. The questions from the survey about the impact on turnover and jobs were examined. The sample size of the survey is 637 firms in 2010, 727 in 2011, 1 345 in 2012 and 2 415 in 2013. In order to address questions 6 (efficiency) and 7 (value enhancement), results were produced using data from the Performance Enhancement System (PES).

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[17] Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community.

[18] Albania, Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Turkey.

Performance Enhancement System (PES)

The efficiency indicator from the Performance Enhancement System (PES) data that was investigated is the cost per hour of the different activities of the Network in order to better understand which aspects of the Network tend to be more resource intensive. The data came from the Net.A 2011-2012 dataset of the PES, which include data at the level of 92 consortia.

The evaluators assessed the value enhancement of the Network by observing the evolution of the number of client-SMEs (following various activities) and the country coverage of the Network. Because the lengths of the periods covered by the PES are not identical, and because some indicators of the third period are broken down in the first periods, one must be cautious in the interpretation of the evolution of the number of clients by activity, even when normalising the periods. Globally, it appears that there is a positive trend in time, which was measured for each activity. Country coverage, assessed by the growth of partners, was mostly stable over the period, with 20 countries keeping the same number of partners. The number of partners increased in four countries, but it decreased in 11 countries. This might be due to mergers of partners.

Client Satisfaction Survey

Data from the Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS) primarily provide insights for question 11 (i.e. how useful the Network services are considered to be). Although the CSS is a satisfaction survey and does not directly measure usefulness, a lower appreciation for services that are considered to be relatively less useful by the clients was to be expected. Data concerning the clients of 292 partners in 2011 and 286 partners in 2012 were examined. The data were collected at the partner level, and indicators were computed as the average assessment per partner and not the average assessment per client. This is due to the unavailability of the number of clients in the 2011 CSS. Hence all partners have the same weight, disregarding the number of clients related to them.

2   Econometric methods used for evaluation question 1

Methods used to asess the impacts of the Network's services

Ideally an effectiveness analysis of an EU action for SMEs would include a strict, defined and known group of participating SMEs and a control group that has very similar characteristics but has not been participating in the EU action. This would provide the opportunity to gather information at micro level of both groups and perform a micro level counterfactual analysis. However for this evaluation this was not possible for several reasons:

- No list of client-SMEs benefiting from the services of the Network is available and the definition of a client-SME is an issue (as discussed).

- It is impossible to say whether some SMEs in the "average EU SME" group actually benefitted from the services of the Network.

- A control group at micro level would have to focus on "internationally oriented" SMEs, which would strongly increase the overlap with client-SMEs of the Network.

- The existing databases that would have been available for constructing a micro control group often have less data available concerning SMEs.

Therefore, the approach adopted for this evaluation was to compare the growth rate of employment and turnover of client-SMEs (treatment group) with the growth rates of the whole population of SMEs ("average EU SME" group, which also may include client-SMEs). The spread or difference between both rates is a direct measure of the effectiveness of the Network in terms of employment or turnover. Data on client-SMEs directly originated from the SMEs survey. Data on the general population of SMEs (i.e. the "average EU SME" group) have been described above.

Using macro-level data (i.e. figures related to the general population of firms) for the control figures allows a comprehensive coverage of benchmark SMEs in the studied countries instead of a partial view of the population. Furthermore, control figures were treated to take into account time and country variability, they focus on SMEs only (i.e. the evolution of large firms does not interfere with the control figures) and were weighted to match the sample of client-SMEs in terms of distribution of employment/turnover size. Client-SMEs were not discounted from these control figures because of the lack of available data on Network participation in the whole population, but this does not represent an issue for the analysis for two reasons:

First, the contribution of client-SMEs in the national growth rates of employment or turnover for all SMEs can be expected to be low. This is supported by the recent results of the EU's Flash-Eurobarometer 421 (October 2015), which reports that 8% of EU SMEs have heard or read about the Network. Hence, it is safe to assume that national macroeconomic figures mainly represent trends of non-client-SMEs. Second, including client-SMEs in the control figures increases the convergence between the figures of the treatment group and the ones of the "average EU SME" group. As the effectiveness of the Network is illustrated by a divergence between both groups, it means that the analysis uses a benchmark that may be stricter than what is needed to obtain positive results (i.e. "average EU SME" group performing better).

The approach is, however, subject to potential biases. First, as the sample of client-SMEs only covers SMEs that were still active when the survey was carried out, SMEs that were terminated before conducting the survey are not observed. This may bias the comparison between client-SMEs and the "average EU SME" group, as the growth rates of the population of SMEs are lowered by the exit of SMEs. This bias, called survival bias, was corrected by taking into account national death rates in the calculations. Second, potential biases may arise as client-SMEs are not randomly selected from the whole population of SMEs. This is called a selection bias.

