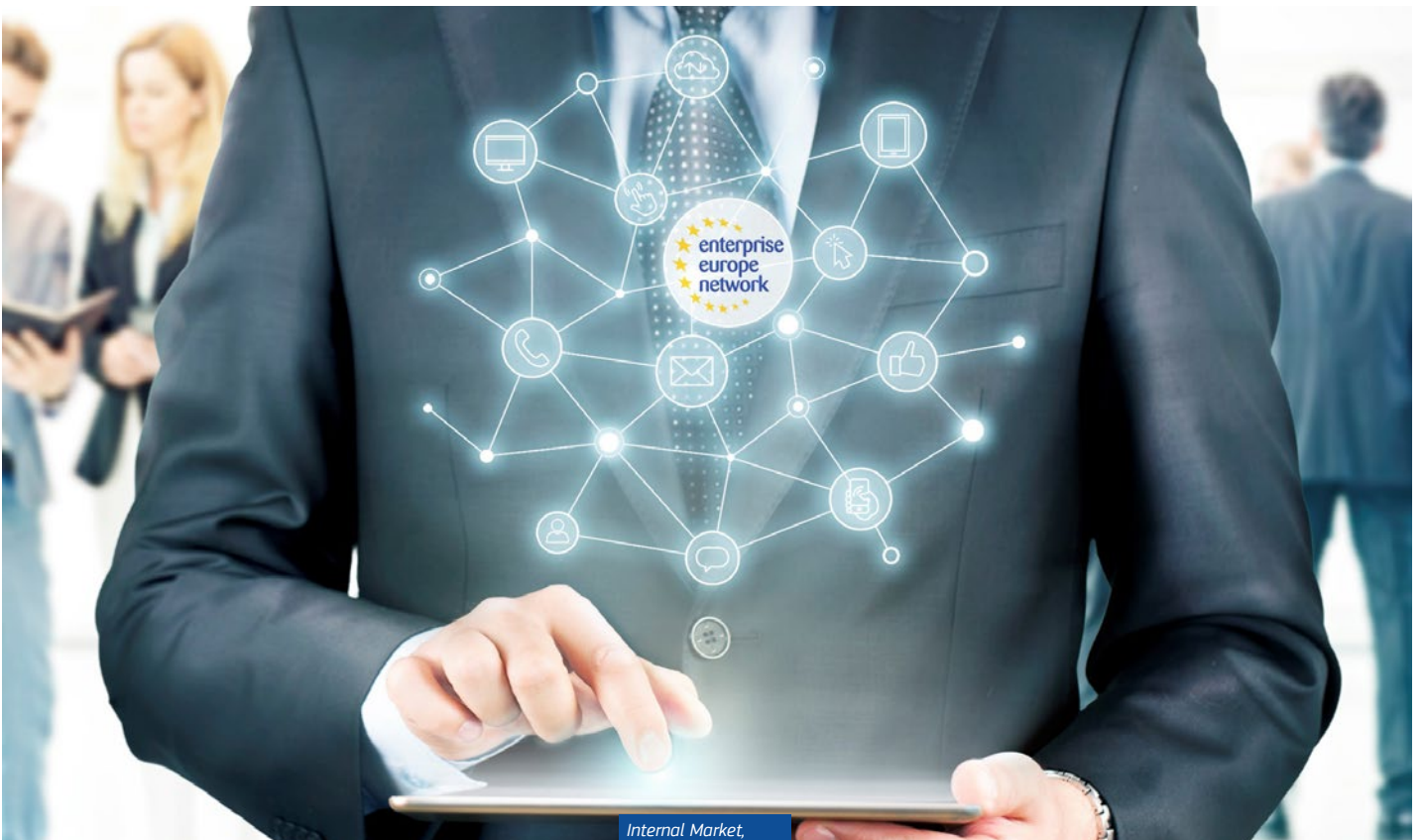




European  
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# ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK

ENRICHING ERDF PROGRAMMES



Internal Market,  
Industry,  
Entrepreneurship  
and SMEs

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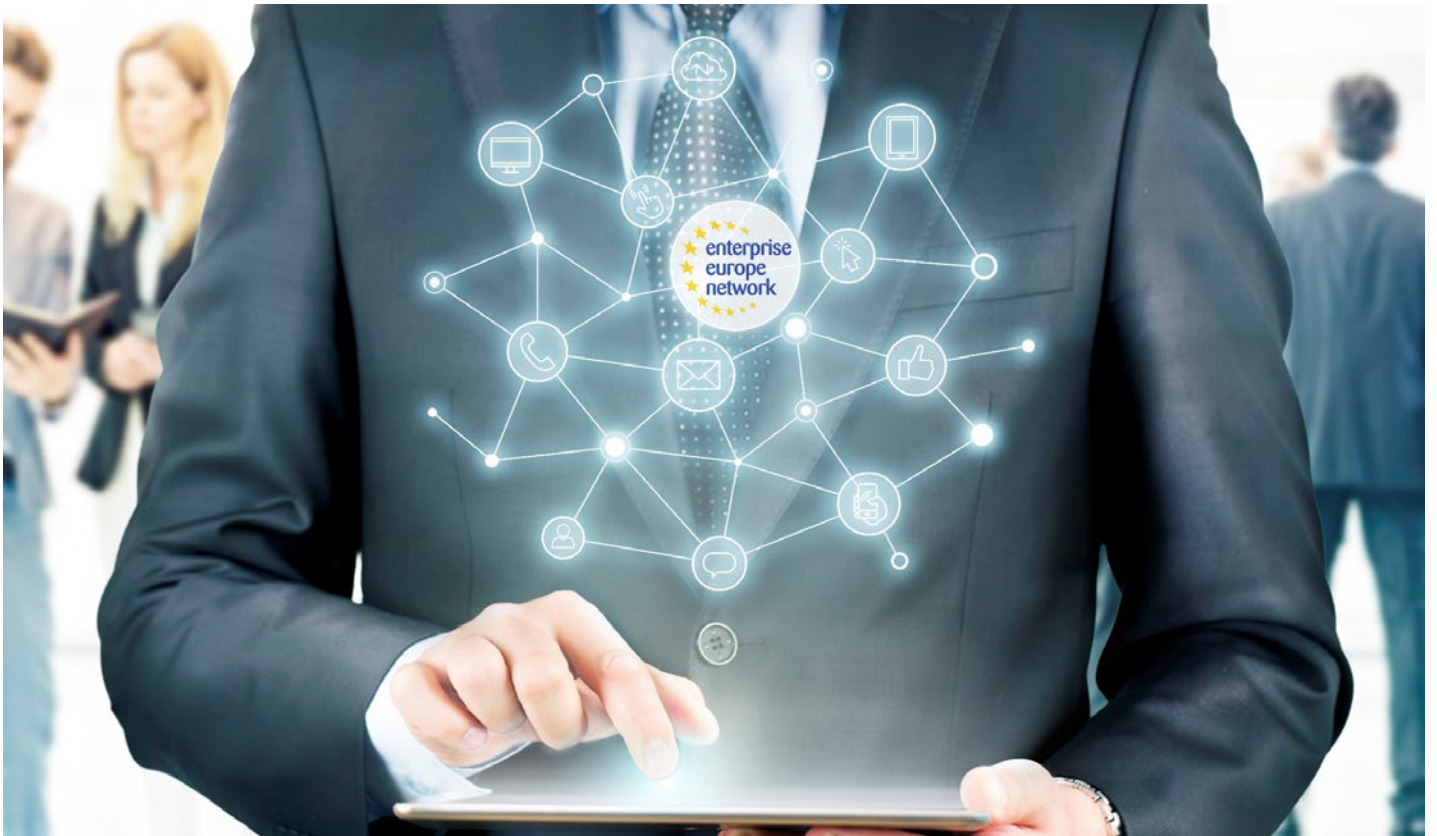


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## ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK

### ENRICHING ERDF PROGRAMMES

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), as the world's largest support network for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), is rooted in regional ecosystems. Its actors cover a wide range of services, ranging from classic business advice services, through a plethora of internationalisation services, to tailor-made innovation-management capacity-building services.

This brochure highlights the network partners' contribution to the design and implementation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programmes. All the good practices showcased should inspire current and future EEN hosts, managing authorities and programme-implementing bodies of the different funds under shared management to rely on the expertise of the EEN.

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## 1. FOREWORD



### The Enterprise Europe Network: the (in)visible glue in ERDF programmes

The EEN is the world's largest support network for SMEs, which make up the backbone of our economy. With its strong partnership of over 600 business- and innovation-support organisations, the network's outreach is truly global. At the same time, the network partners are firmly anchored in their regional and national ecosystems through their host organisations. According to a recent survey, more than 10 % of the network's host organisations are also managing authorities of ERDF programmes, and some 25 % act as intermediate bodies. This gives the network partners and their hosts a unique ability to help the local/regional and national SME communities benefit from global business opportunities. In its first 10 years of existence, the network helped over 230 000 SMEs find new business partners. The network partners enrich ERDF-funded measures and projects in many different ways by delivering specialised EEN services, which contribute to more efficient project implementation. In such cases, EEN services are often the (in)visible glue connecting organisations and acting as a catalyst for the projects. In this brochure, the network's existing good practices for using its services to enrich the ERDF programmes are presented. These good practices should encourage current and future EEN partners and their host organisations, along with managing authorities and intermediate bodies in charge of not only the ERDF programmes but all shared-management programmes in a broader sense to work together to develop synergies in the interests of European SMEs.

**Kristin Schreiber**

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*Directorate-General for Internal Market,  
Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs*

## 2. WHAT IS THE ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK?

Established in 2008 as the merger of the previous networks of euro info centres and innovation relay centres, the EEN is the **world's largest support network for SMEs**. At the end of 2018, the EEN covered **65 countries with 604 partner organisations**. A total of 532 partner organisations grouped into 93 consortia covered 38 countries from EU Member States and countries associated with the EU programme for the competitiveness of SMEs <sup>(1)</sup>. These core network partners worked with 69 business cooperation centres grouped into 30 consortia covering 29 non-EU countries, as shown in Figure 1 below.

The partner organisations of the EEN are official **business- and innovation-support organisations** (e.g. chambers of craft, chambers of industry and commerce, regional development agencies, innovation agencies, research organisations, universities and regional/national promotional banks). They are organised into consortia, covering at least one NUTS (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) level 2 region, and are selected through a competitive call for proposals. The next call to establish the next generation of the EEN (2022-2028) will be launched in 2021. The EU consortia receive co-funding from the EU budget (up to 60 % of all their eligible costs, which are mainly personal expenses) and the non-EU consortia self-finance their participation in the network.

