CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Supporting Competitive and Sustainable Growth in the Tourism Sector

THEME 1 - **Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups**

THEME 2 - **Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products**

THEME 3 - **Enhancing tourism accessibility – improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs**

COS-TOUR-2015-3-04

COSME Work Programme 2015

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1.   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1.   Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) play a crucial role in reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy[1]. Whereas they are considered as crucial engines for growth and job creation, their competitiveness is affected by a limited exploitation of international opportunities and innovation prospects in the Single Market and beyond.

In this context, the Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014-2020) [2], hereinafter referred to as "COSME", aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union.

This call constitutes part of the COSME Work Programme 2015 adopted on the 29 October 2014[3].

The contracting authority is the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises[4] (hereinafter referred to as "EASME"). EASME is, *inter alia*, entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation of, among others, parts of the COSME programme and the Horizon 2020 programme.

1.2.   Policy Context

1.2.1.   *GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT*

This call for proposals aims at developing and supporting transnational cooperation projects in the tourism sector with the involvement of SMEs and in close cooperation with the Member States[5]. As outlined in the Communication of the European Commission of 30 June 2010[6], entitled "Europe,

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[1] COM (2010)2020 final of 3 March 2010 "Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

[2] Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) (2014 - 2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC. *(Official Journal of the European Union L 347/33 of 20.12.2013. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1287*

[3] European Commission Implementing Decision C(2014)8044 of 29 October 2014 on the adoption of the work programme for 2015 and the financing for the implementation of the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises.

[4] EASME was set up by European Commission Implementing Decision 2013/771/EU of 17 December 2013 establishing the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and repealing Decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC (Official Journal of the European Union L 341/73 of 18.12.2013).

[5] Article 25 of the COSME Regulation « (…)In support of action taken in Member States, the COSME programme may support initiatives in both sectoral and cross-sectoral areas with significant potential for growth and entrepreneurial activity, especially those with a high proportion of SMEs, accelerating the emergence of competitive and sustainable industries, based on the most competitive business models, improved products and processes, organisational structures or modified value chains (…)».

[6] COM (2010) 352 final Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe" http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0352

the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe", which was welcomed by the Council in October 2010, tourism is an important sector of the Union economy. Enterprises in this sector directly contribute 5 % of the Union's gross domestic product (GDP). The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ("TFEU") acknowledges the importance of tourism and outlines the Union's competences in this field. It provides that the Union shall complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of that sector (Title XXII Tourism, Art. 195). Measures to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States shall be especially aimed at: a) encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in this sector; b) promoting cooperation between the Member States, particularly by the exchange of good practices.

In line with the EU competence in the tourism field, the actions proposed under COSME 2015 work programme contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially by focusing on the enhancement of the competitiveness and sustainable growth of the tourism sector in Europe. These actions, while continuing the implementation of the Communication of the European Commission on Tourism of 30 June 2010[7], focus on five general EU tourism policy objectives:
 (1) increasing tourism demand, (2) diversifying tourism offer, (3) enhancing tourism quality sustainability, accessibility, skills, information and innovation, (4) improving socio-economic knowledge of the sector and (5) increasing Europe's visibility as a tourist destination as well as of its diverse destinations.

To achieve the above EU general tourism policy objectives, the following three specific policy objectives are relevant for this call:

1) Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons[8]
Under this objective, partnerships which facilitate the increase of tourism flows during the low and medium seasons between European Union (EU) Member States and/or non-EU countries are supported. The targets will be two specific groups, notably seniors and the youth.

2) Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products
Under this objective, transnational partnership projects are supported. The focus will be on the diversification of the tourism offer by supporting transnational tourism products, in the field of sport and/or wellness activities linked to natural environment as well as the ones linked to cultural and industrial heritage.

3) Enhancing tourism quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills, information and innovation
Under this objective, the main actions for accessibility will be the maintenance and expansion of the "Tourism for All" principle. In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union[9], this objective aims at providing accessible tourism services for all; visibility and awareness raising actions; developing accessible tourism itineraries (exploiting synergies with the actions for senior and low/medium season tourism) to improve the facilities and services for tourists with special access needs.

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[7] See footnote 6.

