



## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS - COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03**

### **European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities**

#### **Questions and Answers**

**Ver. 04/12/2020**

*Last questions to be taken into consideration have to be submitted 7 calendar days prior to the deadline of the submission of this call.*

### **Contents**

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	2
2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S)-ACTIVITIES-OUTPUTS.....	2
3. TIMETABLE .....	3
4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS .....	3
5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS .....	3
6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA .....	3
7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA .....	9
8. SELECTION CRITERIA.....	9
9. AWARD CRITERIA.....	9
10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS .....	9
11. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES .....	9
12. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS.....	9
13. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS .....	9
14. PUBLICITY.....	9
15. DATA PROTECTION.....	9
16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS.....	9
17. ANNEXES .....	9

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document provides replies to the frequently asked questions (FAQ's) concerning the *European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities* Call for proposals (COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03). Its purpose is to clarify the text of the Call to facilitate the submission of good quality proposals.

This document is not legally binding and it should be read in conjunction with the text of the *European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities* Call for proposals (COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03).

The link to the text of the Call text is published on the EASME website <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-cluster-2020-3-03-european-cluster-excellence-programme-clusterxchange-scheme> .

An additional reference document to consult is the annual work programme for COSME 2020. This document is published under DG GROW web site [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/programming-monitoring-evaluation\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/programming-monitoring-evaluation_en).

You may want to contact the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) in your country and region: they can provide general information on the COSME programme and assist in case you are looking for partners in other EU country/ies. <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>.

In order to find partners for establishing your consortium, you can also use the partner search tool of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform: <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/>.

Last but not least, to ensure equal treatment of all applicants EASME does not provide individual telephone information or accept one-to-one meetings. In case you have further queries, please contact us via the functional mailbox for this action: [EASME-COSME-CLUSTER-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EASME-COSME-CLUSTER-EXCELLENCE@ec.europa.eu).

## 2. OBJECTIVE(S) – THEME(S)-ACTIVITIES-OUTPUTS

### Question 2.1

We would appreciate knowing if the activities planned under the Cluster Xchange are meant to be carried out on-site or whether it would also be possible to carry them remotely given the current covid-19 situation.

### Answer 2.1

*According to section 2.2.2 of the call for proposals, in case of crisis and/or situation of force majeure, such as the Covid-19 outbreak, where travelling abroad is seriously impeded or forbidden, it is possible to implement the ClusterXchange scheme through virtual exchanges (i.e. exchanges taking place remotely through a digital solution without physical travelling). Recourse to this exceptional measure and its implementation rules and modalities are to be decided by the Agency, in*

*consultation with partnerships selected under this call for proposals. On-site exchanges should be favoured over virtual exchanges as soon as the situation allows.*

### 3. TIMETABLE

### 4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

### 5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

### 6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

#### Question 6.1

To whom it may concern,

with great interests we have read the published call text of the "COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03: European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities" <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-cluster-2020-3-03-european-cluster-excellence-programme-clusterxchange-scheme>

We have a question referring to our eligibility as potential applicant. Is our organisation [name of the organisation] an eligible applicant? Our legal form is European economic interest grouping (EEIG) with [number] members representing public authorities, research institutes, companies and clusters from [number] different countries - the managing team of our network is based and registered in [city], [country].

#### Answer 6.1

*According to section 6.1 of the call for proposals, proposals may be submitted by applicants that are either registered on the ECCP or have requested registration on the ECCP by the call's deadline as cluster organisations or business network organisations. Moreover, according to the selection criteria as per section 8.2 of the call for proposals: "Applicants must represent a **cluster organisation or a business network organisation** involved in supporting the enhancement of cooperation, networking and learning in innovation clusters and providing or channelling specialised and customised businesses support services to stimulate innovation activities, especially in SMEs, in compliance with the coverage of innovation clusters given in the section 1.2 (e), 1.3 (s) and Annex I in the "EU Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation"". The information demonstrating these aspects are required in the application form. If the operational capacity of one or several partner(s) is not demonstrated, there is high risk that the whole proposal fails at the evaluation stage.*

*Finally, please note that questions about the individual eligibility of applicants or applicant consortia cannot be answered in advance, as this is the task of the Evaluation Committee.*

#### Question 6.2

We are interested in apply to the COS-Cluster 2020-3-03 call but it is the first time in this type of call. Therefore, we have some doubts that I hope you can address.