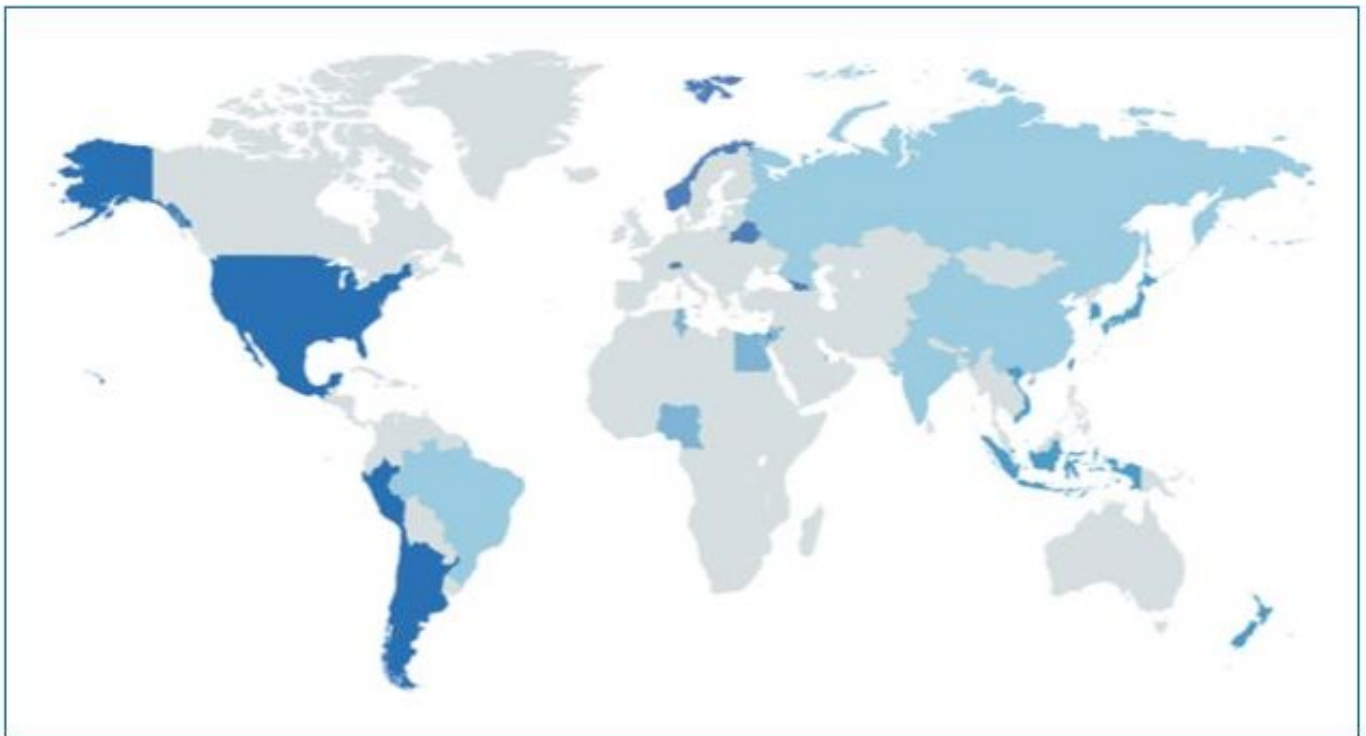


Figure 1: Business cooperation centres of the EEN

<sup>(1)</sup> Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo (this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence), Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.



Figure 2: The wide range of business- and innovation-support organisations in the EEN

## 2.1. Range of Enterprise Europe Network services

The entire range of the EEN's services is available to the SMEs free of charge and at the level of their regional/national EEN consortium.

These services are grouped into three categories: business advice, partnership support and innovation support, as shown in Figure 3 below.

Under the business advice services, SMEs receive the following support.

- Free advice on regulatory compliance with EU legislation.
- Free market intelligence in order to support the preparation of internationalisation activities.

- Free consultation on access to finance regardless of the source of the funding (i.e. no matter whether it is an EU funding scheme or a national/regional funding opportunity, and including the possibilities for funding offered by the ERDF-backed measures).

- Free basic consultation on issues related to intellectual property.

SMEs can also give feedback on their experience – good or bad – with EU legislation so as to facilitate evidence-based policymaking for the European Commission.

ADVISORY SUPPORT	INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	INNOVATION SUPPORT
Advice on EU laws and standards	Partnering – for B2B and H2020 projects	Technology transfer
Market intelligence	Brokerage events (B2B, B2F)	Innovation Management Services – innovation audits, capacity building
IPR expertise	Company missions	Key Account Management service under H2020
Access to funding		Start-up / scale-up advisors
SME feedback		

Figure 3: Services of the EEN consortia

Under the international partnership services, SMEs receive the following support.

- Free partnering services to foster the establishment of consortia applying for Horizon 2020 / Horizon Europe calls.
- Free partnering services that include the use of the Partnership Opportunities Database (information technology-supported database for partnership offers and partnership requests with automated matching) and participation in specific business-to-business (B2B) matchmaking events with pre-arranged meetings with potential new business partners.
- Matchmaking services to find potential investors/financers, along with help preparing the pitch for their innovative idea.
- The opportunity to participate in company missions in order to establish new business partnerships.

Under the innovation services, SMEs benefit from the following support.

- Free support for technology transfer by helping transform research results into actual commercial applications and new products and services.
- Free innovation-management capacity-building services <sup>(2)</sup> that help SME managers seize all opportunities for innovation, carry out complex innovation projects and ensure that a culture of innovation is embedded in the day-to-day operation of their businesses. Using a specific assessment tool <sup>(3)</sup>, the EEN also examines all of an SME's digitisation potential and helps to

establish an action plan to implement proposed recommendations.

- For SME beneficiaries of the enhanced European Innovation Council pilot, the services of a key account manager for free, consisting of a thorough needs analysis for the smooth implementation of the winning innovation project. Following this step, the key account manager facilitates the identification of the most suitable coach for the most needed skill.

The majority of the EEN's services are co-funded through the EU programme for the competitiveness of SMEs, which will form part of the single market programme under the new multiannual financial framework as from 2021. Its innovation-management capacity-building and key account management services are co-funded through Horizon 2020.

## 2.2. Target group of the Enterprise Europe Network

The general target group of the EEN is SMEs with the potential for international growth. Beyond that, the EEN also targets its services at distinct groups composed of the beneficiaries of the European Innovation Council pilot; these include both innovative start-ups and scale-ups. Being embedded in regional/national business- and innovation-support ecosystems, the EEN teams also offer their services to other entities such as clusters, research and technology organisations and universities.

<sup>(2)</sup> This service is provided in line with the European standard on innovation management CEN/TS 16555-1. The EEN partners use different innovation-management assessment tools such as the IMP<sup>3</sup>rove Assessment, developed by the European Innovation Management Academy (IMP<sup>3</sup>rove) (<https://www.improve-innovation.eu/our-services/assessments/improve-assessment/>), or the Innovation Health Check

(<https://www.leanbusinessireland.ie/funding-supports-overview/are-you-an-enterprise-ireland-client/innovation-health-check/>).

<sup>(3)</sup> The Digital Innovation Quotient, developed by IMP<sup>3</sup>rove (<https://www.improve-innovation.eu/our-services/assessments/digital-innovation-quotient/>).



## 2.3. Outcome and impact of the Enterprise Europe Network services

The results of the first ex post impact evaluation for the EEN services delivered between 2008 and 2014 revealed that SMEs that received EEN services achieved up to a 3.1 % higher growth in turnover than their peers who did not receive any EEN services. A new ex post evaluation will be carried out to measure the impact of the EEN services between 2015 and 2021.

In its first 10 years of existence the EEN provided services to a total of more than 2.6 million SMEs. The breakdown of the services provided to the SMEs is shown in Figure 4 below. The outcomes of the EEN services for the last operational cycle (2017–2018) show an upward trend compared to the 10-year results.

The clients of the EEN are regularly asked to give feedback on their satisfaction with the services they have received. In 2018, 88 % of them reported being generally satisfied with the services received and 92 % would recommend using the EEN to their peers.



## 10 years 2008-2018



Figure 4: Outcome of the EEN services 2008–2018

## 2.4. Value of the Enterprise Europe Network services for regions

The broad range of EEN services represent untapped potential for regions and regional/national authorities involved in the design and implementation of programmes both under shared management and under exclusive regional/national planning. The entire range of EEN services is delivered by actors in the regional ecosystem and can be used as a vehicle for the implementation of regional/national policies.

The EEN services can be used to complement regional/national strategies for SME internationalisation and innovation management. The innovation-management capacity-building services of the EEN (as described in Chapter 2.1) could contribute to the achievement of the objectives set out under policy objective 1 of the future ERDF programmes.

## 3. THE ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK IN THE WORLD OF THE ERDF PROGRAMMES

The EEN teams' host organisations – as mentioned in the previous chapter – are all distinguished actors within their respective regional and/or national business and innovation ecosystems. As such, they are involved in the design, implementation and governance of ERDF-financed measures at many different levels.

At the beginning of 2019, a survey was conducted of 167 EEN partners from the EU-28 with regard to the role of the EEN host organisations' involvement in the ERDF programmes. The survey revealed the following results:

- Some 13 % of the EEN's host organisations are also managing authorities of ERDF programmes, and some 25 % act as intermediate bodies;
- Various monitoring committees overseeing the implementation of operational programmes represent 40 % of the EEN's host organisations;
- Two thirds of the EEN's hosts received ERDF funding for different projects;
- Under the EEN access-to-funding consultation service, more than two thirds of the EEN teams advise SMEs on access to ERDF-financed measures, among others.

The results of this first survey were discussed with EEN partners in a workshop, and five distinct areas where EEN teams and their services play or have the potential to play a role have been identified and explained below.

### ► Governance of ERDF programmes.

EEN teams' advisory role on accessing ERDF-funded measures can be enhanced by regular exchange of information between members of the monitoring committee (especially if the EEN's hosts take part in the work of the monitoring committees) on their meetings' outcomes, on the planned upcoming calls. If the EEN's hosts are directly involved in the work of the monitoring committees, EEN team members may also participate in certain meetings where EEN-relevant issues, such as internationalisation or innovation support for SMEs, are discussed.

### ► Design and implementation of ERDF programmes / ERDF-funded measures.

EEN teams can play a crucial role in the design of the ERDF programmes: through their close and steady contact with the SMEs, they can provide input on the SMEs' needs and give recommendations for new measures – which they may even implement within their own host structure.

Beyond that, they can be directly involved in the entrepreneurial discovery process with their SME clients so as to provide valuable input on the design and redesign of the regional smart specialisation strategies (S3).

The EEN can also serve as a quick and easy instrument for managing authorities to hold a peer-to-peer exchange on a wide range of topics, be it different aspects of implementation of certain measures or their set-up modalities.

### ► Advice on access to ERDF funding.

The EEN teams' standard access-to-funding service takes account of all available funding possibilities for the SME community and the actors in the business and innovation ecosystem. This includes the different ERDF-funded measures that are available to them at regional/national level.

### ► Enriching ERDF-funded projects with EEN services.

EEN services (other than access to funding) can complement ERDF-funded projects. This can be

sequential (e.g. EEN services are provided subsequent to an ERDF-funded project) or parallel (e.g. EEN services are integrated into an ongoing ERDF-funded project). This can happen at different levels and for different programme types (ERDF (mainstream) operational programmes or European territorial cooperation (Interreg) programmes). EEN services can also be used in support of the implementation of macro-regional strategies.

#### ► **Scaling up EEN services with ERDF funding.**

Certain genuine EEN services can also receive ERDF funding (subject to compliance with the ERDF selection criteria and eligibility rules) in order to scale them up with the goal of offering them to a larger number of SMEs.

## **4. GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK TEAMS' ROLE IN ERDF PROGRAMMES**

The present chapter will present a handful of good practices from the EEN for the five distinct areas set out in Chapter 3. All these good practices were submitted by EEN partners in a special survey conducted in mid 2019.

### **4.1. Governance of ERDF programmes**

It is essential for the EEN teams to be involved in the governance structure of ERDF programmes; this could result in constant and regular information flow on the design of new measures, upcoming calls and the state of play of measures under implementation. Equally, the managing authorities and monitoring committee members could receive regular feedback on SMEs' needs for new support measures and on the ongoing ERDF-financed measures.

**EEN Baden-Württemberg** (<https://enterprise-europe-bw.de/>) even has the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Housing among its consortium members as the body responsible for the planning of the regional ERDF operational programme.