[8] There is no common definition of low-medium season because seasonality varies from country to country and from a site to another. Applicants should demonstrate how their proposal contributes to extending the tourism season of the targeted territories

[9] Article 10 TFEU: Article 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

As for expected results, in general, the above mentioned objectives will contribute to strengthening the competitiveness of the European tourism sector. The public-private partnerships will be consolidated and the participation of small and micro enterprises in tourism partnerships will be increased. The initiatives dedicated to the increase of senior and young tourists' flows will generate an extension of the tourism season, which is fundamental for the industry to gain competitiveness. The sustainable transnational tourism offer in Europe will be enlarged and diversified and the sustainable development of the sector better promoted. Furthermore, by fostering the provision of tourism services and products that are capable to accommodate the needs of all tourists (disabled, elderly, families with children, other temporary or permanent special needs), the overall quality of tourism in Europe will be enhanced. Therefore, this call also aims at boosting the image of Europe as a tourism destination of excellence worldwide.

Therefore, this call for proposals covers the following 3 THEMES:

THEME 1 "Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups"

THEME 2 "Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products"

THEME 3 "Enhancing tourism accessibility - improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs"

    1.2.2.   SPECIFIC POLICY CONTEXT FOR EACH THEME:

1.2.2.1.	THEME 1 - "Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups"

The European Commission encourages the extension of the tourism season with a view to stimulating competitiveness in the European tourism sector. In particular, action 6 of the Communication on Tourism COM (2010)352[10] states that the European Commission should favour the creation of "a voluntary tourism exchange mechanism between Member States enabling in particular certain key groups such as young or elderly people, people with reduced mobility and low-income families to travel, particularly during the low season". In line with this action, the European Commission has been active in promoting tourism exchange mechanisms in the low/medium seasons with the programme "CALYPSO-Tourism for All" implementing the Preparatory Action "Social Tourism in Europe", approved by the European Parliament in 2009 for a period of 3 years[11].

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[10] See footnote 6.

[11] The main aim of Calypso was to encourage as many tourists as possible to go on holiday in the low season, across different European countries, by fostering mobility opportunities for some of the most vulnerable groups (seniors, youths, people with disabilities, families with low income). Additional aims of the initiative were to promote regional development and generate economic growth across Europe; improve tourism seasonality patterns across Europe; create more and better jobs in the tourism sector; and strengthen the European citizenship.

Under the Calypso initiative, a study on social tourism[12], ten projects[13] have been co-financed with the budget of the Preparatory Action (2009-2011) and the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP)[14] in 2012.

In 2013 the European Commission decided to launch a call for proposals focusing only on the senior target group[15]. Since demographic trends and market opportunities showed the greatest potential of this segment in terms of further tourism development, the establishment of public and private partnerships and interest of the market for some tailored tourism offers in the low/ medium seasons was tested. A second call for proposals[16] was launched in October 2014 after a broad consultation process with various tourism stakeholders representing youth and seniors at international and European level, taking into account the results of a specific report on seniors, elaborated with a pool of experts in 2014[17]. The call is part of the COSME Programme[18], in accordance with Article 4.1.c) of the COSME Regulation (EU 1287/2013) in order to set up an action "*to improve framework conditions for the competitiveness and sustainability of Union enterprises, particularly SMEs, including in the tourism sector*". A growing number of project proposals have been submitted during 2013 and 2014.

The present call for proposals falls under this specific framework as a continuation of the previous calls, reflecting on the European Commission's engagement in **developing transnational mobility models around specific tourism products to foster tourism flows in low/medium seasons within EU and COSME participating countries**. By searching common EU coordination strategies, tourism SMEs investments will be generated, fostering entrepreneurship and a leverage employment in all seasons, decreasing the seasonality patterns.

1. Seniors market

On the basis of the population projection by EUROSTAT, more than 128 million people in the European Union were aged between 55 and 80 years in 2012, representing about 25% of the total

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[12] The full report is uploaded on the following European Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/seniors-youth/index_en.htm

13 More information on Preparatory Action and all the Calypso co-financed projects can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/calypso/index_en.htm.

[14] http://ec.europa.eu/cip/eip/index_en.htm

[15] The European Commission launched a call for proposals in June 2013 under the EIP Programme, "*Facilitating transnational low season tourism exchanges in Europe encouraging Senior Citizens to travel*". A short summary of the co-financed Projects is on the European Commission´s web site: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/seniors-youth/index_en.htm

[16] The European Commission launched a call for proposals in 2014 under the COSME Programme: "*Facilitating EU transnational tourism flows for seniors and young people in the low and medium seasons*": http://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cos-tflows-2014-3-15

[17] The Report "Facilitating cooperation mechanisms to increase senior tourists' travels within Europe and from third countries in the low and medium seasons" and an Annex 1, 'Demographic change and the rise of senior tourists' are uploaded in the following site: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/seniors-youth/index_en.htm

18 Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) (2014 - 2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1287

population. The current demographic trends in the EU show that the proportion of senior citizens is bound to constantly increase up to a 30% in 2060.

