

EIS

Everywhere International SMEs

Action Plan by

Partner organisation	Emilia-Romagna Region
Other partners / players involved (if relevant)	
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NUTS2 region	Emilia-Romagna
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1. Policy context

1.1 Aim of the Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

***ERDF Regional Operational Programme Emilia-Romagna 2014 – 2020
Priority Axis 3 – Competitiveness and Attractiveness of the regional
productive system
Investment Priority 3b – Developing and implementing of new operational
models for SMEs, in particular for internationalisation
Specific Objective 3.4 increasing the internationalisation of the productive
systems
Action 3.4.1 Projects for promoting export of SMEs and their aggregations,
identified on a territorial and/or sectorial basis.***

1.2 Peer Review Summary of reviewed measure

Our Peer Review was held on 12-13 December 2017 in Evora, Portugal.

The Staff Exchange held on May 16-18, 2018 in Aarhus/Viborg in Denmark has been very useful for the definition of the Emilia-Romagna Region Action Plan.

Since the POR FESR program was in progress, both the results of the Peer Review and those of the Staff Exchange had a direct impact on the definition of the new calls in implementing the existing measures.

Policy instrument

The policy instrument is a Structural Fund programme - ERDF Regional Operational Programme Emilia-Romagna 2014 – 2020, Priority Axis 3 – Competitiveness and Attractiveness of the regional productive system, Investment Priority 3b – Developing and implementing of new operational models for SMEs, in particular for internationalisation; Specific Objective 3.4 increasing the internationalisation of the productive systems.

Expected results are, on one side, to increase the number of newly exporting companies by 5%/year, with a priority for manufacturing companies, involving them in structured pathways towards internationalisation, with a priority for S3

sectors. On the other, to increase stability and relevance of foreign activities of regional SMEs.

Aim and target group

Priority Axis 3 – Competitiveness and Attractiveness of the regional productive system was designed following an integrated approach with Regional S3 and with the Regional Programme for Productive Activities.

Different support measures under action 3.4.1 have been developed, with a view to sustain multiannual internationalisation processes of SMEs towards new markets, with a priority for initiatives based on S3 regional filières/clusters, and supporting sectorial aggregations, either horizontal and/or vertical, also through the support of Export Consortia and assisting SMEs selling overseas also leveraging on the knowledge and experience and support by regional entrepreneurial organisations and innovation centres.

Therefore, within Action 3.4.1 different measures consistent with the Specific Objective 3.4 increasing the internationalisation of the productive systems can be implemented through calls for proposals. Each measure is described separately in the following paragraphs.

Summary SWOT

The combined results of SWOT analysis made by both Emilia-Romagna's Local Stakeholder Group and the EIS partners

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
S1 Operational flexibility	W1 Few direct contacts with beneficiaries;
S2 focused on SMEs information, financial, managerial needs	W2 Poor monitoring of the direct results of co-financed actions
S3 Leveraging on existing knowledge and capacities of stakeholders and the support services' market	W3 Less targeted to the needs of more mature internationalised businesses
S4 Long term experience in exporting among Emilia-Romagna Companies	W4 Lack of support for new or early stage exporters. To guide and assist with growth (pipeline not being developed)
S5 Financial capacity to support activation of plans	W5 Little focus on having the right SMEs to apply
S6 Tradition of Consortia which motivate and engage SMEs to be part of the Programme	W6 Threshold of 700.000 € is excluding high tech start ups
S7 Coordination between incentives	W7 Lack of flexibility. The approach is too traditional
S8 Joined up resources	W8 Few direct contact with beneficiaries

	W9 Repetition of the Consortia Programme every year W10 Unwillingness to cooperate with other companies of the same sector (competition) W11 Focus on business needs
OPPORTUNITIES O1 Further develop the monitoring and evaluation system O2 Further fine tune eligible activities and costs O3 Further widen the number of SMEs reached by information and eventually embracing a pathway towards foreign markets O4 Using successful companies to bring new companies in the markets O5 Targeting new markets O6 Reallocation of resources O7 People to focus on business needs O8 Better use of the leverage effect of the brand "Italia" between regional and national level O9 Commercial EU agreement with other countries	THREATS T1 Awarding benefits to the most skilled in applying not to the most endowed with export potential, nor to those most in need of support T2 Overlapping of supports T3 Political focus top-down, not client based T4 Insecurity of markets without EU agreements... T5 Reduction of public money T6 Existing consortia might prevent access to others with higher export potential

- We are considering adopting a set of criteria for evaluating the SMEs' potential alongside with the evaluation of export promotion projects;
- We are considering strengthening training and consultancies offered to SMEs alongside with a (small) contribution to realise some promotional actions abroad.