In many other cases, the EEN hosts are themselves managing authorities and/or intermediate bodies, which facilitates these linkages. Three of the four EEN

hosts in **EEN Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein** (<https://een-hhsh.de/>) are for example important actors in regional or interregional operational programmes: **Wirtschaftsförderung und Technologietransfer Schleswig-Holstein (Business Development and Technology Transfer Corporation of Schleswig-Holstein)** (<https://wtsh.de/>) is the economic development agency of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein and is not only a partner in the EEN but also an important intermediate body for the federal state's ERDF operational programme. The same also goes for the **Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein** (<https://www.ib-sh.de/>), which is the federal state's promotional bank and which also functions as the managing authority for Interreg Deutschland-Danmark, the cross-border Germany-Denmark operational programme, and the transnational Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme. The promotional bank of Hamburg, **Hamburgische Investitions- und Förderbank (IFB Hamburg)** (<https://www.ifbhh.de/>) is an intermediate body for Hamburg's ERDF operational programme, is entrusted with the implementation of two financial instruments and is also a full member of EEN Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein.

The **Centrum Rozwoju Małych i Średnich Przedsiębiorstw (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development)** (<https://www.parp.gov.pl/>) is a governmental organisation implementing measures under ERDF aimed at the development of entrepreneurship, innovativeness, start-ups and internationalisation. It implements its ERDF measures through three Polish ERDF programmes, including the 'smart growth' operational programme. It is also the lead host organisation for **EEN Central Poland** (<https://www.een.org.pl/een/o-nas>).

In its capacity as the only funding agency for research and innovation (R & I) in Cyprus, **Research Promotion Foundation Cyprus** (<http://www.research.org.cy/>) maintains very close collaboration with the managing authority for the ERDF operational programmes and is also a member of the monitoring committee for the programmes. In addition, it is responsible for the promotion of Cyprus' participation in European and international programmes and initiatives, providing information and support related to several funding opportunities. It is also the coordinator of **EEN Cyprus** (<http://eencyprus.org.cy/en/>). Therefore, the possibilities for making use of synergies between the EEN and the ERDF managing authority are very strong.

In order to strengthen synergies at governance level, a staff member of a regional EEN consortium can also assume the role of a fully fledged representative on the monitoring committee. **Unioncamere Liguria** (<https://www.lig.camcom.it/>), as a regional chamber of commerce and industry, has been actively engaged in the design and implementation of the regional ERDF operational programme since 1995. Unioncamere Liguria has also been the lead organisation for the EEN in Liguria since 2014 and the lead manager for EEN Liguria Coordinator has been appointed as a member of the ERDF monitoring committee on behalf of the whole chamber. Moreover, the managing authority has delegated responsibility for the *animazione economica* – the technical assistance provided to potential beneficiaries under ERDF measures – to Unioncamere Liguria.

The Slovenská obchodná a priemyselná komora (**Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry**) (<http://www.sopk.sk>) is an active member of the monitoring committee of the Slovak ‘research and innovation’ operational programme and the Interreg operational programmes involving Slovak participation. The chamber is also actively engaged in the negotiations for the new partnership agreement for the 2021–2027 funding period. The chamber also hosts an EEN team that is part of the **Slovak EEN** ([www.een.sk](http://www.een.sk)). This allows the chamber to gain maximum benefit from synergy between the services of the centralised EEN and the operational programmes under shared management.

**Sicindustria** (<https://www.sicindustria.eu/>), in addition to being an EEN host, is an active member of the monitoring committee of the Sicily ERDF and European Social Fund operational programmes. It is a member of the Partnership Secretariat, consisting of key regional stakeholders and interacting constantly with the managing authorities of the European Structural and Investment Funds about the implementation of the operational programmes. It is also a member of the Task Force for the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Internationalisation ‘SPRINT’.

Cooperation between EEN teams and regional/national managing authorities can also be formalised in written cooperation agreements. For this to happen, the support of the EEN host organisation is a key prerequisite.

The **Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie Bourgogne Franche-Comté (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the French region Bourgogne Franche-Comté)** (<https://www.bourgognefranche-comte.cci.fr/>) is by law in close partnership with the regional council and the local representation of the national government (both managing authorities) in order to help define and carry out the regional strategy for economic development, innovation and internationalisation. The chamber also belongs to the monitoring committee for the regional ERDF programme. Global cooperation agreements have been signed between the three organisations in which EEN services are explicitly referred to on the subject of innovation and internationalisation support, along with promotion of EU funding programmes, including helping SMEs access them.

The operational unit of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bourgogne Franche-Comté, which is entrusted with the EEN activities, carries out its EEN mandate, but also represents the chamber at the monitoring committee meetings, bringing the added value of its dedicated knowledge of both regional enterprises and EU-level programmes.

#### 4.2. Design and implementation of ERDF programmes / ERDF-funded measures

EEN teams have the potential to influence the design and implementation of both ERDF programmes in general, and SME- and innovation-support measures in particular. This is thanks to the daily intensive contact of the EEN teams with the regions’ economic bases.

For example, EEN teams can play a central role in the entrepreneurial discovery process that allows for the identification of the smart specialisation areas of the regional innovation strategies. The contribution of the EEN teams can also be valuable in this endeavour in the interregional design and implementation of S3.

As part of S3, EEN teams can play a role specifically in the design and implementation of regional/national cluster policies. Equally, EEN teams can contribute to the design of different calls through which the implementation of S3 is facilitated.

**DEV’UP Centre Val de Loire** (<https://www.devup-centrevaldeloire.fr/>) is the economic development agency of the French region Centre Val de Loire. The region started to work on an S3 as early as 2011, long

before the vast majority of European regions. It was among the first three regions to be registered on the S3 platform and it was picked by the European Commission to be one of the pilot regions to test the feasibility of the S3 concept in 2012. The two EEN hosts in the region – the regional chamber of commerce and industry and DEV'UP Centre Val de Loire – were committed to this process at the highest political level.

In particular, the agency has been tasked by the managing authorities with moderating the entrepreneurial discovery process in order to identify the region's S3 priorities by involving the main regional stakeholders. The agency's **experience with innovative companies, in particular through the EEN team and its services, has been a key driver of this process.** It allowed the agency to support the policymakers' deliberations with input from the ground by better aligning the S3 priority areas with the needs of the region's enterprises.

The EEN team also **contributes to the implementation of the S3** for Centre Val de Loire by actively feeding the project pipeline at a low granularity of the S3 priorities.

Furthermore, as part of the S3, measures to strengthen the overall innovation ecosystem of the region were developed: DEV'UP Centre Val de Loire was commissioned to coordinate the réseau des développeurs économiques du Centre Val de Loire (Economic Developers of Centre Val de Loire Network). This network consists of almost 350 actors from public and semi-public organisations in charge of economic and technological development, such as the regional council, Bpifrance, chambers of commerce and industry, the universities of Tours and Orléans, public research organisations and technology transfer structures. Their task is to initiate new projects and support regional SMEs in their innovation journey by directing them towards different funding mechanisms, offering them networking opportunities and training them in innovation-related skills.

Both EEN teams for the region are connected to the economic developers' network and they also take part in the work of the Europe Centre Val de Loire Innovation, Développement, Recherche (Euclide)

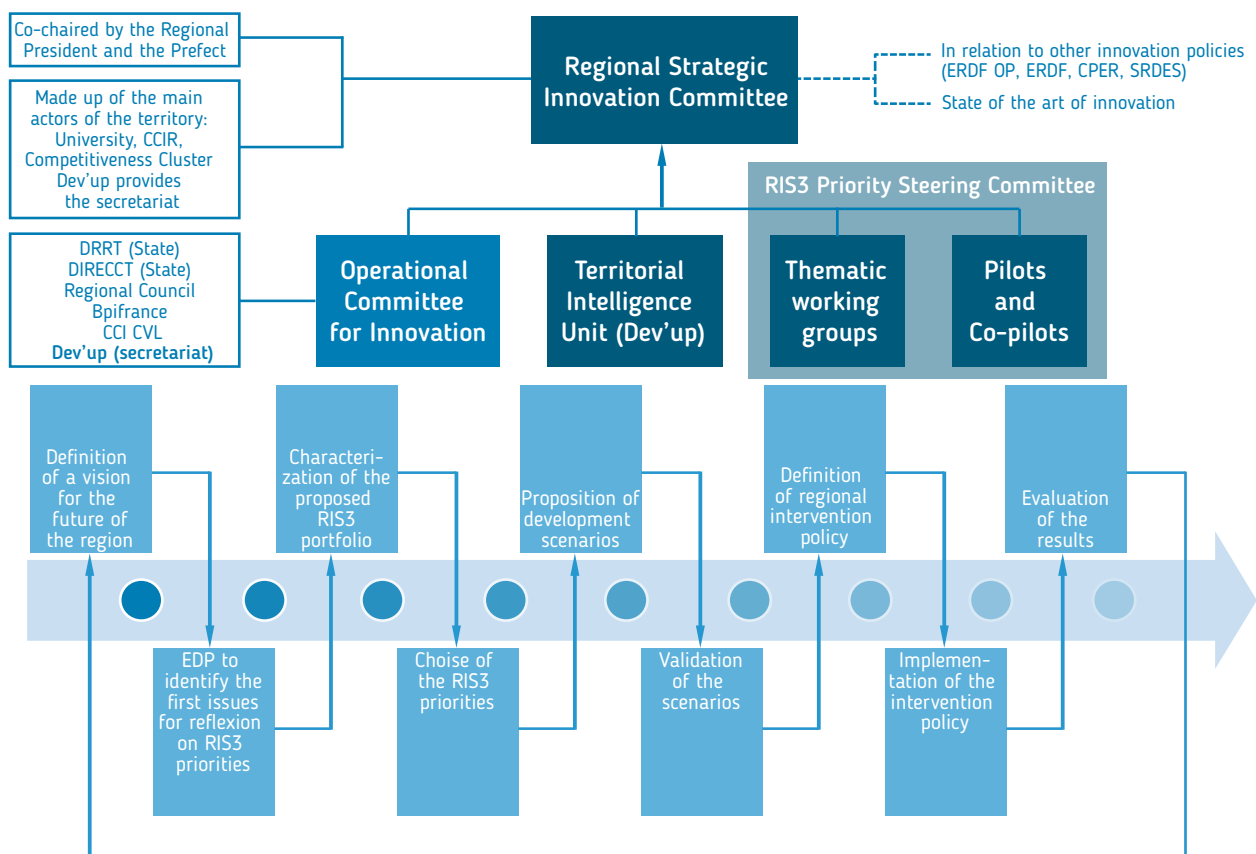


Figure 5: DEV'UP Centre Val de Loire – role in the Regional Operational Committee for Innovation

network (<http://www.europeocentre-valdeloire.eu/le-reseau-euclide/>), which supports the set-up of European projects with the participation of regional SMEs, mainly under Horizon 2020. The EEN teams fulfil two roles in this respect: firstly they offer a gateway to a network of innovation intermediaries at European level and secondly they participate in the structuring and restructuring of the regional innovation-support initiatives.

The EEN team at **Bayern Innovativ** (<https://www.bayern-innovativ.de>) is well integrated into the regional SME support ecosystem. As an institution of Bavaria, Bayern Innovativ's mission is to support innovation in that state. On behalf of the Bavarian government and the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bayern Innovativ manages various clusters and networks in the fields of new materials, the automotive industry, energy technology, healthcare, additive manufacturing and sustainable construction, and cooperates closely with other clusters and networks in Bavaria managed by third parties. Bayern Innovativ and four other Bavarian organisations also form the Bayerische Forschungs- und Innovationsagentur (Bavarian Research and Innovation Agency) (<https://www.forschung-innovation-bayern.de/>). The EEN team of Bayern Innovativ cooperates regularly with the thematic and sectoral in-house experts to shape Bavaria's regional innovation policy. Bayern Innovativ is currently working with the managing authority to update the Bavarian research, technology and innovation strategy and two EEN members are also involved in this process.