As a result, better performance in employment and turnover could be observed within client-SMEs due to intrinsic characteristics of the firms and not due to the Network. However, considering that the targeted population of client-SMEs is not based on a selection process of better performers, that no evidence of selection process was observed when conducting the survey, and that the analysis is based on a representative sample of more than 1 500 client-SMEs, selection bias is expected to be minimum. A second form of selection bias could have occurred at the selection of SMEs for the SME Survey.

In order to take into account time dynamics in an appropriate manner, firms in the survey are classified in cohorts. Each cohort corresponds to a year from which firms have started to use the services of the Network. There are 6 cohorts in the sample, from 2008 to 2013. The first cohort, cohort 2008 includes firms that started to use the Network's services in 2008 or

before. From 2009, cohorts include firms that joined the Network during the corresponding year.

A threefold cleaning procedure was implemented in order to remove inconsistent responses and outliers. First, only firms in the survey sample that account for a maximum of 250 employees (at the beginning or the end of the period) are considered in the calculations in order to keep comparability with the growth rates of the population of SMEs. Second, observations for which changes in employment and turnover (in terms of growth rates and absolute variations) are below the first percentile or above the last percentile of the distribution were not considered in the analysis in order to smooth the calculations. Third, only firms with available data for employment and turnover at the beginning and at the end of the period could be considered for the calculations. As a result, the analysis was based on 1 730 client-SMEs for employment growth rates, and 1 573 client-SMEs for turnover growth rates.

The observed average growth rate of employment or turnover between the year an SME (SME i) started to use the Network's services (year 0) and the last reported year (2014) is:

$$g_{i,0} = (X_{i,2014}/X_{i,t_0})^{1/(2014-t_0)} - 1$$

where t0 stands for year 0 and X is the turnover or the employment of the SME. In order to take into account the survival bias, this growth rate is adjusted. This must not be interpreted as an impact of the survival bias on the individual growth of the firm, but as a correction for the bias that takes into account SMEs' characteristics. The idea is that the correction is performed before aggregating the SMEs in order to take into account country, year and size class variability.[19] The adjustment is based on the death rate of all SMEs in the corresponding country, year and size class. When the firm changes its size category between the first year and 2014, the average death rate of the two size classes is used. The correction of the growth rate is computed as follows (the correction is applied from the first year after the beginning of the period):

$$g_{i,0}^* = (1 + g_{i,0})\left(\prod_{t=0}^{2013}(1 - \delta_{i,t+1})\right)^{1/(2013-t_0)}$$

where δ is the death rate for the corresponding country, size class and year. Adjusted employment or turnover is computed as follows:

$$\bar{X}_{i,2014} = X_{i,0}(1 + g_{i,0}^*)^{2014-t_0}$$

Control figures for employment and turnover are calculated as follows:

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[19] Size categories are based on the Eurostat categories for SME personnel: 0, 1-4, 5-9 and more than 10 employees.

$$Xcontrol_{i,2014} = X_{i,0} \prod_{t=t_0+1}^{2014} (1 + gpop_{i,t})$$

where *gpop* is the growth rate of employment or turnover of the population of SMEs corresponding to the country of client-SME *i* and year *t*.

The aggregation of company level figures yields global growth rates for each cohort of client-SMEs:

$$G_0 = \frac{\sum_i \bar{X}_{i,2014}}{\sum_i X_{i,0}} - 1$$

The growth rates for the "average EU SME" group is calculated as follows:

$$Gcontrol_0 = \frac{\sum_i Xcontrol_{i,2014}}{\sum_i X_{i,0}} - 1$$

The idea here is that the "average EU SME" group is distributed similarly to the sample of client-SMEs in terms of country and size representation. The difference between *G0* and *Gcontrol0* is a spread that measures the extent to which the evolution of employment or turnover in the SME sample exceeds the evolution in the "average EU SME" group.

$$spread_0 = G_0 - Gcontrol_0$$

In order to produce a single figure for all cohorts of SMEs, a weighted average of aggregated growth rates is calculated as follows (for the client-SMEs and the "average EU SME" group):

$$G = \sum_{t=2008}^{2013} G_t N_t \Big/ \sum_{t=2008}^{2013} N_t$$

where *Nt* is the number of SMEs in the sample in cohort *t*.