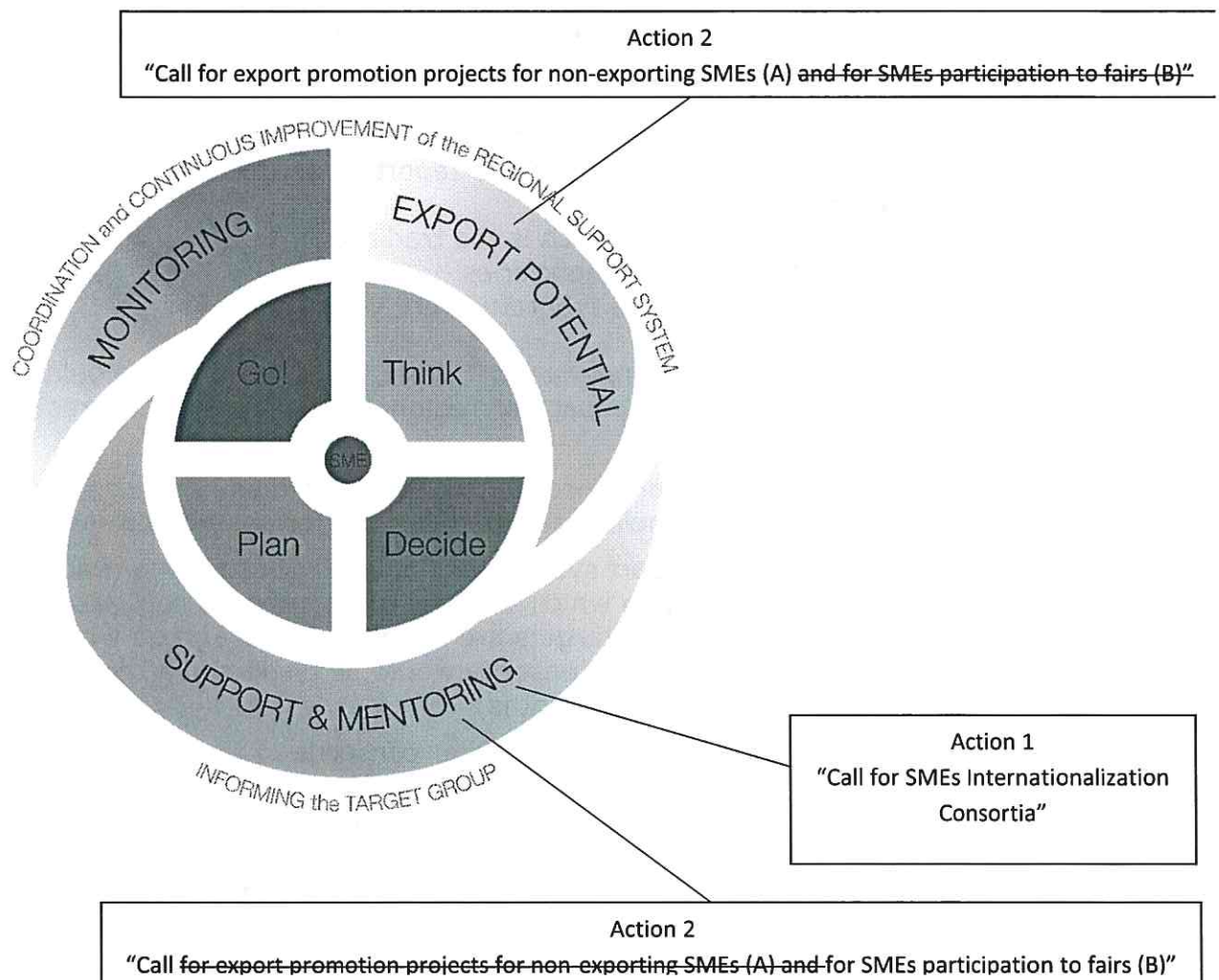
2. The link of Emilia-Romagna Region’s Action Plan with the GlobaleIS Tool

The GlobaleIS Tool has been developed during the first two years of the EIS project in a joint learning process of the EIS partner regions. For more information about the GlobaleIS Tool please refer to the GlobaleIS Concept Paper.

The Action 1 of Emilia-Romagna Region’s Action Plan, “Call for SMEs Internationalisation Consortia”, is part of the second quarter of the wheel – DECIDE, SUPPORT & MENTORING.

Concerning the Action 2, “Call for export promotion projects for non-exporting SMEs (A) and for SMEs participation to fairs (B)”, the (A) part of the call is part both of the first quarter of the wheel – THINK, EXPORT POTENTIAL and the second quarter of the wheel – DECIDE, SUPPORT & MENTORING, meanwhile the (B) part of the call is part of the second quarter of the wheel – DECIDE, SUPPORT & MENTORING.