In the tourism industry, two main challenges should be faced to exploit this trend: the high seasonal patterns and unemployment (due to very uneven distribution of activity across seasons) and an important untapped customers market of the often healthy and wealthy elder population (especially in the ranges between 55-70 years old).

Although the contribution of this segment to the touristic activity over the past years grew considerably[19] and substantially contributed to mitigating the crisis in the tourism industry, it is clear that its level of participation in tourism remains relatively low, especially for the 65+ group (40 % compared with 56 % for the rest). This is partly explained by the insufficient adaptation of the supply to the needs and expectations of elderly consumers. In most EU countries systematic reflection has been barely conducted in order to identify potential barriers and lift them. This situation leads to lower employment opportunities in the European tourism sector, particularly in SMEs.

Long-lasting experience of some Member States has already demonstrated the great potential of senior tourism to extend its seasonality spread and to support subsequent job creation. The EU wide senior tourism market however remains limited and fragmented, senior tourists' mobility is often problematic and very often the supply is scarcely designed when it comes to meeting the needs of the elderly. Consequently, it is necessary – for both the public authorities and the private sector - to design medium and long-term strategies to anticipate and react upon in the most competitive way.

2. Youth Market

Figures from the "EU Youth Report 2012"[20] indicate that 96 million European inhabitants - about one-fifth of the total population (19.4%) are between 15 and 29 years of age. Youth travel is one of the fastest growing and most dynamic markets of the global tourism sector. According to UNWTO forecasts, by 2020, the youth travel industry will grow to 320 billion US$ per annum and there will be almost 300 million international youth trips per year.

In terms of youth potential for the tourism market it has to be noted that the youth travel market is growing steadily and, due to longer travel lengths, young travellers spend differently than the average traveller during a trip. The high value of youth travel also lies in the 'lifetime value' that young people deliver to destinations through their travel career (they often return to the places they have visited in later life). Young travellers often try and avoid international chains, spending their money directly with local suppliers (this tends to increase the local impact of their expenditure, as leakages are reduced and more money ends up with local businesses). The intrepid nature of experienced young travellers leads them to visit parts of the world that are 'off the beaten track' and discover new destinations. Youth travel has been recognized by the United Nations as one of the most promising paths towards a more responsible and sustainable tourism sector.

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[19] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-12-043/EN/KS-SF-12-043-EN.PDF In the EU, 65+ tourists spent a third more on tourism in 2011 compared to 2006.

[20] http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/eu-youth-report-2012_en.pdf

1.2.2.2.	THEME 2 - "Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products"

In line with the latest Communication on Tourism COM (2010)352[21], one of the main aims of the European Commission remains the promotion of the development of a competitive, sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism offer. The European Commission focuses on two key concepts mutually influencing each other: the need for a sustainable approach and the need to boost the competitiveness of the European tourism sector. Indeed, the tourism sector's competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and by their integration into a local community.

Sustainability refers to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee long-term growth. The sustainability of tourism thus covers a number of different aspects: The responsible use of natural resources, taking into account the environmental impact of activities (production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc.), the use of 'clean' energy, protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care.

To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector and to keep the leading position of Europe as a tourist destination, the European Commission encourages, among others, **the diversification of the supply of tourist services and products** capitalising on our common and rich heritage (natural, cultural, historical, industrial etc.) and on different sustainable products and services. Europe has an impressive wealth of common heritage and natural assets, whose added-value lies in their great diversity. There are numerous transnational thematic tourism products (e.g. routes/itineraries/trails) crossing several countries related to different types of tourism which can benefit of support for further development and increased visibility and thereby contribute to promoting sustainable tourism. Europe is also a key cultural tourism destination, with a large number of major cultural sites and a strong flow of culturally-motivated international and domestic visitors. It is estimated that cultural tourism accounts for around 40% of all European tourism. The great variety of European cultural heritage – both material and immaterial – represents an important competitive advantage.

In consideration of the above, transnational thematic tourism products are an important niche market with a large growth potential and a clear sustainable profile (e.g. cycle or hiking or other sport and wellbeing related routes crossing several countries; pan-European cultural routes etc.). Whilst recognising the important role Member States play in developing and implementing strategies for tourism at national and regional level, the Union should help the development and promotion of sustainable transnational tourism products which embody common European shared values and heritage and contribute to promoting Europe as a "unique tourism destination". Therefore the European Commission encourages the development of tourism products on a transnational and European scale.