3 Econometric methods used for evaluation question 5

Methods used to assess the effectiveness of individual Network services

A regression model was implemented in order to measure the impact of each service provided by the Network on the probability that the Network contributed to safeguard or enhance turnover or employment of the client-SME. The idea here is that the use of each service is related to other services, which justifies a ceteris paribus approach in order to disentangle the impact of each service. A multivariate regression analysis produces estimates for the impact of each service while holding the use of other services constant. As the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable equal to 1 if the SMEs report a positive impact on turnover or

employment, and 0 otherwise, the following probit regression model was used for the purpose of the analysis:

$$P(impact_i = 1|x) = \Phi\left(\alpha + \sum_k \beta_k service\ k_i + country_i\right) = \Phi(x\beta)$$

$$\text{with} \quad \Phi(x\beta) = \int_{-\infty}^{x\beta} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\Pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{v^2}{2}\right) dv,$$

where

- $impact_i$ is 1 if client-SME i reports positive impact of the Network on employment or turnover, 0 otherwise;

- service k_i is 1 if client-SME *i* uses service category k, 0 otherwise;

- $country_i$ is a control variable for country heterogeneity.

The probit model estimates the probability that SMEs will fall into one of the two categories of the impact variable (i.e. impact = 1 or impact = 0). The estimation of the coefficients is based on a maximum likelihood estimation[20]. Marginal effects were calculated from the estimated coefficients of the probit regressions in order to measure the effect of the change of the binary independent variables (i.e. when the service variables change from 0 to 1) on the predicted probability that the Network has an impact on the SME. The marginal effect (ME) of service k is calculated as follows (holding all other variables at their mean):

$$ME\ of\ service\ k = P(impact = 1|service\ k = 1, x) - P(impact = 1|service\ k = 0, x)$$

The McFadden pseudo R-squared is reported as a goodness-of-fit indicator. A better value for this statistic indicates a better fit of the model.

No use has been made of fixed effects at the level of individuals as the structure of the data is not a panel (short panel would be quite an issue) with each firm observed in time. A set of country effects (in a non random design) has been added. There is a satisfying number of responses in most individual countries.

The followint table presents the marginal effects of each service on the probability that employment or turnover is positively affected. The marginal effect of a service can be interpreted as the change in the probability of observing a positive impact when the firm uses the corresponding service instead of not using it.

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[20] Iterative maximisation algorithm in Stata produced results at 5th iteration.

Marginal effects of the Network's services on employment and turnover (Probit regressions)[21]

	Impact on employment	Impact on turnover	Impact on employment and/or turnover
Information	0.074*	0.093*	0.081*
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.024)
Information onInternationalisation beyond the EU	0.121*	0.123*	0.145*
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Business cooperation	0.087*	0.102*	0.105*
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Innovation and transfer of technology and knowledge	0.084*	0.127*	0.133*
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Encouraging participation in FP7/H2020	0.088*	0.027	0.066*
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.025)
"No wrong door" principle	0.098*	0.120*	0.130*
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)
N	2611	2611	2611
Pseudo R-squared	0.133	0.148	0.153

Source: SME Survey

Please note that this table presents marginal effects computed based on the coefficients of probit regressions. Standard errors are in brackets. * indicates that the marginal effect is statistically significant at 1%. Country effects are included in the model but not reported.

4   Estimation of the total number of clients of the Network

For the purpose of this evaluation, the definition of a client-SME is based on the use of the Network services. In principle the brokerage services seem to be a cornerstone of the activities of the Network, as they directly translate into international SME collaboration. A triangulation of different sources of data was implemented in order to infer a reasonable figure for the population of Network SMEs:

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[21] SME Feedback is left out as it is used by the very large majority of client-SMEs, which makes it difficult to disentangle the effect of feedback from the effect of other services.

- From the SMEs survey, about 55% of SMEs of the sample are using the brokerage services of the Network.[22] The target population being all client-SMEs, the utilisation rate of brokerage services is inferred as being the same for all client-SMEs.
- From PES, about 35,000 clients used brokerage services in 2008-2009.

The estimated total client-SME population is then 65 000 clients in 2008-2009. From the SMEs survey can be deduced an average annual increase of 20% of new clients that started to use the services of the Network since 2009. This yields the following figures between 2009 and 2014. [23]

Estimated number of clients of the Network per year, based on the number of clients taking part in brokerage events, corrected as explained above

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
65,000	78,000	94,000	112,000	135,000	160,000

Source: Technopolis Group based on SME Survey and PES.

The PES figures for brokerage services in 2011 were also used as a validation indicator in order to produce an estimate for a different year. Using the same method (i.e. extrapolation of the population based on the percentage of use of brokerage services), the estimated number of client-SMEs in 2011 is 94 000, which validates (perfectly!) the annual increase that is used on the period.

The 2014 figure of about 160 000 client-SMEs is (partially) confirmed by COSME data: about 113 000 clients where planned to receive international and innovation support in 2103-2014. Given that about 60% of the SMEs in the SME Survey used these types of services, the planned number of 113 000 clients using these types of services corresponds well to the total estimate of 160 000 SMEs clients. Although it is not a perfect match like the earlier match with PES data it is certainly in the same margin and correctly scaled.

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[22] One should be aware that our sample might be biased as (1) the Network Partners that have forwarded the survey might have focused more on such clients, and (2) these organisations fill out the survey more frequently.