The following wheel shows the links of the individual actions of Emilia-Romagna Region’s Action Plan with the GlobaleIS Tool:



3. Action 1: Call for SMEs Internationalisation Consortia

3.1 The Background

The ERDF program has been launched, for the internationalization part, since 2016, the activities have therefore been planned by the Emilia-Romagna Region well before the start of the EIS project. After the approval of EIS the intention of the Region was to use the results of the project to improve the measures implemented and not to build new ones. Furthermore, the measures in favor of internationalization, as part of the ERDF ROP, are part of a wider regional program that makes use of regional funds and of the collaboration with other institutional partners. This means that the experiences acquired during the Good Practices of the EIS project could have an impact beyond the ERDF ROP itself. From a financial point of view:

- 1- Emilia-Romagna Region ERDF program is fairly advanced with most of the expenditure having taken place;
- 2- Although the ERDF is almost finished the measure for the Consortia will be maintained also thanks to regional funds. In 2019 a new tender was defined, very similar to that of 2018, as implementation of the measure of the ERDF POR and it is entirely funded with regional funds. The Action Plan will therefore have a lasting impact and not limited to a single call.

During the Peer Review critical issues appeared with respect to the size of the Consortia and in particular the partners reported in the SWOT analysis in the WEAKNESSES section as follows:

- Lack of flexibility. The approach is too traditional
- Few direct contacts with beneficiaries
- Repetition of the Consortia Program every year

With the partners we tried to understand " What types of services could be offered to businesses to facilitate the impact of regional businesses measures?" And the partners answered as follows:

- A Introducing the possibility for consortia to offer tailor-made services to single SMEs, at a reduced co-financing rate than the one for shared/common services;
- B. Introducing a different support system for Consortia, based on a medium-term Business Plan per consortia in which services to be provided to SMEs, related objectives with indicators and targets are negotiated and agreed with the regional government. Funds to Consortia would be disbursed after periodical in-process monitoring i.e. every 6 months;
- C. Successful services to be shared with other consortia

Starting from these observations, the Region has focused on improving the existing measure in view of the release of the 2018 and 2019 tenders, with the possibility that the same measure is also financed in the following years.

We tried to make changes to overcome two specific critical issues that were considered particularly important:

- the repetitiveness of the programs presented by the Consortia, which tend to be based on an ordinary activity;
- the increase in the number of potential companies benefiting from the contributions received through the Consortia
- the analysis led by the Region with respect to these points has also highlighted that one of the most ordinary activities carried out by the Consortia consisted in supporting the consortium companies in participating in international fairs. Furthermore, the Consortia have little propensity to involve non-consortium SMEs in these projects although it is legally possible.

On these points we acted by introducing specific changes in the 2018 call. These changes were also maintained in the 2019 tender.

Objectives:

Export/Internationalization Consortia are a good means for penetration of foreign markets by SMEs. The basic idea about consortia is that "unity is strength": in other words, consortia are a means to overcome the problems single SME's are facing when going international, especially their tiny dimension and their limited investment and management capacities.

As explained in the introduction, the measure already exists and is in any case expected to be maintained over time also thanks to other non-ERDF ROP funding sources.

The specific objective of the Action Plan is to address the two main weaknesses that emerged during the Peer Review:

- the repetitiveness of the programs presented by the Consortia, which tend to be based on an ordinary activity;
- the increase in the number of potential companies benefiting from the contributions received through the Consortia.

Eligible activities

Before

A coordinated set of promotional activities and/or activities aiming at establishing more stable commercial/productive and technological cooperation with foreign counterparts for the benefit of adhering SMEs, to be carried out in a limited number of countries, i.e. **yearly promotional programme, detailing strategy, objectives, expected results, target markets, actions and budget.**

After

We have introduced the possibility of financing two-year programs that allow us to plan actions that exceed the ordinary activity of the Consortium. To encourage the creation of more innovative activities devoted to offering services to SMEs, a limit was also placed on single participation in trade fairs, but particular emphasis was given to join participation in trade fairs.

Another aspect concerns the evaluation criteria, these have been modified to reward the ability to innovate offered services.

Another critical issue we have been dealing with is the involvement of non-Consortium companies in order to allow an enlargement of the beneficiaries and for this reason we have modified the evaluation criterion by rewarding the Consortia that bring new businesses.

Eligible expenditures are those related to the **collective Participation to international fairs abroad and in Italy** (renting and setting up of exhibition spaces for the Consortium; shipping and insurance of products; hiring of hostess; Interpreting costs), **Promotional expenditures** (video, leaflets, brochures, commercials and other promotional materials, including consortium website, commercials; renting of space for conferences, seminars, B2B meetings; expenditures for demonstrative actions), the purchase of **Specialised services from external providers** (drafting of an international marketing plan for the Consortium, for a single country; study/research outlining the best internationalisation pathway for the consortium, taking into account the distinctive features of adhering companies; feasibility studies for a more stable presence on the selected market (collective showrooms, after-sale service centres); **Incoming missions** (costs connected with hosting representatives of foreign businesses in Italy), **consortium staff for coordination and management of the initiative.**

Amount of co-financing:

- 40% of eligible costs;
- min. 30.000 - max 150.000 €, based on the number of businesses adhering to the promotional programme, i.e. 10.000 €/per participating business.