Various initiatives in favour of the development of diversified and sustainable European transnational products have been put in place over the recent years. The European Commission has already co-financed numerous transnational initatives[22] and has enhanced the visibility of different

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[21] See footnote 6.

[22] http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/index_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/transnational-products/index_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural/index_en.htm#cultural_tourism_projects

thematic tourism products throught conferences and other events[23]. It has been cooperating with the Council of Europe on the Cultural Routes programme[24] and with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in finding the general definition of European Cultural Routes[25]. These transnational thematic tourism products can enhance the profile of Europe as a world destination and contribute to further promoting sustainable tourism.

Finally, investing in sustainable tourism products, linked to such universal fields as sport/wellness nature and culture, is a way to ensure that benefits go to all citizens, a wide range of SMEs, generating new tourism flows, new jobs, new creative industries and opportunities for regional sustainable growth. It is a way to ensure that benefits are not only concentrated in European capitals but involve also rural and industrial areas in decline that suffers for job losses, depopulation and other harmful social consequences.

The present call is a continuation in pursuing the main objective of the diversification of the European tourism offer linked to sustainable and environmentally friendly as well as cultural and industrial heritage related tourism[26].

Proposals on transnational tourism products **targeting tourists with special needs** should be submitted to THEME 3 (see also 1.2.2.3) and not to THEME 2.

1.2.2.3.	THEME 3 - "Enhancing tourism accessibility - improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs"

Responding to special access needs is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. Accessibility is also a human right[27] and a compelling business opportunity at the same time. With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD 2007) by both the European Union and each one of the EU Member States, there has been an increased focus on the tourism sector's obligations to ensure that persons with disabilities (and by extension all persons with special access needs not necessarily linked to a permanent disability) can exercise their right to enjoy cultural heritage, landscape, leisure, wellness, sport and tourism in an independent and easy way as other persons.

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[23] (i.e.: European Tourism Day, Crossroads of Europe, networking events)

[24] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Routes/default_en.asp
http://www.culture-routes.lu/php/fo_index.php?lng=en

[25] These routes invite tourists to discover how Europeans co-operate and compete since ancient times, creating great emotions and artefacts. Their rich diversity makes them particularly attractive: from pilgrimage routes to historical or remembrance routes, from gastronomic to architectural routes, just to mention few. OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2014

[26] In this sense, it constitutes a continuation of main objectives of the previous following actions: Preparatory Action "Sustainable Tourism" (2009-2011), the calls for proposals launched under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme on "Promotion of trans-national thematic tourism products in the European Union as means of sustainable tourism development (2012-2013)" COSME 2014 call for proposals on Sustainable Transnational Tourism Products, as well as calls for proposals launched under the Preparatory Action "Promotion of European and transnational tourism products with special emphasis to cultural and industrial heritage" (2012-2014).

[27] Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, art. 26

At the same time, as travel and tourism represent one of the fastest growing industries worldwide (according to the UNWTO more than 1 billion international tourists travelled in 2014), the provision of safe, convenient and accessible tourism services becomes a priority for the European tourism sector.

According to a recent study by the European Commission[28], people with special access needs took in 2012 nearly 783 million trips within the EU (both domestic and intra-EU travel). As far as the key international inbound markets are concerned, the demand for EU's accessible tourism services was almost 18 million trips in the same year. In terms of economic contribution, the EU demand for accessible tourism yielded in 2012 a direct gross turnover of about EUR 352 billion, while the induced contribution was EUR 786 billion, including the multiplication factor (i.e. the number of persons accompanying travellers with special needs, which in the EU is estimated in average at 1,9). It is expected that, in view of socio-economic factors such as ageing, the demand for accessible tourism will continue to grow by about 1,2 % every year.

Although the tourism industry has begun to recognize that accessible tourism is not only an obligation but a "golden opportunity", much remains to be done. According to the same study, in fact, the demand of accessible tourism would increase by almost 25% if accessibility were more widespread across the tourism supply chain (accommodation, booking, food & beverage, transport services, leisure, sport, cultural activities), information on accessible services would be more reliable and exhaustive, and a majority of staff in the tourism sector would get basic dedicated training. Rather than utopic, unrealistic changes, these are minimum improvements that can be easily implemented by fostering a true "accessible transformation of the tourism value chain" whereby:

- accessibility is **mainstreamed** in the tourism offer throughout the whole tourism experience, from information and booking to return journey and sharing of experience;

- entrepreneurs and managers are **sensitized to the opportunities** of accessible tourism, **are encouraged to invest** in accessibility and are **supported with clear guidance** in implementing legislation, standards and practical guidelines;

- destination managers and tourism public authorities in general actively support accessibility by **integrating universal design concerns in strategic planning**, encourage **networking and partnerships** with enterprises, SMEs and training providers, **foster inventories** of the current offer and **set a long term agenda of progressive improvements**.