[23] The figures do not take into account potential SMEs that might quit their relationship with the Network, because the quality of reporting on that is limited. These figures represent the total set of clients of the Network. EASME data do not allow to distinguish between different services as data lack the needed level of representativeness, while Technopolis data allows only a partial differentiation between years and not a longitudinal approach (as respondents were asked to look back from 2015).

5 Key Performance Indicators used by the Network internally

Key performance indicators used by the Network internally in the period 2008-2014

The table below gives an overview of the logical framework for Network activities resulting in outputs, outcomes and impact indicators. Each of the indicators (34 in total) are collected at consortium level. The individual consortia have received baseline and target values for these indicators as part of their individual workprogramme, and have been assessed at the occasion of the interim and final evaluation of their grants.

ANNEX 1 – OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS
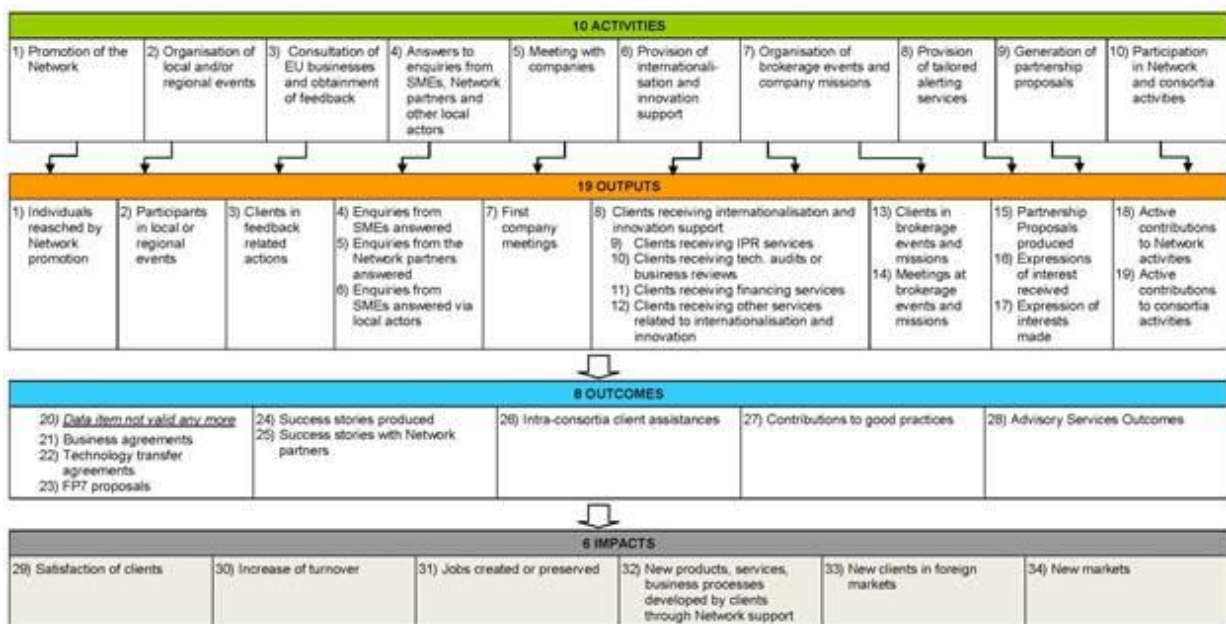
Key performance indicators used by the Network internally in the period 2015-2021:

Service activities, outputs and outcomes; enabling activities and outputs

Service activities and outputs	
1. Advice, support and information activities	
1)	Regional/local events organised
2)	Participants in regional/local events
3)	SMEs/clients receiving individual advisory support
2. Cross-border partnering activities for business cooperation, technology transfer, innovation and research	
4)	Brokerage events/company missions organised
5)	SMEs/clients in brokerage events/company missions
6)	Meetings at brokerage events/company missions
7)	Partnership profiles produced
8)	Expression of interests received
9)	Expression of interests made
3. SME feedback activities	
10)	Clients in feed-back related actions
4. Specific activities in the context of innovation support (Horizon 2020)	
11)	Clients mentored/coached
Service outcome	
12)	**Achievements**
Enabling activities and outputs	
5. Promotion of the Network's services and communication activities	
13)	Number of SMEs using digital services provided by the Network
14)	Cooperation with local stakeholders
6. Network building and reinforcing the Network	
15)	Answered enquiries from Network partners
16)	Active contributions to Network activities

(Source: annex 3 to the "Guide for applicants" (p.60) of the call COS-EEN-2014-2-04: Enterprise Europe Network (2nd Call) - 2015/2020; available at https://ec.europa.eu/easme/sites/easme-site/files/documents/Guide%20for%20applicants%20-2nd%20EEN%20call.pdf; The document also provides definitions for the individual KPIs.)