Evaluation system and criteria:

The following table presents in a nutshell the evaluation criteria, their respective weighing in the evaluation process and the minimum quality for a project to be eligible.

Criteria	Max points	Min points
A Quality of the submitted programme	40	20
A1 Clarity and consistency of objectives	10	5
A2 Feasibility and adequacy of market prospects	20	10
A3 Adequacy of the foreseen methodology	10	5
B Economic/financial quality of the programme	20	10

C Capacity of the programme to generate a positive impact on the competitive and export potential of adhering SMEs	40	15
C1 N companies adhering to the project/n companies adhering to the consortium	10	5
C2 quality of project management	10	5
C3 Added value of the foreseen actions, focus, continuity and sequence	20	5
TOTAL	100	45

Initiatives submitted by SMEs Consortia are awarded the ERDF contribution according to the ranking list resulting from the quality evaluation, by applying the co-financing rate to the expenditures that the evaluation unit deems eligible and reasonable, until all available resources are committed.

Question from RER	Answers from partners
What types of services could be offered to businesses to facilitate the impact of regional businesses measures?	a. Introducing the possibility for consortia to offer tailor-made services to single SMEs, at a reduced co-financing rate than the one for shared/common services; b. Introducing a different support system for Consortia, based on a medium-term Business Plan per consortia in which services to be provided to SMEs, related objectives with indicators and targets are negotiated and agreed with the regional government. Funds to Consortia would be disbursed after periodical in-process monitoring i.e. every 6 months; c. Successful services to be shared with other consortia

3.2 Action

3.2.1 Objectives

The Action Plan will concern a measure named "Call for SMEs Internationalisation Consortia". The aim is to switch from the support to ordinary activity-based project to projects based on extraordinary activity, strictly related to the promotion of SME on international markets.

In detail the AP will try to support the promotional activities carried out by Regional SMEs Consortia for Internationalisation in the form of an annual promotional programme that might also comprise several independent but coordinated actions. Each consortium can submit only one promotional programme per call.

3.2.2 Target group

Consortia for SMEs internationalization.

3.2.3 Content

Each Consortia can comprise at least 8 industrial, commercial and craft (in case of consortia comprising only craft SMEs minimum number is lower, i.e. 5) having their legal seat and/or at least an operational branch in the region.

The activities listed hereunder have been carried out from February to May/June 2018 in order to define and agree with stakeholders the contents of the 2018 call for Consortia for SMEs Internationalisation:

- **Elaboration of a proposal** modifying the features of the call;
- **Meeting with entrepreneurial associations** for presenting the proposed modification to the call. The meeting was held with the core group of the Regional Committee for Exports and Internationalisation, with the participation of the Director of the Service for Attractiveness and Internationalisation and the Regional Minister;
- **Feedback by entrepreneurial associations;**
- **Further modifications of the draft call** taking into account feedbacks received
- Finalisation of the draft call.

The outcome of the above described process led to the following modifications:

- **time-frame** for implementing supported initiatives by Consortia is **extended from 12 to 24 months**, in order to stimulate Consortia in planning and implementing medium-to-long term penetration strategies, which are especially needed for less experienced SMEs and for improving the market position of the more experienced ones, especially in times of increased competition;
- Consortia need to submit **a comprehensive penetration strategy** for the target market, **in which promotional actions are correctly framed;**
- **Costs eligibility:**
 - a special emphasis is introduced on the **collective nature of promotional actions and related costs** (i.e. promotional actions whose scope is clearly for the benefit of the consortium as a whole), **excluding those costs which are related to promotional actions for the benefit of single companies** and introducing **stricter rules for visibility items;**
 - **Introduction of upper limits for costs incurred** for the **participation to international fairs:** participation to international fairs **held in Italy** might not represent more than 50% of overall costs for participation to fairs;
 - **Lowering the threshold for Consortium staff costs from 25% to 20% of overall direct costs;**
 - **Maximum Regional contribution** is increased **from 40% to 50%** of eligible costs, while the minimum amount of eligible costs is kept at 30.000

€ and maximum contribution is slightly lowered from € 150.000 to € 149.900;

- **New criteria for projects selection** awarding those consortia able either to enlarge the number of SMEs adhering to the consortium and/or able to enlarge the number of SMEs participating to the supported initiative:

Criteria	Max points	Min points
A Quality of the submitted programme	50	25
A1 Clarity and consistency of objectives, clear focus on target market(s)	10	5
A2 Feasibility and adequacy of the methodology with reference to market and consortium objectives	20	10
A3 Aggregation level of activities and related costs	30	15
B Economic/financial quality of the programme	20	10
C Capacity of the programme to generate a positive impact on the competitive and export potential of adhering SMEs	30	15
C1 rotation of SMEs adhering to the project and participation of companies outside the consortium	10	5
C2 degree of complexity of the project (in terms of variety and integration of different eligible activities and related costs)	10	
C3 quality of project management	5	5
C4 Innovation of the project with reference to previously supported actions and with reference to consortium ordinary activity	5	5
TOTAL	100	50

Minimum quality thresholds for the **criteria group A Quality of the submitted programme** and **Group B Economic/financial quality** of the programme, will be considered independently and will lead to the rejection of application if not met.