We are planning to write a proposal including three clusters focalized on [specific sector] and two universities (one more managerial oriented and the other one technical). Each University is member of one cluster. Is fine a consortium with these types of partners? Have the universities to participate as single partner or as linked third party of the own cluster?

At page 19 of the “Call for Proposal” we read “Training providers from a COSME participating country that are cluster members (as Host organisation only)”. Do universities be considered only for training? Can we include for example tasks of value chain analysis? Finally, what do you mean for “host organisation only”?

Thank you in advance to the information that you can provide us.

#### Answer 6.2

*See answer 6.1 as regards the eligibility and operational capacity of applicants.*

*In addition, according to section 6.2 of the call for proposals, to be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by a consortium:*

- a) composed of **at least three different legal entities**, which are*
- b) established in a minimum of **three different EU Member States** or other countries **participating in the COSME programme** pursuant to Article 6 of the COSME Regulation and*
- c) including at least **one consortium member** representing an organisation established in a region classified as 'less developed' or 'in transition', according to the mapping proposed for Structural Funds eligibility for the period 2014-2020<sup>1</sup>.*

*According to section 6.1, linked third parties, i.e. legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation (also referred to as ‘affiliated entities’), may take part in the action **as applicants** in order to declare eligible costs. It means that linked third parties may take part in the actions only as partners (applicants) and not as a linked third party of an applicant.*

*Note that page 19 of the call for proposals specifically focus on types of organisations eligible for the ClusterXchange mobility scheme, which is one of the activities to be implemented by a Partnership. ClusterXchange will be implemented by selected Partnerships as described on pages 18 – 22 of the call for proposals and*

---

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/what/future/img/eligibility20142020.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/what/future/img/eligibility20142020.pdf).

*in line with the provisions set in the “**Quality Manual** for European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for Excellence (Partnerships)”, which is annexed to the call for proposals. In this particular context, universities can be considered as training providers and would therefore be able to participate in ClusterXchange but as host organisations only. It means that training providers will not be able to participate in ClusterXchange as visiting organisations and are, according to the section 2.2.2, therefore **not** entitled to a financial contribution in the form of a lump sum.*

*Finally, as regards your question on inclusion of value chain analysis, note that according to section 2.2.1 of the call for proposals, value chain analysis is a possible eligible action.*

### Question 6.3

I am writing you regarding European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities (COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03). I work for the business support organisation from [one of the EU countries] ([hyperlink to the organisation]). We are considering participation in the above mention call for proposals. One of the eligibility criteria is that „*all applicants must be registered or having submitted a registration on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)*“.

My question is whether we as a *business support organization* are allowed to register there? Are there any specific conditions for registration?

### Answer 6.3

*Please see answer 6.1 as regards the eligibility and operational capacity of applicants. Especially note that according to the selection criteria as per section 8.2 of the call for proposals: “Applicants must represent a cluster organisation or a business **network** organisation...”*

*For more information about the registration see <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/user-guidelines> and contact European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) directly (<https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/contact>) in case you need further assistance with registration.*

### Question 6.4

On behalf of a candidate for the COS-CLUSTER-2020-3-03: European Cluster Excellence Programme with ClusterXchange scheme connecting ecosystems and cities, we would like to ask several questions regarding the application process and eligibility factors.

1. Is it necessary for a consortium applicant to provide any form of registration documents for the establishment of the consortium, declarations regarding tax and duties, any court documentation, etc.? What type of documents are required on the phase of submission of the project proposal?
2. Currently we have the following situation: we want to form a consortium of 3 parties. Is it required for such a cooperation to present documentation of the formed

consortium on the stage of applying for the programme or you will require such documentation after a stage of approval of the project proposal?

3. You have stated that a host organization for the exchanges needs to be a partner from a cluster organization that is part of the Cluster Xchange pilot scheme, which is a result from previous calls of COSME. My questions regarding this are: 1) Is it eligible for an organization that was **not** part of this scheme and previous calls of COSME to register as a visiting organization through your IT matching tool for this exchange? And 2) if it is eligible, when should the registration as a visiting organization take place – before submitting the project proposal or after the approval of the project and the start of the implementation period?