The European Commission study identified also key barriers at the different stages of the travel experience. Some of these barriers have also been confirmed by the ongoing projects co-financed under the previous call (2013) on accessible tourism itineraries[29]:

- lack of information on accessibility in the mainstream tourism offer (e.g. booking and tourism information sites, facilities and activities sites, etc.);

- lack of accessible transport facilities at the destination, as well as of accessible paths and parking. This barrier is particular unsatisfactory for hidden/sensory disabilities;

- barriers in the accommodation sector which could be eliminated without excessive investments and often reveal a lack of guidance on "what to do" (e.g. poor circulation in

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[28] *Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe" (2014)*: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/accessible/index_en.htm)

[29] http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/accessible/index_en.htm

bedrooms, lack of grab rails, poor signage, lack of menus for persons with allergies, menus in Braille etc.);

- poor offer for nature-based sports and cultural activities (e.g. lack of signage and dedicated equipment, safety concerns, negative attitudes from staff, etc.).

On this last point, another European Commission study[30] has clearly identified the unevenness in the distribution of accessible tourism services. While accessibility improvements have been mostly concentrated in accommodation services, the accessible offer for areas such as **sports, outdoor activities and enjoyment of cultural heritage** is still rather poor throughout Europe.

Therefore, the proposals on transnational tourism products **targeting tourists with special needs** should be submitted to THEME 3 and not to THEME 2.
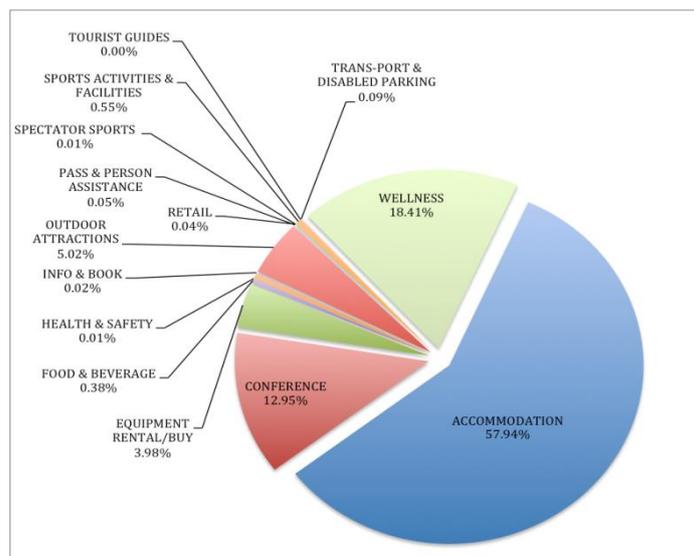
Source: European Commission, "Mapping and Performance check of the supply of accessible tourism services in Europe" (2015).

Against this background, the present call intends to continue and enhance the actions already launched under the "Preparatory Action Tours Accessibility for All" (2012-2014) and the call "Design, Promotion, Implementation and Marketing of Accessible Tourism itineraries"[31].

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

2.1. General objectives

The call is divided into three themes:

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[30] *Mapping and Performance Check of the supply of accessible tourism services in Europe (2015):*
http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/accessible/index_en.htm

[31] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=6889

1. "Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups" **(THEME 1)**

2. "Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products" **(THEME 2)**

3. "Enhance tourism accessibility - improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs " **(THEME 3)**

For the three themes, the following objectives are relevant:

➢ Stimulate competitiveness of the tourism industry in Europe;

➢ Diversify, innovate and enhance the quality of the European sustainable tourism offer;

➢ Foster the dissemination of more sustainable and responsible business models across the EU tourism offer;

➢ Create a favourable framework to SME's cooperation;

➢ Foster transnational cooperation of all actors along the tourism value chain;

➢ Facilitate long-term European public-private partnerships.

Instructions to applicants

A proposal can only be submitted under <u>one</u> of the following three Themes and must comply with the specific conditions and requirements of each Theme[32].

Applicants submitting proposals for **THEME 1**, please proceed to the next section (section 2.2);

Applicants submitting proposals for **THEME 2**, please proceed directly to section 2.3;

Applicants submitting proposals for **THEME 3**, please proceed directly to section 2.4.