(see Emilia-Romagna Region website "Progetti di promozione internazionale dei Consorzi - Anno 2018" <http://imprese.regione.emilia-romagna.it/Finanziamenti/internazionalizzazione/progetti-di-promozione-internazionale-dei-consorzi-anno-2018>)

3.3 Partners/Players involved

Business and entrepreneurial associations to which most Consortia belong.

3.4 Timeframe

Call open: from **11 June 2018 to 23 July 2018**

Approval of submitted proposals: from August to December 2018

Project implementation from January 2018^{[HCJ1][DF2][HCJ3]} to December 2019 (24 months). Previous costs from January 2018 are eligible because it is a “de minimis” state aid.

- Eligibility check of submitted projects **within 60 days from the call deadline**;
- Quality evaluation of eligible projects **within 30 days from the completion of the eligibility check**;
- Awarding of contributions;
- **Monitoring of results** will be performed in parallel with the checks of the **applications for reimbursement**, i.e. from 30/4/2020.

An impact assessment will be carried out in the framework of the ex post evaluation foreseen by the ROP-ERDF;

The measure in favour of the Consortia was financed at first with the PRAP (Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development) 2012-2015, ie with regional funds, then with the ROP-ERDF. We intend to make use of the experience gained with both funding channels to assess whether to continue to support Consortia and, if we continue, to define the new measures improving it.

The current PRAP (Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development) 2012-2015 has expired and the new one is in progress. The final new programming of regional funds will be ready by 2019 and will consider both experiences acquired (PRAP and ROP-ERDF).

The EIS project will have an impact on future calls financed either with POR-ERDF measures and regional funds.

By 2019 the autonomy of the regions of North of Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto) is expected to increase.

3.5 Costs

The call will be funded both with Emilia-Romagna Region and ROP-ERDF funds with 1.995.098,22 €.

Emilia-Romagna Region funds (PRAP= Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development). These funds will later be reported within the ROP-ERDF as the measure is still implemented according to ROP ERDF funds.

3.6 Funding sources

Emilia-Romagna Region funds (measure implemented within the ROP-ERDF).

3.7 Impact expected

From 15 to 20 selected projects and from 250 to 350 SMEs involved in the projects.

Self-defined indicators:

- 1) n. of companies receiving a financing
- 2) n. of new commercial relationships activated, i.e. n. of fairs to which companies have participated and the list of the companies participating in each single consortium and participating in the call.

Our target is 20% of SMEs increasing their export turnover in 2020.

4. Action 2: Call for export promotion projects for non-exporting SMEs (A) and for SMEs participation to fairs (B)

4.1 The Background

The ERDF program has been launched, for the internationalization part, since 2016, the activities have therefore been planned by the Emilia-Romagna Region well before the start of the EIS project. After the approval of EIS the intention of the Region was to use the results of the project to improve the measures implemented and not to build new ones. Furthermore, the measures in favor of internationalization, as part of the ROP ERDF, are part of a wider regional program that makes use of regional funds and of the collaboration with other institutional partners. This means that the experiences acquired during the Good Practices of the EIS project could have an impact beyond the ROP ERDF itself.

From a financial point of view:

1- Emilia-Romagna Region ERDF program is fairly advanced with most of the expenditure having taken place;

2- Although the ERDF is almost finished:

- the measure (A) will perhaps be maintained also thanks to regional funds. In 2019 a new call for tenders was defined and approved, very similar to that of 2018, as implementation of the measure of the ERDF ROP (funded with regional and chamber funds).

- the measure (B) will be maintained also thanks to regional funds. In 2019, a new call for tenders was defined and approved, very similar to that of 2018, as implementation of the measure of the ERDF ROP (funded entirely with regional funds). The Action Plan will therefore have a lasting impact and not limited to a single call.

During the Peer Review critical issues appeared in particular the partners reported in the SWOT analysis in the WEAKNESSESS section as follows:

- Lack of support for new or early stage exporters. To guide and assist with growth (pipeline not being developed)
- Little focus on having the right SMEs to apply
- Focus on business needs

With the partners we tried to understand " What types of services could be offered to businesses to facilitate the impact of regional businesses measures?" Among the answers of the partners we considered the following observations useful:

A Evaluation of the potential of SMEs through:

- Thematic approach based on export markets
- SMEs must be trained before to apply

Based on the discussions held during the Peer Review and the results of the management of the first call for non-exporting companies under Peer Review, the Region has planned to define two different measures that are the subject of this Action Plan. A more specific one for non-exporting companies (A) managed together with an institutional partner and one for export businesses to trade fairs (B).