4. Which documents per mandatory Annexes are required at the stage of project submission?

#### Answer 6.4

1. Templates for all necessary documents that need to be submitted at the proposal stage are available on EASME's website dedicated to this call for proposals (<https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-cluster-2020-3-03-european-cluster-excellence-programme-clusterxchange-scheme>) and in the Electronic Submission Service on the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#). These documents are:

- Description of the Action (Part B of the proposal – Technical Annex 1) and its appropriate annexes that are included in the template:
  - Annex 1: Description Sheet 1 for European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) registered partners: to be completed by all cluster organisations or business network organisations with a validated registration in the ECCP;
  - Annex 2: Description Sheet 2 for ECCP pending registration partners: to be completed by all cluster organisations or business network organisations that have a pending registration in the ECCP;
  - Annex 3: Eligibility Sheet;
  - Annex 4: Information Sheet.
- Detailed budget template (Part B of the proposal – Technical Annex 2).

Finally, administrative forms (Part A) will be automatically generated after the online forms in the Electronic Submission Service are completed. The consortium is not required to form new legal entity with all obligations that you have mentioned.

2. All **selected** Partnerships will be required to conclude a consortium agreement, in principle prior to the signature of the grant agreement. No such document is necessary at the proposal stage. However, consortia must verify and declare through their coordinator that none of their members participates in another application within this call for proposals. If such a case is detected by the funding body, it will lead to the exclusion of the organisation concerned from all respective proposals. The respective consortia affected by the exclusion of (a) partner(s) must still fulfil the eligibility criteria as stipulated in sections 6.1 and 6.2 of this Call for proposals in order to be considered eligible.



3. According to section 2.2.2 of the call for proposals, **the participation in ClusterXchange** will not be limited to the direct beneficiaries of the European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for Excellence but **must** be **open to**:

- all cluster organisations and business network organisations from COSME participating countries,
- scaling-up support organisations<sup>2</sup> from COSME participating countries that are cluster members,
- SMEs<sup>3</sup> from a COSME participating country that are cluster members,
- Training providers from a COSME participating country that are cluster members (as Host organisation only),
- Large companies from a COSME participating country that are cluster members (as Host organisation only),
- Public authorities at both regional and city/administration levels that are active in a cluster from a COSME participating country (as Host organisation only).

Each eligible organisation may benefit from the scheme only once per cycle (i.e. once under each call of the European Cluster Excellence Programme) as a visiting organisation. This means that a visiting organisation under the pilot phase of the ClusterXchange scheme<sup>4</sup> could apply again to be a visiting organisation under the phase covered by the present call for proposals. Therefore, eligible organisations that were previously not part of ClusterXchange can indeed apply for it. Note that selected Partnerships under this call for proposals will be responsible for the implementation of the next cycle of ClusterXchange. Therefore, for the next cycle of ClusterXchange, potential host and visiting organisations can register in the ClusterXchange IT Matching tool only after the selected Partnerships under this call for proposals start implementing their projects. However, we invite eligible organisations to already take part in the current cycle (pilot phase) of ClusterXchange that is implemented by current/running European Strategic Cluster Partnership selected under Call for proposals European Cluster Excellence Programme (COS-CLUSTER-2018-03-02 - <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme/cos-cluster-2018-03-02-european-cluster-excellence-programme>). For more information about the current cycle of ClusterXchange please see <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/clusterxchange>.

4. See above the reply to your first question as regards all necessary documents that need to be submitted at the proposal stage.

---

<sup>2</sup> Scaling-up support organisations include technology centres, research institutes, fab labs, (digital) innovation hubs, creative hubs, resource-efficiency service providers, incubators and accelerators. They comprise any public or private organisations that is providing access to the testing and validation of technologies and concepts, market intelligence as well as business incubation and acceleration support services in relation to the uptake of advanced technology, digitalisation, new business models, low-carbon and resource-efficient solutions, creativity and design and skills upgrading.

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en).

<sup>4</sup> Call for proposals European Cluster Excellence Programme (COS-CLUSTER-2018-03-02), <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme/cos-cluster-2018-03-02-european-cluster-excellence-programme>.

#### Question 6.5

One of our clients has just applied to this December's call for Clusters Go International. This entity is also interested in the ClusterXchange call but we have doubts as to whether they could be eligible, given that they would already be obtaining funding from the Cluster Go International if approved. Can the same entity participate in several calls within the same COSME program oriented to clusters?

#### Answer 6.5

*Yes, the same entity can participate in several calls under the COSME programme targeting cluster organisations, provided that it fulfils the criteria provided in each respective call and the content of the project is different.*



- 7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA**
  - 8. SELECTION CRITERIA**
  - 9. AWARD CRITERIA**
  - 10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS**
  - 11. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCEDURES**
  - 12. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS**
  - 13. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**
  - 14. PUBLICITY**
  - 15. DATA PROTECTION**
  - 16. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS**
  - 17. ANNEXES**
-