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[32] For more details on eligibility criteria, please refer to Section 6.

THEME 1 "Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups"

This theme is subdivided in two sub-strands: Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for seniors target groups and increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons for youth target groups.

2.2.1. *Specific objectives*

The specific objectives of this theme for the present call are to:

➢ Facilitate seniors and youth transnational mobility within the EU, lifting obstacles alongside the tourism value chain (e.g. accessible barriers scaling up the use of innovation and technologic tools, products and services facilitating transnational mobility schemes for the young market and enabling senior citizens to pursue active, healthy and more independent travel mobility);

➢ Reposition on and enlarging the senior/youth market to increase investment opportunities for the tourism industry, SMEs and businesses, both at European and international level;

➢ Facilitate the internationalisation of tourism businesses (mainly SMEs) and senior/youth associations and their introduction or consolidation in the senior/youth tourism market;

➢ Facilitate the emergence of a better and coordinated age-friendly tourism supply along the tourism value chain, matching the specific young people and seniors' needs and expectations;

➢ Improve governance in the senior/youth tourism field, fostering the establishment of long-term public and private transnational partnerships supported at regional, national and European level.

2.2.2. *Target groups*

Project proposals must target **EITHER "seniors" OR "young people"** and must clearly indicate which one of these two groups they target. **Proposals addressing both target groups together will be rejected**.

DEFINITIONS

Seniors are defined, for the purposes of this call, as any person over 55 years old.

Young people are defined, for the purposes of this call, as any person aged between 15 and 29.

The proposal may be directed towards seniors or youth (as defined here above) in general or may further restrict the target to one specific category or age group (for example: "high school students between 15 and 17 years old", "young mothers aged less than 24", "retired women", "over 75", etc.). This choice must be duly justified in the light of the project's objectives.

2.2.3.   *Eligible activities and expected results for proposals targeting senior tourism*

Under this target, EASME will co-finance specific actions aimed at developing transnational mobility models around specific tourism product/s for seniors, facilitating tourism flows within EU and COSME participating countries during the low and medium seasons.

The proposed transnational models must be self-sustainable after the end of the EU co-financing period and can be either newly developed or based on already existing national or regional experiences but upgraded to transnational level.

DEFINITION

- *Transnational mobility model: For the purposes of this call, "transnational mobility model" refers to a medium to long-term strategy to facilitate senior tourists' flows in low and medium seasons between different countries, around specific tourism product/s, improving public and private transnational cooperation, mainly enabling long-term agreements among a maximum of actors along the tourism value chain.*
- *Tourism Product: For the purposes of this call, a "tourism product" represents a combination of different aspects (characteristics of the places visited, modes of transport, types of accommodation, specific activities at destination, etc.) around a specific centre of interest, such as nature tours, life on farms, spiritual tours, visits to historical memory and cultural sites, visits to a particular city, the practice of specific sports, the beach, etc. This notion of "tourism product" is not related to the concept of "product" used in economic statistics, but rather to the one used by professionals in the tourism business to market specific packages or destinations. It is then possible to speak of specific types of "tourism products", such as culinary tourism, ecotourism, city tourism, sun-and-sand tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, winter tourism, etc.*
- *Product Development: For the purposes of this call, "product development" refers to the process that includes all activities needed to provide a set of tourism services to meet the senior tourists' needs, excluding the launching of the product into the market.*

Eligible activities:

The project proposals under this strand must develop the following **"core" activities**:

1) Design and develop a transnational mobility model around a specific tourism product(s) for an age-friendly tourism; and

2) Run a pilot test to validate the model[33]; and

3) Measure and evaluate the test's results and gather the lessons learned.

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[33] The mobility model around a tourism product/s shall be tested, involving at least 2 countries (EU Member States or countries participating in COSME) , with a sufficient number of tourists, in order to evaluate and provide evidence of the impact of the tourism product. The pilot test could be uni/bi/multidirectional and shall be implemented during the low/medium seasons. The proposal must plan the testing phase during the implementation period, with enough time to provide evidence of its assessment within the outcomes of the project. The involvement of a higher number of EU/COSME participating countries in the tests and trips will be considered as added value to the proposal.