Starting from these observations, the Region has focused on improving the measure (A) in view of the release of the 2018 and 2019 tenders, with the possibility that the same measure is also financed in the following years. The measure (A) is in fact the one intended for non-exporting companies, therefore it has a type of beneficiary with which the regional offer was not well aligned, according to the results of the Peer Review.

The modified measure introduce:

- a mandatory training for company managers;
- a pre evaluation of the growth potential on foreign markets;
- the integration of the measure with a benchmarking service provided by the partner of the Region (Unioncamere).

We have made these changes, also thanks to what learned during the Staff Exchange in Denmark/Aarhus, where we explored the ways companies are followed on internationalization paths.

The measure (B), which up until 2017 included both incentives for non-exporting and exporting companies, has become since 2018 a measure focused only on supporting SMEs that want to join international fairs and acquire a limited set of consulting services related to exhibitions. In this way the measure has been simplified and addressed to a typology of beneficiaries quite distinct from those of measure (A).

Objectives: Core aim of the measure is to support two types of initiatives. Each SME can apply for only one of the two types of initiatives under each call.

As explained in the introduction, the measure already exists and is in any case expected to be maintained over time also thanks to other non-ERDF ROP funding sources.

The specific objective of the Action Plan is to address the two main weaknesses that emerged during the Peer Review:

- A Evaluation of the potential of SMEs through:
- Thematic approach based on export markets
 - SMEs must be trained before to apply

(A) projects carried out by non-exporting SMEs with the aim of building up a structured two-years internationalisation pathway, based upon an export plan and targeting maximum two countries;

(B) participation by SMEs – also already exporting - to a programme of at least 3 international fairs.

Eligible applicants

- (A) **non exporting Micro, Small and Medium Sized companies** having their legal seat or at least a productive unit in Emilia Romagna and having an annual turnover of at least 700.000 €, and **formally established networks of independent non exporting Micro, Small and Medium Sized companies** possessing the same features;
- (B) **Small and Medium Sized companies** having their legal seat or at least a productive unit in Emilia Romagna, and **formally established networks of independent Small and Medium Sized companies** possessing the same features;

Eligible activities

Thanks to the comparison with the EIS project partners and with the members of the Local Stakeholder Group (Unioncamere is part of it), this new measure was defined for the first time for the 2018 call. In implementing this measure also for 2019, another call has been approved.

(A) **Services provided by external consultants** for:

- Evaluation of the capacities and potential for internationalisation of single non-exporting SMEs and their reinforcement – also through the development of an export plan;
- Feasibility studies relative to the internationalisation of single SMEs on selected markets, including sectorial studies;
- Reinforcing SMEs organisational capacity and contributing to carrying out a structured internationalisation pathway;
- Searching and identifying potential customers and/or distributors and support in b2b meetings;
- Developing a company website in foreign language and on-line promotion

Temporary export manager (TEM) for:

- Services by TEMs aimed at planning and/or managing the internationalisation pathway and supporting the improvement the managerial capacities of the beneficiary SME;

Products Certification for Export

- External consultancies necessary for product/company certifications required for exporting in the targeted markets;

Participation as exhibitor to a maximum of 2 fairs abroad, either qualifying as international or national.

Project shall be based on **an export plan**. SMEs that already have developed such a tool shall submit it together with the application. SMEs that do not, may include the development of an export plan in the project to be submitted.

(B) Two years projects for SMEs' penetration into foreign markets, through:

Participation to at least 3 fairs in foreign countries.

As an alternative, the participation to one foreign fair can be substituted by promotional events, B2Bs, company visits, exhibitions in show rooms, etc., either organised by the applicant SMEs or to which the applicant SMEs adheres.

Consulting services by external providers for:

- products certifications
- protection of trade marks and intellectual property rights in targeted countries;
- Searching and identifying potential customers and/or distributors and support in b2b meetings in connection with fairs;
- Organising promotional events

Amount of co-financing:

(A)

Projects submitted by single SMEs:

- Minimum cost of projects: 50.000 €
- Regional contribution: 40% of eligible expenditures, max 100.000 €

Projects submitted by formal networks of SMEs:

- Minimum cost of projects: 50.000 €
- Regional contribution: 40% of eligible expenditures, max 100.000 € for each participating MSME, with an overall maximum of 400.000 €

(B)

Projects submitted by single SMEs:

- Minimum cost of projects: 20.000 €
- Regional contribution: 30% of eligible expenditures, max 30.000 €

Projects submitted by formal networks of SMEs:

- Minimum cost of projects: 20.000 €
- Regional contribution: 30% of eligible expenditures, max 30.000 € for each participating SME, with an overall maximum of 120.000 €

Evaluation system and criteria:

(A)