The aim of the Interreg Alpine space project '**S3-4AlpClusters**' (<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/s3-4alpclusters/en/home>) was to support smart industrial transition in the Alpine regions by making use of the interplay between clusters and the participating regions' S3. The project partners developed an S3 innovation model, which used a systematic process to explore capabilities and opportunities for transformation. The model facilitates the creation of transformation activities based on interregional cooperation. Four project partners - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur (**Business Upper Austria**) (<http://www.biz-up.at/en>), **Innovation and Technology Transfer Salzburg** (<http://www.itg-salzburg.at>), Bayerische Forschungsallianz (**Bavarian Research Alliance**) (<http://www.bayfor.org>) and **Veneto Innovazione** ([http://www.venetoinnovazione.](http://www.venetoinnovazione.it/?q=eng)

[it/?q=eng](http://www.venetoinnovazione.it/?q=eng)) - and two observers - **Area Science Park** (<https://www.areasciencepark.it>) and **Finlombarda** (<http://www.finlombarda.it/home>) - also host EEN teams, and they took advantage of the EEN tools and procedures in the implementation of some of the planned activities. For instance, Veneto Innovazione further collaborated with Business Upper Austria in the implementation of a **cross-regional action development workshop**, the aim of which was to define concrete actions for the further development of transformative activities in order to gain critical mass. The workshop focused on the topic 'Smart Food Ecosystem > Safety, quality and food traceability along the food value chain', and the business contacts that Veneto Innovazione and Business Upper Austria created using their EEN services were used to prepare the cross-cluster meeting held in September 2018.

As it has for many years in a row, Slovakia takes first place in the production of new cars per 1 000 inhabitants as it is home to three car manufacturing plants that are original equipment manufacturers (PSA, KIA and Volkswagen). The automotive sector is duly identified as a key S3 area. In 2017, the **Slovak Business Agency (SBA)** (<http://www.sbagency.sk/>) decided to start strategic relationships with key stakeholders in the automotive sector in order to support regional/national SMEs in becoming suppliers to the large car manufacturers. The SBA's original idea of organising B2B meetings was presented to the Automotive Industry Association, which proposed inviting other key stakeholders (relevant bilateral chambers of commerce such as the Slovak-German Chamber of Commerce and the French-Korean Chamber of Commerce) to participate in round-table meetings.

The first CEE (central and eastern Europe) Automotive Supply Chain event (<https://www.ceeautomotive.eu/>) took place in 2017; the first day was dedicated to a conference on future trends in the automotive industry and on the second day **B2B meetings** were organised **with the help of the EEN team** of the SBA. At the first event, 259 participants held 623 meetings. At the second event, 372 participants held 576 meetings. In 2019, the Czech Automotive Industry Association made an agreement with its Slovak counterpart to rotate the event on a yearly basis between the two countries. Therefore, the 2019 event took place in Olomouc in Czechia in mid November 2019, with 452 participants.

Thanks to this endeavour, the EEN team of the SBA deepened its cooperation with the automotive industry associations of Slovakia and Czechia. The 2019 event involved the Czech EEN partners and brought together 13 other EEN partners who shared the same goal – to support their SMEs in finding new partnerships in the CEE region.

**The Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry** has signed a cooperation agreement with the **Slovak Plastic Cluster** (<http://portal.spklaster.sk/index.php/en/>), which is a key stakeholder in the field of plastic and the automotive industry. Plastics are embedded in Slovakia's S3 priority area 'industry for the 21st century'. Businesses in the plastics industry play an equally important role in the automotive industry. Thanks to the cooperation agreement, members of the Slovak Plastic Cluster can receive specialised services from **EEN Slovakia** ([www.een.sk](http://www.een.sk)), which include access to matchmaking events, company missions, gaining new international business contacts, participation in EEN seminars and information events. Through this cooperation, EEN Slovakia makes an important contribution to the implementation of the wider Slovak S3.

The Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Vest (**ADR Vest**) (**West Regional Development Agency**) (<http://www.regiuneavest.ro/en/home/>) is the lead organisation for the **EEN in western Romania** (<https://een-romania.ro/en/ro-boost-smes/>) and an intermediate body for the regional operational programme. The ADR Vest established Tehimpuls, the first regional innovation and technology centre in the region, in 2006, and pioneered the first clusters in Romania, establishing the Automotive Cluster in 2007 and the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Regional Cluster in 2011, both of which brought together local authorities, universities, businesses and support organisations. The EEN team of the ADR Vest is in close contact with the unit hosting the intermediate body within the ADR Vest and there is **regular information exchange** and communication on EEN events and services. The EEN team leader is also involved in the planning for the next generation of ERDF programmes in Romania, including the design of the S3.

Besides the ADR Vest, other EEN hosts also play an important role in shaping the cluster policy of their regions. This allows for possible synergies between EEN services and clusters, as in Berlin, where **Berlin**

**Partner für Wirtschaft und Technologie** (Berlin Partner for Business and Technology) (<https://www.berlin-partner.de/>) is involved in the design and implementation of the regional clusters as part of the joint Berlin-Brandenburg regional S3.

The EEN team of the Bulgarian **Applied Research and Communications Fund** (<http://www.arcfund.net/>) was able to use its host's strategic position with research institutes and clusters to build up extensive business relationships. EEN support for commercialising R & D results and for internationalisation became accessible to research institutes and clusters and to their respective business clients. The EEN team of the Applied Research and Communications Fund maintains continuous cooperation with the Executive Agency for SME Promotion in Bulgaria and the Ministry of Economy, which manages the 'innovation and competitiveness' operational programme and the National Innovation Fund. Experts from the EEN team were **members of the working group on drafting the call for cluster support** under the programme. Team members also provided expert support to the Executive Agency for SME Promotion in improving the National Innovation Fund and its upcoming calls.

Clusters can also benefit from the matching services of the EEN. **Baden-Württemberg International** (<https://www.bw-i.de/startseite.html>), as part of EEN Baden-Württemberg, organised the fifth Cluster Matchmaking Conference with the North Denmark EU Office in September 2017 in Stuttgart. This is where the cooperation between BioREGIO STERN (<https://www.bioregio-stern.de/de>) and the Danish cluster Welfare Tech (<https://en.welfaretech.dk/>) to set up the ILDA-care (intelligent logistics, digitalisation and automated workflows for the homecare and nursing homes sector) project ([www.bioregio-stern.de/de/projekte/ilda-care](http://www.bioregio-stern.de/de/projekte/ilda-care)) began. The project is financed through the ERDF by the Innovation Express call of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and aims to develop new value chains in the logistics, digitalisation and automation in the care sector. The advantages of bringing Danish and German SMEs together through ILDA-care include, for example, giving German SMEs access to knowhow and in vivo Danish testbeds in order to develop products for the more mature Danish elderly care market. The Danish SMEs gain knowledge of the German market, business culture and deep technological competences.

EEN teams can themselves also design and implement measures in regional operational programmes that are in line with regional/national strategies.

The host organisations of EEN Lithuania (<https://eenlietuva.eu/>) - the chambers of commerce, industry and crafts of Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda, and the Lietuvos inovacijų centras (Lithuanian Innovation Centre) - have, for many years, been actively working together with regional and national stakeholders, including for example ministries, employers' organisations and associations, universities, research centres and governmental agencies. The EEN teams regularly update the key stakeholders with information about the different EEN services, events, success stories and impacts achieved. Joint events are frequently organised with employers' organisations and associations as well as governmental institutions such as Enterprise Lithuania (<https://www.enterpriselithuania.com/en/>) and the Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (<https://mita.lrv.lt/en/>).

Following extensive continuous consultation with its clients, EEN Lithuania identified one particular area where clients needed assistance: forming international partnerships. The Lithuanian Innovation Centre, as coordinator for EEN Lithuania, approached the Ministry of Economy and Innovation with a proposal for a new ERDF measure. Following this, a working group was formed in cooperation with the Lithuanian Innovation Centre to evaluate the results presented and consider possible options. The working group concluded that one potential way to boost R & D in SMEs would be to address the issue of forming and developing partnerships. Representatives of the Lithuanian Innovation Centre facilitated the drafting of the proposal for the new measure. Thanks to the close relationship between the EEN and the Ministry of Economy and Innovation and the impact that EEN Lithuania has demonstrated the measure will have, the proposal to set up this new ERDF-backed measure was accepted at the beginning of 2018. Its name is 'InoConnect LT' and it uses EUR 1 448 million to finance the participation of innovation ecosystem actors - primarily from SMEs - in international research events and experimental development initiatives. SMEs, science and technology parks and cluster coordinators can receive funding of up to EUR 10 000 to participate

in the events, organised exclusively by the EEN. At these events the SMEs can meet new potential business partners, allowing them to form fruitful and profitable business relationships. A total of now up to 87 SMEs or institutions have applied for this funding and already received EUR 780 000.

By channelling feedback from the SME community and stakeholders to the political decision-makers, EEN teams can also influence regional/national policy design and implementation. A special point of interest for managing authorities could also be the policy experience benchmarking that EEN teams across the EU can easily provide.

In their daily work, EEN partners are organised into 17 different sector groups. These groups allow network staff to focus their activities on specific economic sectors that are considered to be of particular relevance for growth in their respective regions. Sector group members are experts in their respective areas and they use their sector group as a platform to discuss, plan and implement collaborative activities that foster cooperation and innovation in that field, or across different sectors. Beyond the sector groups, the network also runs 14 thematic groups. The work of these group members is dedicated to specific sector-neutral topics, ranging from public procurement to access to finance. The active participation of network staff in these groups allows for **experiences to be exchanged and for the effective collection of input on the design and development of new support measures** that could be implemented with the support of the ERDF at regional level. This was the case for the set-up of a new financial instrument in the ERDF operational programme in the Liguria region of Italy. A staff member of **Unioncamere Liguria** was able to gather valuable input on the design of a new financial instrument ('mini-bonds'), as a member and lead coordinator of the EEN Thematic Group on Access to Finance. The inputs were forwarded to the managing authority and helped with the set-up of the new ERDF-supported financial instrument.

Beyond this, the needs of microenterprises and SMEs with respect to innovation, internationalisation and sustainability will be put forward by the EEN manager of the Camera di Commercio di Genova (**Chamber**



of Commerce of Genoa) (<http://www.ge.camcom.it/IT/HomePage>) through a task force responsible for designing the upcoming Interreg Italy–France maritime programme.

In a similar vein, Vlaams Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen (the **Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**) (<https://www.vlaio.be/nl>) makes use of the EEN for cross-border peer exchange and policy benchmarking. The ‘GR-EEN’ meetings organised by the agency twice a year with EEN teams from northern France (Lorraine), Germany (Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland), Luxembourg and Switzerland (Basel and surroundings) offer an opportunity to exchange ideas on a number of SME-relevant policy implementation issues such as state aid rules, the Seal of Excellence (SoE), business transfer policies and approaches to implementing Industry 4.0. The results of the GR-EEN meetings are forwarded to the managing authority in order to shape and reshape ERDF measures and contribute to more efficient programme implementation.

Investitions- und Förderbank des Landes Niedersachsen (**NBank**) (<http://www.nbank.de>) is the promotional bank of the German federal state Lower Saxony and a member of EEN Lower Saxony (<https://een-niedersachsen.de/>). In addition, the bank is a key intermediate body in the implementation of the ERDF operational programme of Lower Saxony. For the planning of the current funding period and the next (starting in 2021), EEN staff are involved in the ‘friends of Europe’-rounds where NBank discusses current and upcoming trends, potential new measures and good project examples.

**SPIRIT Slovenia**, the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalisation, Foreign Investments and Technology (<https://www.spiritslovenia.si/en>), is commissioned by the Slovenian Ministry for Economic Development and Technology to implement SME-relevant measures of the Slovenian multi-fund operational programme. At the same time, as a member of EEN Slovenia (<http://een.si/>), SPIRIT Slovenia **collects feedback** from other EEN partners and also **gives feedback on its own experiences** to the Ministry for Economic Development and Technology.

The Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Centru (**ADR Centru**) (**Centre Regional Development Agency**) (<http://www.adrcentru.ro/>) is the intermediate body for the implementation of the ERDF regional operational programme 2014–2020 in the Centru region in central Romania. At least one member of the EEN team joins the ADR Centru’s programming department during the presentation of the new calls for proposals and **gives support and feedback to the managing authority** and regional stakeholders. In order to continuously improve the policy instruments targeting SMEs, the ADR Centru’s EEN team engages with Interreg Europe projects such as the cultural and creative industries policies hub ‘CRE:HUB’ project (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/crehub/>), which allows for, for example, on-site evaluations and peer reviews of the policy systems and tools in place for the support of SMEs in the cultural and creative industries. As a result of this project, the ADR Centru’s EEN team sent a letter to the managing authority for the regional operational programme and **proposed revisions to**



Figure 6: Sector groups of the EEN

**the funding guidelines** for the second priority of the regional operational programme dedicated to SMEs. The revisions included the introduction of additional scores for SMEs in the cultural and creative industries and the reduction of the minimum threshold for a project from EUR 1 million to EUR 500 000 in order to allow more SMEs from the cultural and creative industries to access funding.

The EEN team of **Confindustria Piemonte** (<https://www.confindustria.piemonte.it/>) proposed enhancing the SoE by **rewarding the SoE-holders** with a higher score in regional calls. Confindustria Piemonte is a permanent member of the Piedmontese monitoring committee of the regional ERDF operational programme.

**Swansea University** (<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/>), as a Welsh EEN partner organisation in EEN United Kingdom (<https://www.enterprise-europe.co.uk/>), collaborates with the Welsh government to promote EU funding and best practices. The EEN team of the university meets on a regular basis with representatives from the regional government who request **feedback on behalf of the SMEs** the university represents. The meetings take place with the devolved authority at least quarterly to discuss the needs of SMEs and possible implementation of changes in support measures that will impact SMEs. The meetings are also attended by members of staff from the Welsh European Funding Office. Swansea University is invited to collaborate on the Welsh European Funding Office Annual Conference, where it always exhibits and often runs workshops, including on the EEN services they offer.

### 4.3. Advice on access to ERDF funding

Within the access-to-funding consultation, EEN teams give tailor-made advice to SMEs on all the different funding possibilities offered by the ERDF programmes. This service can be reinforced in cases where EEN hosts implement ERDF measures. Before proceeding to the provision of tailor-made advice, EEN teams also use different formats and channels to raise awareness among SMEs on the different ERDF funding possibilities.

The EEN team of the **Industrie- und Handelskammer für Oberfranken Bayreuth (Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Upper Franconia-Bayreuth)** (<http://www.bayreuth.ihk.de/>), for example, advised its client **Hygienische Decken- und Wandsysteme (Hydewa)** (hygienic ceiling and wall systems) on the possibilities offered by the support measure 'go international' which is supported by the Bavarian ERDF operational programme (<https://www.international.bihk.de/foerderung/go-international/erfahrungsberichte.html>). The support measure is implemented by the Bavarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and allows for SMEs to receive grants of up to EUR 20 000 to assist with their entry into up to two different markets. Hydewa produces special panels that can be used in moist and cool rooms to ensure problem-free hygienic conditions. With its multifunctional fire safety panels, the company also contributes towards achieving comprehensive fire safety and protection. Even the United Nations in Vienna uses Hydewa's panels in its canteens and food and drink areas. Following the advice of the EEN team in the Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Upper Franconia-Bayreuth, Hydewa received an ERDF grant to target the Italian market by, for example, localising its website to Italian consumers.

In addition to being an EEN host, the **Birmingham Chamber of Commerce** (<https://www.greaterbirminghamchambers.com/>) also hosts an ERDF-funded business growth hub (<https://www.gbslepgrowthhub.co.uk/>). ERDF-funded calls that come from the growth hub are always brought to the attention of the chamber's EEN team, which provides one-to-one support to SMEs. Beyond its own measures, the chamber also cooperates with **Innovation Birmingham** (<https://www.innovationbham.com/>) to provide EEN services as an additional service to support its initiatives. The chamber also works with the **STEAMhouse** (science, technology, arts and maths) project (<https://steamhouse.org.uk/>), where the EEN team is working closely with members of the project to provide routes into commercialisation for the incumbents in this maker space.

The **Zentrum für Innovation und Technik in Nordrhein-Westfalen (ZENIT)** (<https://www.zenit.de/english-version/>) is a public-private partnership in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, owned by the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. It is a

consortium of banks and an association comprising some 180 enterprises. ZENIT provides services to companies, especially SMEs, as well as universities and research institutions. For example, the EEN team of ZENIT advised the **Zentrum für Wasser- und Umweltforschung** (the Centre for Water and Environmental Research at the University of Duisburg-Essen) (<https://www.uni-due.de/zwu/start.php>) on accessing the ERDF-funded measure to support research infrastructures in North Rhine-Westphalia. The centre, and its idea of establishing the Future Water Campus, was selected in one of the latest calls in 2018. The campus will allow for interdisciplinary water research on whole-system solutions for water supply by involving academics, public water utilities and enterprises in the water sector. ZENIT is also the lead coordinator for **EEN North Rhine-Westphalia** (<https://nrweuropa.de/>). The EEN team members of EEN North Rhine-Westphalia regularly organise access-to-funding consultation days ('**NRW.Europa-Fördersprechtag**') free of charge, where SMEs can discuss their project ideas and the most suitable funding programme for them, including possibilities offered by different ERDF-financed measures.

The **Greek National Documentation Centre** (<https://www.ekt.gr/en>), as part of EEN Greece (<http://www.enterprise-hellas.gr/en/partners>), advises SMEs on how to benefit from ERDF funding possibilities offered by the regional ERDF programmes and the sectoral ERDF 'competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation' operational programme. In particular, the '**we venture abroad**' measure ([http://www.antagonistikotita.gr/epanek\\_en/prokirixeis.asp?id=20&cs=](http://www.antagonistikotita.gr/epanek_en/prokirixeis.asp?id=20&cs=)) supports export-oriented Greek SMEs in participating in exhibitions and trade fairs abroad co-organised by the EEN.

The **Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry** successfully advised a manufacturing business for high-quality drinking glasses, tableware accessories and decorative glassware with a focus on the catering and hotel industry on accessing the funding possibilities for the introduction of a new innovative production technology offered by the Slovak ERDF 'research and innovation' operational programme. As a result of the funding, the client was able to increase its competitiveness and now produces high-quality pulled stem glasses.

Before EEN teams give tailor-made advice to SMEs on accessing ERDF funding possibilities, they very often start by raising SMEs' awareness of the possibilities using different methods and channels.

**Lazio Innova** (<http://www.lazioinnova.it/>) regularly organises roadshows for the presentation of ERDF calls on internationalisation support for SMEs, where additional EEN services are also presented.

The **Hrvatska Gospodarska Komora (Croatian Chamber of Economy)** (<https://www.hgk.hr/>) organises information days and seminars for SMEs on open ERDF calls, and EEN services are presented here as well.

The **ADR Centru in Romania** usually organises three to four information workshops before a call is launched and these sessions are co-organised with the EEN team in the ADR. As an established good practice, representatives of both sides are present at the workshops - whether they are organised within EEN activities or under the umbrella of the regional operational programme. The agency also promotes knowledge transfer: former and existing ERDF beneficiaries are regularly invited to the information sessions to present their experience to potential beneficiaries.

The **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** in the French region **Bourgogne Franche-Comté** is, along with the regional managing authority, involved in **La Fabrique à Projet** (the project factory) (<https://www.europe-bfc.eu/jai-un-projet/la-fabrique-a-projets/>), whereby the chamber's EEN team and the regional managing authority organise joint information and training sessions for SMEs on access to EU funding possibilities, including ERDF possibilities.

**EEN Hessen** (<https://www.een-hessen.de/>) has been conducting specific consultation days on innovation funding and cooperation for many years. They take place at chambers of commerce in northern, central and southern Hessen, which are all strategic partners of EEN Hessen. EEN team members of **Hessen Trade and Invest** (<https://www.htai.de/>), **Wirtschafts- und Infrastrukturbank Hessen** (<https://www.wibank.de/wibank/>) experts from **Hessen Agentur** (<https://www.hessen-agentur.de/>) on the SME 'Hessen

Modellprojekte' and 'Model R & D projects' research programmes, together with the hosting chambers of commerce, offer advice to the regional SMEs on funding schemes available at regional, national and European level. In 2019 EEN Hessen organised a specific event on funding for innovation projects in the fields of energy and resource efficiency, involving an expert presentation on the ERDF-funded schemes in the Hessen ERDF operational programme.

The **Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia** (<https://www.ozs.si/english>) organises joint workshops and information days with the managing authority and intermediate body for SMEs on ERDF funding opportunities, calls and funding guidelines. The SoE-holders from the SME instrument within Horizon 2020 also receive consultations on accessing ERDF funding possibilities.

The **Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce** (<https://helsinki.chamber.fi/en/>), as part of **EEN Finland** (<https://www.een.fi/>), provides its clients with EU funding brochures and guidelines that include the funding possibilities offered by the Finnish ERDF programmes. The funding possibilities are also presented to SMEs as part of individual advice services.

The EEN team (<http://www.een-portugal.pt>) of the **Portuguese Industrial Association-Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (<http://www.aip.pt>) presents, on a regular basis, information on new calls and ERDF funding opportunities to all Portuguese SMEs. This information also features in the newsletters and mailings of the EEN host organisation. The EEN team also holds expert meetings for SMEs where the clients' needs are assessed and different funding opportunities are identified on the basis of the results of the assessment, including the ERDF funding opportunities. (PT 2020).

**St John's Innovation Centre** (<https://stjohns.co.uk/>) is a business incubator of the University of Cambridge and is well known regionally, nationally and internationally. In particular the centre is well known for its access-to-finance work and has close working relationships with financial institutions, such as the British Business Bank (<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/>). The centre has built up strong relationships with other key regional partners (local enterprise partnerships, growth hubs, universities), and their teams meet regularly to discuss each other's

offers of support, client referrals and signposting. The centre also works closely with **Exemplas** (<http://www.exemplas.com>), which implements the ERDF-funded measure 'Innovate2Succeed' that **builds on the EEN enhanced innovation-management capacity service** for SMEs. The centre refers its business clients to this programme. Similarly, the centre also refers businesses to other ERDF-funded measures such as the Anglia Ruskin University Keep+ programme (<https://aru.ac.uk/business-employers/knowledge-exchange/keep-plus>). Beyond client referrals, all ERDF-funded projects are included in the mailings of the centre to keep them updated on EEN-related events, services on offer and success stories.

Access-to-funding consultation can cover specific funding possibilities that are available to consortia with multiple beneficiaries. EEN teams can actively help in searching for partners to build up budding consortia in interregional calls, and can also invite SMEs to join a consortium wishing to access the regional ERDF programme's funding possibilities.

The overall objective of the Interreg project 'AQUAFIMA - integrating aquaculture and fisheries management towards a sustainable regional development in the Baltic Sea Region' ([http://eu.baltic.net/Project\\_Database.5308.html?contentid=79&contentaction=single](http://eu.baltic.net/Project_Database.5308.html?contentid=79&contentaction=single)) was to integrate aquaculture and fisheries management in order to create sustainable regional development. The project was approved in the fourth call of the Baltic Sea Region programme in 2011 during the 2007-2013 funding period. Eleven partners from seven countries worked together and analysed the prospects for increased integration of stocking/restocking measures into coastal fisheries management. The lead organisation behind the project was **Landgesellschaft Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** (<https://www.lgmv.de/>), a state-owned land management and development company, which received help from the **Technologiezentrum Warnemünde** (<https://www.tzw-info.de/>) to identify suitable partners for the project idea. With the help of the EEN team of Technologiezentrum Warnemünde from **EEN Mecklenburg-Vorpommern** (<https://enterprise-europe-mv.de/>), two organisations

with expertise in fisheries management (Eurofish Denmark and the Estonian University of Life Sciences in Tartu) were able to join the project.