Once the proposal contains the core activities, the following additional activities are also possible for funding, provided that applicants clearly motivate the choice and demonstrate that they are necessary for the better implementation of the abovementioned activities:

- Defining a common knowledge and data set. In a context of fragmentation of studies and data collection but also of knowledge gaps, rationalisation of existing knowledge and pooling of data sources at EU level is suggested to come up with comprehensive, evidence-based and comparable data;

- Supporting mutual learning and benchmarking activities. Given the diversity of situations and experiences across Europe, best practices exchange and sharing at EU level would be beneficial;

- Designing and implementing training and capacity building programmes (e.g. improving professional skills of service providers, fostering the emergence of start-ups and entrepreneurship at international level, etc…);

- Implementing cost-efficient models regarding the use of Information Technology (IT) solutions in the ageing field;

- Proposing common standardisation tools and dynamics in terms of financial inclusion and accessibility, in order to enhance senior consumers' confidence (e.g. mainstreaming electronic payments, encouraging online and cross-border bookings/purchases, facilitating accessible physical sites and transports, facilitating virtual access to web sites or call services, etc.);

- Fostering clustering and networking activities at European level;

- Creating synergies and participating in European initiatives (e.g. eCalypso, EDEN, Tourismlink, Tourism Business Portal, Cultural Routes, European Capital of Culture, European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, etc.) and transnational programmes and policies (e.g. Macro-regional strategies, twinning policies between cities, etc.);

- Awareness raising events relevant to the call objectives.

This **list is non exhaustive** and only aims at providing guidance to the applicants. Applicants may propose any other action they deem necessary to achieve the objectives of the call, provided that they well justify their choice and clearly describe the link between the proposed actions and the objectives to achieve.

Non-eligible activities:

Development/improvement of infrastructure.

Expected results:

- Increased tourism flows and a higher volume and quality of transnational trips undertaken by seniors during the low/medium seasons in the EU, thus reducing the seasonality patterns in the EU;

- Medium to long term strategies implemented in the design and development of a transnational mobility model, tailored on senior specific needs, considering the dynamics of the product offer for seniors;

- A common approach developed on the supply-side, by improving transnational cooperation and by increasing long-lasting agreements between the public sector, senior associations/organisations and tourism service providers (mainly SMEs);

- Balanced employment levels across seasons enhanced and job creation supported;

- Increased competitiveness of the tourism SMEs, business associations and industry (e.g. internationalisation, introduction/consolidation in the senior market, improving investment opportunities, etc.);

- Establishment of specific indicators to quantify, evaluate and monitor the results of the proposed activities and results.

For guidance purposes, other potential achievements are possible:

- Improved knowledge of the senior tourism market identifying the needs of senior tourists and lifting existing obstacles to senior travel mobility;

- Improvement and adoption of more homogenous standards of services and offers for senior travels throughout Europe;

- An efficient model of economic incentives set up to support the transnational mobility model/scheme;

- Tourism promoted effectively as a strategy for active and healthy ageing ;

- Accessibility in tourism offers facilitated effectively, along with intermodal transfer and cross-border/transnational connectivity;

- Increased awareness-raising of Europe as a sustainable, quality and safe destination.

2.2.4. *Eligible activities and expected results for proposals targeting youth tourism*

Under this target, EASME wishes to co-finance projects that are "exemplary", both in terms of their capacity to address the major needs and constraints that young people perceive as barriers to transnational mobility, and in terms of their ability to become a reference model which will be replicable and transferable.

The European Commission considers that – on the basis of some preliminary analysis of the market and stakeholders' consultation – the mobility schemes might provide the greatest added value at European level and a certain degree of novelty.

Therefore, EASME wishes to support **intra-EU "mobility schemes between organisations"** (for example youth associations, clubs, sport associations, educational institutes, volunteering organisations, etc.), in different EU countries, fostering young people travel/tourism/volunteering experiences in other EU countries.

DEFINITION

*A **"mobility scheme between organisations",** for the purpose of this call, is any possible mechanism agreement, set of tools, etc., able to make a specific and defined target group travel from one organisation established in one participating country to a partner organisation located in a different participating country. It is **not** a system of **direct subsidies** to individual travels.*

Eligible activities

The project proposals under this strand must develop the following **"core" activities**:

> 1) Design a mobility scheme as indicated above; and
>
> 2) Run a pilot to test the concept. The pilot must be run during the low/medium seasons[34] and at transnational level, involving at least 2 different EU member states or countries participating in the COSME programme[35]. Trips around a higher number of Member States/ countries participating in COSME will be given preferential treatment in the evaluation process; and
>
> 3) Measure and evaluate the test's results and gather the lessons learned.