Criteria	Max score	Min score
A. Quality of submitted project in terms of	50	25
A.1 Clarity and consistency of objectives	20	10
A.2 Industrial/commercial feasibility and adequacy of motives related to markets trends and perspectives	20	10
A.3 Adequacy of the foreseen methodology	10	5
B. Economic/financial quality of the programme	20	10
C. Capacity of the programme to generate a positive impact on the competitive and export potential of adhering SMEs	30	15
C.1 Extension and diversification of actions foreseen for building the internationalisation pathway	10	5
C.2 Capacity and experience of the Temporary Export Manager or of the internal manager devoted to the project	10	5
C.3 capacity and experience of the external consultant(s)	10	5
TOTAL	100	50

(B)

Criteria	Max score	Min score
A. Quality of submitted project in terms of	20	10
A.1 Clarity in definition of objectives and consistency with foreseen actions	10	5
A.2 Industrial/commercial feasibility and adequacy of motives related to markets trends and perspectives	10	5
B. Economic/financial quality of the project	30	10
C. Extension and complexity of the project in terms of	50	20
C.1 Typology of targeted markets		
UE	20	
EXTRA UE within WTO/OECD	25	
EXTRA UE outside WTO/OECD	30	
C.2 Combined actions (fairs + certification of products or trade mark registration)	20	
C.3 Combined actions (participation to fairs in coordination with other companies)	5	
C.4 Number of foreseen events beyond minimum (1 point for each further event)	3	
TOTAL	100	40

Submitted projects are awarded the regional contribution according to the ranking list resulting from the quality evaluation, by applying the co-financing rate to the expenditures that the evaluation team deems eligible and reasonable, until all available resources are committed.

Question from RER	Answers from partners
How could be better selected the target of beneficiaries to have a greater impact on the regional objective of increasing the number of exporters?	a. Focus not only on selected countries such as China, South Africa, Iran..., but align promotional activities to the countries where EU is signing agreements

	<p>b. Evaluation of the potential of SMEs through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Thematic approach based on export markets ii. Invest more internal resources in facing clients go directly to the company and knowing their potential before inviting them to different calls iii. First contact through promoters of regional policies, not consultants, to understand what the region can offer to the company iv. SMEs must be trained before to apply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Involving Medium Size Companies in the supply chain of large companies
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4.2 Action

4.2.1 Objectives

The Action Plan will concern a measure named "Call for export promotion projects for non-exporting SMEs (A) and for SMEs participation to fairs (B)". The aim of the AP is to improve the selection of the beneficiaries and increase the number of successful projects.

4.2.2 Target group

SMEs

4.2.3 Content

Separation of the single call into two separated calls, i.e one targeting non-exporting SMEs (A) and one supporting SMEs participation to fairs (B);

Call (A):

- **Agreement** between **Emilia-Romagna Region** and **Unioncamere** (Regional Association of the Chambers of Commerce) for **entrusting Unioncamere with the task of managing the call for non-exporting SMEs**, with regional and Unioncamere **resources pooled together**;
- Introduction of a **mandatory assessment of the export potential** of applying SMEs to be performed either by Regional Chambers of Commerce or by consultants credited on a national level;

- Introduction of **training programmes** devoted to non-exporting SMEs, organised in modules covering different issues and aiming to build up the skills needed for managing the export process and presence on international markets;
- The **minimum turnover** has been decreased from **700.000 €** to **500.000 €**;
- The **duration of the project** has been reduced from **24** to **10 months**;
- **Minimum amount of project costs** reduced from **€ 50.000** to **€ 6.000**;
- **Regional contribution increased** from **40% to 50%** of eligible costs, with a **maximum amount reduced from € 100.000 to € 15.000**
- **Companies that benefited from the 2017 call cannot participate**;
- In the **evaluation criteria** an **additional score** is awarded to companies that committing to **undergo training programmes** on core aspects of the internationalisation processes. If the training is not performed, the contribution will be reduced by 30%;

Criteria		Score
A. Quality of submitted project in terms of:		MAX 60
- A1 Clarity and consistency in the definition of objectives	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
- A2 Project capacity to have a positive impact on the beneficiary company's export and competitive potential	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
- A3 Variety and extension of the actions of the internationalization process	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
- A4 Strengthening of promotional tools	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
B. Economic/financial quality of the project:		MAX 40
- B1 Consistency of the costs structure with the submitted activities	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
- B2 Expenditure breakdown (level of detail)	High	15
	Medium	10
	Low	5
- B3 Costs accuracy from an economic point of view	High	10
	Medium	5
	Low	2
TOTAL		100

(see Emilia-Romagna Region website "Bando per la concessione di contributi Promozione export e internazionalizzazione intelligente 2018"
<http://imprese.regione.emilia-romagna.it/Finanziamenti/internazionalizzazione/bando-per-la-concessione-di-contributi-promozione-export-e-internazionalizzazione-intelligente-2018>)

Call (B):