The EEN team of **DEV'UP Centre Val de Loire** helped its client **Antea** (<https://www.anteagroup.fr/en>) be part of the 'innovation platforms to respond to environmental issues' programme funded by the ERDF (<https://plateformes-pivots.eu/?lang=en>). This programme involves seven scientific platforms that carry out laboratory research and field experiments to better diagnose problems with and clean up the environment. The objective of the programme is to make the Centre Val de Loire Region a cluster of excellence in the field of environmental monitoring by offering scientists and entrepreneurs in this sector the means of experimentation, measurement and testing to carry out their projects.

Access to funding also includes access to instruments other than grants, such as venture capital investment possibilities.

The EEN team of the **ADR Vest** in Romania (<https://adrvest.ro/>), for example, advised Xvision (<https://xvision.app/>) on the possibilities offered by GapMinder (<http://gapminder.vc/about-us/>), a venture capital fund co-funded by the Romanian ERDF competitiveness operational programme. Thanks to this consultation, Xvision was able to receive an investment of EUR 25 000.

The Catalan governmental Agency for Business Competitiveness (<http://www.accio.gencat.cat/ca/inici/>) helped to design two financial instruments with ERDF funding: the first focused on individual or collaborative business R & D projects (Nuclis S3CAT) and the second on R & D and R & I collaborative public-private partnerships (Comunitats S3CAT). The EEN team members of the agency include advice on these instruments in their daily advisory services to SMEs and promote them at different local events.

**Finlombarda** is the regional development bank owned by the Lombardy region and is tasked with supporting the economic and social development of the region by supporting actors in the sectors of the quadruple helix. On SME development specifically, Finlombarda promotes the competitiveness, growth, innovation, cooperation and internationalisation of Lombardy's businesses. Finlombarda is also the

lead organisation for **EEN Lombardia** (<https://www.simplernet.it/>) and for the regional ERDF operational programme it implements the financial instrument 'Innovalombardia', which supports SMEs' R & D and innovation activities. As part of the access-to-funding activities, the EEN team of Finlombarda advises its clients on access to Innovalombardia.

Provision of access-to-funding consultation can also be institutionalised by managing authorities entrusting EEN hosts with this service. In certain cases, EEN hosts can embed EEN access-to-funding consultation services into their overall business consultancy.

**Unioncamere Liguria** has been commissioned by the regional ERDF managing authority to implement the *animazione economica* within the regional operational programme. This technical assistance is targeted at potential beneficiaries of the different ERDF measures and includes awareness-raising events on ERDF measures and ongoing calls for proposals. Beyond this, potential beneficiaries receive advice on the suitability of the different ERDF measures with respect to their needs and investment projects. Further services provided to the potential beneficiaries help them present their project proposals properly. The results, including the impact of the measure, are monitored and forwarded to the managing authority. In Unioncamere Liguria, this ERDF measure is coordinated by the EEN Liguria coordinator, and therefore EEN team members are directly involved in the implementation of this service. As a result, EEN team members are able to assist more companies in their investment readiness assessment and provide them with a wider range of different services.

In **IFB Hamburg** the access-to-funding consultation services of the EEN have been incorporated into a special business unit that has been established: the **IFB Business Advisory Centre** (<https://www.ifbhh.de/g/ifb-beratungscenter-wirtschaft#eu-forderung>). The advisory centre is the central contact point for start-ups and enterprises in Hamburg for advice on all public funding possibilities (including those offered by the ERDF) in the fields of business development, environment and innovation.

## 4.4. Enterprise Europe Network services in synergy with ERDF funded projects

### 4.4.1. Regional and interregional programmes

EEN services can enhance the impact of ERDF-funded projects in many ways: for example, they can be linked to an ERDF-funded project as a separate add-on, catalysing the impact of the original project. EEN services can also be blended with an ERDF-funded project and act as a vehicle for its implementation.

These synergies can be achieved at different programme levels: they can be realised within mainstream ERDF programmes or in the different strands of Interreg. EEN services can also support the implementation of different priorities of the macro-regional strategies.

EEN services can enrich and enhance purely regional/national ERDF-funded projects because they are offered to SMEs as a seamless add-on to the original project.

The Lombardy region in Italy set up a **collaborative open innovation platform** co-funded by the ERDF in 2015. The platform was built around the paradigm of responsible R & I. Today it brings together over 10 000 actors in the quadruple helix to promote collaboration not only in the region but, thanks to the interoperability of the platform, also with other regions. Through a dedicated plug-in the participants of the platform can **receive partnership proposals from the EEN** that suit their interests through an automatic matching process.

The **Jožef Stefan Institute** (<https://www.ijs.si/ijsw/IJS>) is the leading Slovenian scientific research institute, covering a broad spectrum of basic and applied research. The institute is the lead organisation in EEN Slovenia. With seven other Slovenian public research organisations (the National Institute of Chemistry, the National Institute of Biology, the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia and the Faculty of Information Studies in Novo Mesto, along with the University of Ljubljana, the University of Maribor and University of Primorska - all three of which are also members of EEN Slovenia), the institute established a consortium to support technology transfer in the

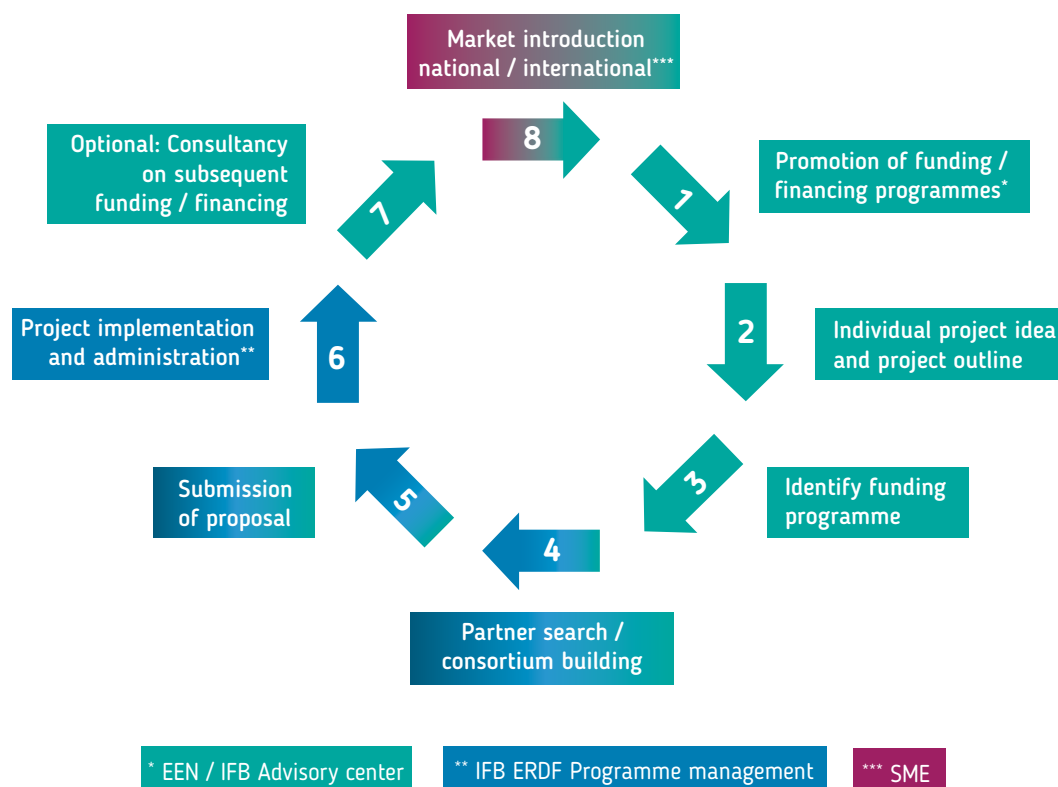


Figure 7: Integration of the EEN access-to-funding services into the overall services of the EEN host (IFB Hamburg)

Slovenian public research organisations. The project 'KTT' (<http://jro-ktt.si/>) is co-financed by the ERDF and aims to increase knowledge transfer from research to industry. Whenever SMEs cooperating with the public research organisations need further support in their internationalisation activities, the EEN members of the KTT project offer their EEN internationalisation services, ranging from individual advisory support to brokerage services.

The **Steirische Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft** (SFG) is the regional economic development agency of the Austrian State of Styria (<https://www.sfg.at/>) and also a member of **EEN Austria** (<https://www.enterpriseeuropenetwork.at/>). The SFG implements the measures 'Enabling!Export' and 'Spitzen!Leistung'. Within Enabling!Export the SFG advises and accompanies regional SMEs on their internationalisation journey. SMEs can receive tailor-made support, reinforced by the online platform Export Know How (<https://www.ic-steiermark.at/en/export-know-how/>). Wherever appropriate, the EEN team members of the SFG offer the EEN services for internationalisation support to their client, such as use of the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database or participation in B2B meetings.

The **Birmingham Chamber of Commerce** has a long-standing close partnership with Innovation Birmingham (<http://www.innovationbham.com>), the organisation that implements the ERDF-funded project '**Birmingham knowledge economy business incubation partnership**'. This project creates a partnership between Birmingham's two science parks by providing accessible support for emerging innovative high-tech SMEs. The project supports, for example, access to both digital facilities and life-science facilities / wet laboratories, and expertise at both locations, complementing the services offered by the growth hub. The different EEN services are offered to the SMEs participating in the project through the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is also associated with the ERDF-funded **STEAMhouse** project (<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/business/steam/steamhouse>) where the EEN team members of the chamber provide routes into commercialisation for the incumbents in this maker space.

The **Außenwirtschaftszentrum Bayern** (AWZ) (<https://weltweit-erfolgreich.bayern>) is a joint initiative between the Bavarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Bavarian Chambers

of Crafts. The AWZ, two Bavarian chambers of commerce and industry and two chambers of crafts are also members of **EEN Bavaria** (<https://www.een-bayern.de/>). Co-funded by the Bavarian ERDF operational programme, the AWZ supports the internationalisation of the regional SMEs by, for example, providing them with country-specific information, depending on their target markets. The EEN services and events organised by EEN Bavaria are accessible via the online platform of the AWZ.

The EEN team of the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which acts as the managing authority for the Flemish ERDF 'investment in growth and jobs' operational programme, is always asked by its host to present and offer the EEN services to ERDF beneficiaries from the regional and interregional operational programmes at the ends of their projects so as to facilitate further development of the original project ideas.

**EEN Berlin-Brandenburg** ([www.een-bb.de](http://www.een-bb.de)) cooperates closely with ERDF-funded projects within regional and interregional programmes. **Berlin Partner** and **Wirtschaftsförderung Brandenburg** (<https://www.wfbb.de/de>) create synergy by complementing ERDF-funded joint booths at trade fairs with '**EEN business days**' (such as at InnoTrans 2018 - <https://innotrans2018.b2match.io/home>) which is a B2B event combining matchmaking services with innovation or access-to-finance support. EEN business days are always organised in close cooperation with the Berlin Senate Department for Economy, the Brandenburg Ministry for Economy and the joint cluster initiatives in Berlin and Brandenburg. After every EEN business days event and where appropriate, EEN Berlin-Brandenburg follows this up by creating dedicated business cooperation profiles for the participating SMEs in the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database. This cooperation adds value for both the EEN teams, who gain better access to relevant target groups, and the regional cooperation partners, who benefit from the enlarged range of European services for SMEs.

**Teesside University** (<https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/business/index.cfm>) was invited in 2015 by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership (<https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/lep/>) to lead the collaborative ERDF-funded '**innovate Tees Valley**' project ([https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/business/consultancy/innovate\\_tees\\_valley.cfm](https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/business/consultancy/innovate_tees_valley.cfm)) with three key partner organisations: Materials Processing

Institute, the North East of England Process Industry Cluster and DigitalCity. The objective of the project was to develop a single coherent and coordinated solution to meeting the innovation challenges of Tees Valley SMEs by increasing the proportion of SMEs that are involved in innovation. SMEs received support for commercialising new or enhanced products/services through, for example, increased investment and/or better collaboration with other SMEs and sharing of knowledge bases. The **EEN team of the University** helped successful beneficiary SMEs of the project make use of the EEN's extensive network for the different routes into internationalisation.

**For SMEs, receiving EEN services can translate into additional points when it comes to project selections in different calls.**

The Hungarian managing authority of the 2007–2013 'economic development' operational programme announced in 2012 and 2013 that SMEs could obtain higher scores for their applications in selected calls if they completed a prior innovation-management assessment. This assessment was carried out with the **IMP<sup>3</sup>rove** innovation assessment tool. This tool is also widely used by the partners of **EEN Hungary** (<http://www.enterpriseurope.hu/hu/innovacios-felmeres>) in delivering the EEN service to enhance SMEs' innovation-management capacity.

**Add-on EEN services can also enrich and enhance interregional projects. This is facilitated in cases where EEN hosts are themselves participating partners in different Interreg projects.**

The **ADR Vest in western Romania** continuously seeks to capitalise on all resources in order to make the greatest impact on the regional economic development. Since joining the EEN, the ADR Vest has partnered in several Interreg projects and exploited complementarities all the way. The most relevant example of this is the synergy achieved between the EEN team of the ADR Vest and the **Interreg project 'NICHE'** (building innovative food value chains in regions) (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/niche/>), which was co-funded under the Interreg Europe programme. The EEN team of the ADR Vest **combined the interregional project meetings with EEN events:** for instance, the project meeting in Timisoara was

combined with an EEN B2B matchmaking session. Similarly, alongside study visits of the project, EEN teams offered to organise B2B events, such as the one at the Food Business Summit in the Finnish city of Seinäjoki or the one alongside the project visit to Donegal in Ireland, where the EEN team of the **Local Enterprise Office Donegal**, as a member of **EEN Ireland** (<https://www.een-ireland.ie/>), hosted a free matchmaking event together with EEN partners from Crete, Estonia, Finland, Northern Ireland, Poland and Romania. Beyond B2B matchmaking events, the ADR Vest also offered the innovation-management capacity-building service of the EEN to the agro-food SMEs participating in the project.

The Interreg cross-border programme France-Switzerland 2014–2020 funded the '**InnovARC**' project (<http://www.innovarc.eu/innovarc/presentation-du-projet/>), which was coordinated by the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bourgogne Franche-Comté** and brought together 250 enterprises and R & D and R & I organisations in the area of the French-Swiss Jura Mountains with the goal of increasing cross-border business cooperation on strategically important innovation projects. InnovARC held an annual event, called '24h d'InnovARC' (<http://www.innovarc.eu/24h2018/>), in which the **EEN team of the chamber** also played an important role: it enriched the event by offering access-to-finance consultation to the participating enterprises along with additional EEN internationalisation services such as their inclusion in the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database. The EEN teams also offered the innovation-support service to enhance the innovation-management capacity of enterprises involved in cross-border innovation projects.

The Interreg Europe 'SME internationalisation exchange' project (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/sie/>) is carried out with the participation of seven partner regions that wish increase their SMEs' internationalisation capacity. The project helps them assess the effectiveness of their current policies and initiatives with the goal of learning from each other and testing new methods of support in their respective regions. The EEN host NBank is a partner in the project, and the **EEN team of the University of Greenwich** (<http://www.gre.ac.uk>) – through its close partnership with another partner in the project, **Kent County Council** (<http://www.kent.gov.uk>) – supported the project by offering the EEN internationalisation services, including B2B matchmaking events and the



use of the Partnership Opportunities Database for the SME clients of the project's participating partners.

The **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** for the Hungarian County of Győr-Moson-Sopron (<https://www.gymskik.hu/en>) is the lead partner of the ERDF-financed Austrian-Hungarian cross-border Interreg project 'smart-up' (<https://www.interreg-athu.eu/en/smartup/>), which supports regional start-ups with mentoring and coaching services, with the overall objective of increasing their long-term innovation performance. Within the project, a cross-border start-up community is developed by fostering the start-ups' innovation and business cooperation. The EEN team of the chamber enriches the project by offering different EEN services to the participating start-ups, including organising B2B matchmaking events, entering the start-ups into the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database and advising them on accessing different funding possibilities.

The ERDF-funded cross-border cooperation programme ALCOTRA (<https://interreg.eu/programme/interreg-alcotra/>) covers the Alpine territory between France and Italy. Within the programme, the integrated thematic plan 'CLIP' pursues the main objective of supporting the increase of SMEs' innovation capacity. The three projects implementing CLIP focus on circular economy, e-health / silver economy and e-mobility, and foster cross-border technology transfer in these areas and facilitate networking between the main actors. The **Chamber of Commerce of Genoa**, as the coordinator of CLIP, relied on its EEN team to help with the efficient implementation of the actions. The EEN team of the chamber provided the EEN service to enhance the innovation-management capacity of the SMEs participating in the project and offered them advice on access to the different funding possibilities according to their needs. Three other EEN hosts were also involved in the implementation of CLIP (**Unioncamere Piemonte** - <http://www.pie.camcom.it/>, **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes** - <https://www.auvergne-rhone-alpes.cci.fr/>, **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur** - <http://www.paca.cci.fr/>).

The Interreg Central Europe project **AMiCE** (<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/AMiCE.html>) was funded with the objective of tackling major challenges for SMEs in the introduction of advanced manufacturing technologies. The project focuses on 3D printing in particular and facilitates SMEs' access

to knowledge and promotes investments in additive manufacturing. Five of the eleven project partners host dedicated EEN teams, including the project leader, **Chemnitz University of Technology** (<http://www.tu-chemnitz.de>), which is a member of EEN Saxony (<https://www.een-sachsen.eu/>). The other EEN hosts in the project are the Czech **Regional Development Agency of the Ústí Region** (<http://www.rra.cz>), **Wrocław University of Technology** (<http://www.wctt.pl>), the **Business and Innovation Centre Bratislava** (<http://www.bic.sk>) and the **Chamber of Commerce of Genoa**. The latter provides, for example, EEN internationalisation services to the SME clients of the participating project partners, such as their entry into the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database, which facilitates cross-border business cooperation and technology transfer.

The goal of the Interreg Europe project 'DEVISE' (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/devise/>) is to foster digital transformation of SMEs. The project exploits the potential of digital tech SMEs in order to facilitate the competitiveness of other SMEs in the participating regions' S3 priority areas. The Romanian **ADR Vest**, as a DEVISE partner and EEN host, used the EEN matchmaking approach for the stakeholder meetings throughout the project to create links between the regional digital supply and the demand. In addition, the ADR Vest developed an audit tool to analyse the digital supply and demand by building on the key elements of the **Digital Innovation Quotient tool** developed by **IMP<sup>3</sup>rove** and used by the EEN members when providing the service to enhance the innovation-management capacity of SMEs.

The EEN team of **Industrie- und Handelskammer Ostbrandenburg** (the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ostbrandenburg**) (<https://www.ihk-ostbrandenburg.de/>) in Frankfurt (Oder) cooperates closely with the service and support centres of the **Kommunalgemeinschaft Pomerania e.V.** (<https://pomerania.net/de/der-verein/projektaktivitaeten/service-und-beratungscenter.html>), which has received support through the cross-border Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Brandenburg-Poland Interreg programme (<https://interreg5a.info/index.php/de/>). The service and support centres offer their services not only to associations and educational institutions but also to SMEs, and their endeavours are complemented by relevant EEN services such as matchmaking services, including the organisation of business delegations and information about EU funding possibilities.

The 'lean landing' project (<https://northsearegion.eu/lean-landing/>) of the North Sea Region transnational Interreg programme is designed to get small businesses into new European markets quickly. The project offers help to SMEs if they wish to test whether their products or services could be sold abroad or if they are looking for new European business partnerships. The project has 26 partners, including accelerators and incubators from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The project coordinator **Erhvervshus Sjælland** (Business Hub Zealand) ([www.ehsj.dk](http://www.ehsj.dk)) and the other Danish project partner **Agro Business Park** ([www.agropark.dk](http://www.agropark.dk)) both host EEN teams that can directly facilitate SMEs' access to EEN services. Beyond this formal membership of the EEN, longstanding business relations with EEN members can also facilitate the SMEs' access to the vast range of EEN services. The project participant **Leeds Beckett University** (<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/ubc/>) has strong business relations with the EEN member **City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council** (<http://www.bradford.gov.uk>), which promoted EEN internationalisation services to project participants and also welcomed inward missions of SMEs.

The Danube transnational programme funded the project 'Danube S3Cluster' (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danube-s3-cluster>), which is coordinated by the Romanian EEN host **South Muntenia Regional Development Agency** (<http://www.adrmuntenia.ro>). Two other project partners - **Steinbeis 2i** (<http://www.steinbeis-europa.de>) and the **University of Maribor** (<http://www.um.si>) - are also official members of the EEN. The project addresses the major territorial challenge of the Danube area: the unbalanced distribution of innovation performance between the western and eastern part of the region. Cluster cooperation based on the participating regions' S3 strategies is at the core of this project. The EEN team of the University of Maribor supports the project by providing innovation audits / enhanced innovation-management capacity-building services, along with B2B matchmaking events and SMEs' inclusion in the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database.

The Interreg Central Europe project 'KETGATE' (<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/KETGATE.html>) supports cross-border access for SMEs to key enabling technologies (KET) within Europe. This is all the more important as in many

Central European countries KET infrastructures are insufficiently available. KETGATE is coordinated by **Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum** (SEZ) (<https://www.steinbeis-europa.de/>), which is a member of EEN Baden-Württemberg. Beyond SEZ, four other EEN partner organisations are also project participants: the Croatian **TERA Tehnopolis** (<http://portfolio.web.tera.hr/index.php/projekti/europska-poduzetnicka-mreza/>), the Italian **Veneto Innovazione**, the Slovenian **Jožef Stefan Institute** and the Polish **Upper Silesian Agency for Entrepreneurship and Development** (<https://gapr.pl/en/>). The project thus connects business-support organisations and research institutes in order to help SMEs access high-level technology for advanced materials, photonics, microelectronics and nanoelectronics in the areas of transport, health and food. EEN matchmaking services and the extensive close contact with the regional/national SMEs enrich the project and contribute to its successful implementation.

A more institutionalised form of linking EEN services to an ERDF-funded project can be achieved through an official memorandum of understanding for cooperation between EEN teams and the project partners.

The project **Boost4Health** (<https://www.boost4health.eu/>) of the transnational North-West Europe programme provides practical and financial support to SMEs that wish to explore their potential for international growth. At the beginning of 2017, the project partners signed a **memorandum of understanding with the EEN** in order to intensify their collaboration in helping SMEs from the life sciences and medical technology fields to internationalise. This has been facilitated by the EEN membership of one of the project partners (**the Growth Company** - <http://www.growthco.uk>).

Add-on EEN services can also enrich and enhance interregional projects even if EEN hosts are not official partners in the projects.

The Interreg Europe project 'CLIPPER' (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/clipper/>) aims to boost the competitiveness of SMEs in Europe's maritime industries. Maritime industry is an S3 priority area shared by all seven participating regions. The EEN

team of the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein teamed up with the R & D Centre of the Kiel University of Applied Sciences (<https://www.fh-kiel-gmbh.de/de/>), which is directly involved in the CLIPPER project. The EEN team's contribution to the successful implementation of the CLIPPER project included for example the organisation of dedicated B2B matchmaking events.