- The call for supporting **MSMEs participation to international fairs** will be managed by the Region;
- The eligible **Ateco** (NACE - Nomenclature of Economic Activities) codes have been reviewed and reduced;
- Timeframe for **projects' implementation reduced from 24 to 19 months**
- Unchanged the minimum amount of project costs, i.e. € 20.000;
- Unchanged the regional contribution, i.e. 30% of eligible costs, maximum € 30.000;
- **MSMEs** that have **received funds from the last two calls** for non-exporting companies **cannot participate**;
- **Companies** must foresee in their projects both the **participation to at least 3 international and/or national fairs held exclusively in foreign markets** and plan for the **activities and costs related to consultancy services related to products certifications, protection of trade-marks and intellectual property rights**, searching and **identifying potential customers** and/or **distributors** and **support in b2b meetings** in connection with fairs;
- the opportunity of introducing the **assessment of the company's export potential** as a pre-condition for accessing the call has been discussed with stakeholders but was in the end rejected as it was considered that participation to fairs is the first exploratory approach to foreign markets, especially for MSMEs.

Criteria	Max score	Min score
A. Quality of submitted project in terms of (clarity in the description of the activities to be carried out and on the objectives of the consultancy expenses)	40	20
B. Economic/financial quality and coherence of the project (clear costs identification for each action or fair/event participation and expected costs accuracy)	40	20
C. Extension and complexity of project in terms of:	20	0
- <i>C 1 Typology of targeted countries (calculated on minimum 60% of expenses incurred for each of the underlying country areas) structured as follows:</i>	-	-
<i>UE</i>	0	0
<i>EXTRA UE within WTO/OCSE</i>	5	0
<i>EXTRA UE, NO WTO or NO OCSE countries</i>	10	0
- <i>C 2 Types of combined spending beyond the minimum two</i>	3	0
- <i>C 3 Possible aggregation methodology (if declared in the project)</i>	3	0
- <i>C 4 Events besides the minimum number (1 point for each further event)</i>	4	0
Total	100	40

(see Emilia-Romagna Region website "Progetti di promozione dell'export e per la partecipazione a eventi fieristici" <http://imprese.regione.emilia-romagna.it/Finanziamenti/internazionalizzazione/progetti-di-promozione-dellexport-per-imprese-non-esportatrici-bando-2018>)

4.3 Partners/Players involved

Business and entrepreneurial associations

Chambers of Commerce

The Emilia-Romagna Region participates in many stakeholders drawing boards, but in the case of the Call (A) there has been a direct involvement with the stakeholder Unioncamere (the Regional Association of the Chambers of Commerce).

4.4 Timeframe

Call (A):

The call is open from 31/05 until 02/07/2018.

The projects selection and the financial contribution will be awarded by the end of September 2018.

Projects will need to be completed by 30/03/2019. By the end of 2019, the monitoring of the implementation of the measure will be carried out.

Call (B):

The call will be open to the public from 20th June until 20th July 2018.

The projects selection and the financial contribution will be awarded by the end of October 2018.

Projects will need to be completed by the end of 2019. Monitoring of the implementation of the measure will be carried out in 2020.

An impact assessment will be carried out in the framework of the ex post evaluation foreseen by the ROP-ERDF.

The measure in favour of the Call (A) was financed only with the PRAP (Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development) 2012-2015, ie with regional funds, meanwhile the Call (B) was financed at first with the PRAP then with the ROP-ERDF. We intend to make use of the experience gained with both funding channels to assess whether to continue to support them and, if we continue, to define the new measures improving them.

The current PRAP (Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development) 2012-2015 has expired and the new one is in progress. The final new programming of regional funds will be ready by 2019 and will consider both experiences acquired (PRAP and ROP-ERDF).

The EIS project will have an impact on future calls for POR-ERDF measures, even if identified with regional funds.

By 2019 the autonomy of the regions of North of Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto) will increase.

4.5 Costs

The calls will be funded as follows both with Emilia-Romagna Region and ROP-ERDF funds:

	Total	ROP-ERDF	Unioncamere (Regional Association of the Chambers of Commerce)
Call (A)	1.037.966,82	400.000,00	637.966,82
Call (B)	4.705.524,58	4.705.524,58	
Total	5.743.491,40	5.105.524,58	637.966,82

Emilia-Romagna Region funds (PRAP= Regional Programme for Entrepreneurial Development). These funds will later be reported within the ROP-ERDF as the measure is still implemented according to ROP ERDF funds.

4.6 Funding sources

Regional sources and resources added by the Chambers of Commerce

4.7 Impact expected

Call (A):

from 130 to 250 companies are expected to be involved.

Our target is 40% of SMEs increasing their export turnover in 2020.

Call (B):

from 150 to 250 companies are expected to be involved

Self-defined indicators:

- 1) n. of companies receiving a financing
- 2) n. of new commercial relationships activated, i.e. n. of fairs to which companies have participated

Our target is 10% of SMEs increasing their export turnover in 2020.

5. Signature (optional)

Date: 10.04.2019

Signature: Rleudo

Stamp of the organisation (if available):

**SERVIZIO ATTRATTIVITÀ
E INTERNAZIONALIZZAZIONE**
ti responsabile
Ruben Sacerdoff