The North Sea Region transnational project 'REFRAME' (<https://northsearegion.eu/reframe/about/>) supports five regional pilots with the objective of developing and/or re-establishing local infrastructures for food production, food processing and food consumption. Through the project, the municipality of Groningen and the Regional Cooperative Westerkwartier work on realising the potential of food production for the northern Dutch region. They do so by for instance improving the access of regional SMEs to the regional urban markets. One of the co-founders of Westerkwartier is the research group on sustainable cooperative entrepreneurship of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences (<http://www.hanze.nl>). The university supports the work of the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab with the Terra vocational educational centre (<http://www.mboterra.nl>) within the framework of Westerkwartier. The enterprises working with the Entrepreneurs' Innovation Lab receive access to the EEN services through the EEN team of Cube050 (<https://een-north.nl/cube-050/>), which is the business incubator of Groningen. These services focus on the internationalisation needs of the enterprises.

A specific and stronger form of synergy is possible when EEN services are blended into ERDF-funded national/regional or interregional projects. In these cases, EEN services are no longer a simple add-on to the original project. In order to avoid double funding, the costs of EEN services must not be included in the overall project costs.

Within Spitzen!Leistung, the SFG cooperates with Styrian clusters to enhance the innovation capacity of their SME members. Clusters receive support to carry out innovation audits – based on the EEN enhanced innovation-management capacity-building service – of their members. The EEN team of the SFG is involved in the preparation and implementation of the innovation audits and the analysis of the results.

Following the innovation audits, action plans with detailed recommendations are drawn up.

Veneto Innovazione is the regional government agency for applied research, innovation and technology transfer of the Italian region Veneto. Its mission is to promote and develop applied research, innovation and technology transfer inside the regional production system, with a particular focus on SMEs. Veneto Innovazione is a member of the Italian EEN consortium Friend Europe, which covers the regions of Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige (<http://www.friendeuropa.it/>). In addition, Veneto Innovazione was the lead partner for the project C-TEMAIp (Continuity of Traditional Enterprises in Mountain Alpine Space areas) co-financed by the ERDF through the Alpine space transnational programme (<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/c-temalp/en/home>). Besides Veneto Innovazione, three other EEN teams were also involved in the implementation of the project: Unioncamere Veneto (<http://www.eurosportelloveneto.it/>), the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture of Bolzano (<http://www.hk-cciaa.bz.it/en>) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Munich and Upper Bavaria (<https://www.ihk-muenchen.de/de/>). The project supported regional SMEs in their endeavour to manage the business transfer process. The matching of buyers with sellers at transnational level has been facilitated with the EEN tools in the project.

#### 4.4.2. Support for macro-regional strategies

EEN teams can contribute to the implementation of macro-regional strategies: for example, EEN services for internationalisation can be made available to the actors in charge of different priority areas of the macro-regional strategies.

The EEN team of Sicindustria played an important role at the third Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which took place in Catania on 24 and 25 May 2018 ([https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/conferences/adriatic-ionian/2018](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/conferences/adriatic-ionian/2018)), by organising a dedicated B2B matchmaking event that mainly focused on the tourism sector, which is the fourth priority area of the strategy. The event attracted 160 participants, of which over 100 were SMEs, but there were also universities, R & D

institutions and financial organisations in attendance. Overall, 445 meetings were held. Since 2018 was the EU-China Tourism Year, the EEN team of Sicindustria was also able to attract 22 participants from China to the event thanks to the Chinese EEN partners.

In 2019, the EEN team of the **Romanian Association for Electronic Industry and Software** (<http://www.aries.ro>), in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organised a B2B matchmaking event at the eighth Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in Bucharest. The B2B event facilitated meetings and exchanges between SMEs, universities, chambers of commerce, clusters and other stakeholders in the Danube Region with the objective of finding partners for new projects and exploring new business opportunities (<https://eusdr2019-b2b.b2bmatch.io/>).

Established in 2012, the **Danube Transfer Centre (DTC) Network** (<http://dtnetwork.eu/index.html> and <https://www.steinbeis-europa.de/dtc>) is a powerful transnational structure in the Danube macro-region dedicated to fostering innovation and knowledge transfer between academia and the economic environment. Within the EU strategy for the Danube Region (<https://danube-region.eu/>), SEZ from Baden-Württemberg chairs the Working Group on Innovation and Technology Transfer in priority area eight: competitiveness. With ten members in eight countries, the DTC Network provides assistance and support to organisations seeking to improve their competitiveness and international dimension. Support is offered for, for example, technology transfer, intellectual property management and management of innovation projects. The DTC Network is coordinated by SEZ, which is member of **EEN Baden-Württemberg**. Besides SEZ, two other EEN partner organisations are also members of the DTC Network: the **University of Maribor**, as part of **EEN Slovenia**, and the **Croatian Chamber of Economy**, which is the lead partner of **EEN Croatia** (<http://www.een.hr/en/een-croatia>). As in the Interreg Central Europe project **KETGATE**, EEN teams' services and their extensive close contact with the regional/national SMEs contribute to the successful operation of the DTC Network.

#### 4.4.3. Scaling up network services with the help of the ERDF

EEN services have a limited outreach due to the availability of funding for the regional/national EEN teams. However, EEN teams can seek further support from the regional/national ERDF programmes in order to scale up certain services, allowing a larger number of SMEs to benefit from the original EEN service.

**Innovate2Succeed** (<https://www.gov.uk/business-finance-support/innovate2succeed-uk>) is a programme designed to help SMEs build and embed innovation-management capability into their business to ensure they are better equipped in the long term to generate and manage their ideas and get them into the marketplace and commercialised more rapidly.

The programme builds upon the enhanced innovation-management capacity service of the EEN, the budget of which enables **EEN United Kingdom** to serve around 300 companies. This was a very limited range and therefore the EEN team of **Innovate UK** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk#content>) looked for ways to scale up the service. With the match-funding of the ERDF, the Innovate2Succeed programme was set up, which enabled an additional 1 600 high-growth businesses to receive support. SME beneficiaries of the programme undergo an in-depth diagnostic assessment of their business, and a bespoke support package is then delivered to embed innovation-management capability within the company. This improved capability provides long-term benefits to the SME and the economy. The programme is delivered across 12 pilot local enterprise partnerships as part of Innovate UK's agenda to increase innovation-management capacity in the United Kingdom's small businesses.

Through the Innovate2Succeed programme, **Newable** (<http://www.newable.co.uk>), as a member of EEN United Kingdom, helped over 250 SMEs in London alone to enhance their innovation-management capacity and to successfully commercialise their ideas (122 SMEs with products that were new to the market and 133 SMEs with products that were new to the firm).

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a set of recommendations for both EEN partners and their host organisations (current and future) and all those funding bodies that are in charge of the design and implementation of shared-management programmes, including ERDF managing authorities / intermediate bodies.

### 5.1. Recommendations for Enterprise Europe Network partners and their host organisations

➤ EEN teams should seek strategic positions within their host organisations; this could be facilitated by regular meetings with the host's strategic decision-makers or by a thorough explanation of the range of EEN services available and their added value to the host organisation and the wider regional/national economy. Compilations of success stories can further demonstrate the role and value of EEN services.

➤ If the EEN host organisation is a member of a monitoring committee for an ERDF operational programme, the EEN teams should seek to acquire the agenda and minutes of the monitoring committee meetings. EEN team members could also accompany their EEN host colleague(s) to the meetings if it is not contrary to the monitoring committee's rules of operation.

➤ EEN teams should increase the visibility of the added value of EEN services to the managing authorities and intermediate bodies. EEN teams could consider holding regular meetings and cross-linking on each other's websites.

➤ EEN teams should seek timely information - from their hosts on the one side, and from the managing authorities / intermediate bodies on the other side - on the upcoming calls / funding guidelines / project selection criteria. EEN teams could also offer their expertise and contribute to the drafting of the planned calls / funding guidelines / project selection criteria.

➤ EEN teams and their hosts are encouraged to suggest to managing authorities / intermediate bodies that having received specific EEN services (e.g. having a digital transformation action plan as a result of the Digital Innovation Quotient assessment) be made a pre-condition for participation in certain ERDF-funded calls or, alternatively, having received EEN services could lead to higher scores at the project selection stage.

➤ EEN teams should offer their expertise and close contacts with the SME community to their regions' S3 planning authorities in order to be involved in the entrepreneurial discovery process leading to the identification of the S3 specialisation fields.

➤ EEN teams should also seek to build contacts with their regions' S3 implementing authorities and actors in order to support the implementation of the S3 with EEN services such as the organisation of S3 sector-specific matchmaking events and participation in and/or organisation of investor-related events with SME participation, including support for their pitching preparation (see Chapter 4.2).

➤ EEN teams and their hosts should actively seek to create synergies with ERDF-funded projects by interweaving them with EEN services such as access to the EEN Partnership Opportunities Database (see Chapter 4.4.1).

➤ EEN teams and their hosts should actively seek to benefit from the different Interreg funding possibilities to set up or participate in projects and enrich them with EEN services (see Chapter 4.4.1).

➤ EEN teams and their hosts are encouraged to actively contribute to the annual forums of the different macro-regional strategies by complementing the forums with, for example, dedicated matchmaking events (see Chapter 4.4.2).

➤ EEN teams should facilitate SMEs' access to ERDF funding; to this end EEN teams should seek to cooperate with managing authorities / intermediate bodies in organising joint workshops and information days for potential SME applicants for ERDF support. In addition, one-to-one consultations should also be offered to the SME clients of the EEN teams.

➤ EEN teams and their hosts are encouraged to design their own ERDF-funded measure(s), into which they could embed different EEN services (see Chapter 4.2).

➤ EEN teams are equally encouraged to scale up one or more of their EEN services to make them available to a larger group of SMEs (see Chapter 4.4.3).

## 5.2. Recommendations for bodies in charge of shared-management programmes including ERDF managing authorities / intermediate bodies

Bodies in charge of the design and implementation of shared-management programmes (including ERDF managing authorities / intermediate bodies) may see the potential value of the following recommendations.

- The regional/national EEN members could be mapped out and a thorough understanding of the EEN services could be developed. Regular joint meetings could be envisaged, along with linking to each other's websites.
  - EEN teams' access-to-funding services could be relied on when advising clients to access funding possibilities offered by the shared-management programmes; this could take the form of joint information events or workshops.
  - The agenda and minutes of monitoring committee meetings could be shared with EEN team members whose hosts are regular members of a monitoring committee. If EEN hosts are regular members of a monitoring committee, they could also be offered the option to invite EEN team members to committee meetings when SME-relevant issues are discussed, if this is not contrary to the committee's rules of operation.
  - EEN teams' expertise and close daily contact with the SME community could be used when new calls / funding guidelines / project selection criteria are being prepared that are of direct relevance to SMEs.
  - EN services could be used to facilitate the successful implementation of different Interreg programmes - managing authorities / intermediate bodies of Interreg programmes might find it useful to propose to the projects' lead partners and other participants that they capitalise on and make use of EEN services.
- 
- It could be made a precondition that SMEs must have received EEN services in order to apply for certain calls, or, at the project selection stage, additional points could be allocated to SMEs who received an EEN service prior to the application (e.g. having a digital transformation action plan as a result of the Digital Innovation Quotient assessment delivered by the EEN could be an eligibility criterion or could entitle applicants to additional points).
- 
- S3 planning and implementing authorities could consider involving the EEN teams in the entrepreneurial discovery process. EEN services such as the different internationalisation and innovation-management capacity-building services could also be used for the implementation of the S3.
- 
- Managing authorities / intermediate bodies whose programmes directly contribute to the implementation of macro-regional strategies could capitalise on EEN teams' services, which could take the form of, for example, dedicated matchmaking events organised by EEN teams.
- 
- Managing authorities could consider - subject to proper applications and in accordance with the programmes' objectives - using funding from shared-management programmes to support the scaling up of the provision of certain EEN services to make them available to a larger group of SMEs.

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