Once the proposal contains the core activities, the following additional activities are also possible for funding, provided that applicants clearly motivate the choice and demonstrate that they are necessary for the better implementation of the abovementioned activities:

- Discussion platforms, focus groups, fora, workshops and similar initiatives;
- Capacity building and training;
- Exchange of good practices;
- Networking and partnering activities;
- Youth market analysis, surveys, comparative analysis, evidence-gathering and mapping activities, studies, etc.;
- Comparative analysis of the quality of existing tourism services provided to young people, definition of common quality criteria for such services, labelling/certification systems, etc.;
- Conferences, seminars, awareness raising events relevant to the call's objectives;
- Collaborations and commercial agreements with tourism service providers and other necessary partners;
- Business models for the products and the pilot areas.

This list is non-exhaustive and only aims at providing guidance to applicants. Applicants may propose any other action they deem necessary for achieving the objectives of the call, provided that they justify their choice and clearly describe the link between the proposed actions and the objectives they want to achieve.

Non-eligible activities:

Development/improvement of infrastructure.

Expected results

Project proposals must aim to achieve at least the following results as a direct and immediate consequence of the project implementation:

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[34] There is no common definition of low/medium season because seasonality really varies from country to country and from a site to another. Applicants should demonstrate how their proposal contributes to extending the tourism season of the targeted territories.

[35] The chosen target group(s) must travel in EU country(ies) different from their country of residence. A greater geographical impact would be seen as an asset.

- Better cooperation among different actors of the tourism value chain and youth organisations/associations;
- Improved understanding of young people's needs/ constraints/ motivations and of youth market opportunities and trends;
- Professionalisation of tourism service providers;
- New tourism products tailored to specific needs of young people;
- Increased European citizenship and better understanding of other Europeans people's cultures;
- Increased tourism flows during low/medium seasons;
- Balanced employment levels across seasons and support to job creation;
- Increased competitiveness of the tourism SMEs, business associations and industry (e.g. internationalisation, introduction/consolidation in the youth market, improving investment opportunities, etc.).

It is expected that, at programme level, the proposed activities will contribute to the realisation of the following:
- Increased intra-EU mobility of young people;
- Improved young people's readiness to travel abroad.

As reflected in the award criteria, in both strands (youths and seniors), EASME is looking for projects that:

1. **Elaborate on how to gather lessons learned and good practices** emerged during the implementation of the project with a view to be replicable at EU level; and

2. **Define a communication strategy.** A work package should be dedicated to the communication strategy, identifying the activities to communicate the project objectives, to give visibility to the EU co-financing and involvement in the project and to share and transfer the project results to the widest possible audience.

2.2.5. *General Indicators of the call for THEME 1*

Applicants must ensure that the project outcomes and impacts are presented against **all** the following indicators:

1. Number of countries/stakeholders participating in transnational cooperation projects;

2. Number of jobs and SMEs created/supported;

3. Number of created public-private partnerships;

4. Number of schools or youth/senior associations involved in an exchange mechanism;

5. Increase in the number of nights spent by tourists in EU Member States/COSME participating countries or other countries participating in COSME, during the low season by the target group.

Moreover, specific outcome indicators have to be defined for each project proposal, depending on the concrete results/outcomes foreseen.

Instructions to applicants submitting proposals only for Theme 1:

Please proceed directly to section 2.5.

THEME 2 "Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products"

This theme is subdivided in two sub-strands: Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products focusing on sport and/or wellness activities and diversifying the EU tourism offer and products focusing on cultural or industrial heritage.

2.3.1. *Specific objectives*

The specific objectives of this theme for the present call are to:

➢ Strengthen transnational cooperation with regard to sustainable tourism;

➢ Encourage the diversification of the supply of tourism products and services by the development of sustainable transnational tourism products;

➢ Strengthen cross-border cooperation and the management skills of public or private bodies in charge of developing sustainable thematic tourism products;

➢ Better market uptake and visibility of attractive sustainable European transnational tourism offer;

➢ Better valorisation of the European natural, cultural and industrial heritage and of its potential for the further development of the tourism sector;

➢ Support economic regeneration and job creation in declining (post) industrial regions;

➢ Foster synergies between tourism and sport and/or wellness related activities and their impact on economy and people's wellbeing.

2.3.2. *Themes and priorities*

Proposals must target **sustainable transnational tourism products (such as itinerary/trail/tourism offer) focusing on either a) sport and/or wellness activities in synergy with natural areas/heritage or b) cultural or industrial heritage.** Proposals combining **both** sport and/or wellness activities in natural areas and cultural or industrial heritage are also admitted.

2.3.2.1. Focusing on sport and/or wellness activity tourism in synergy with natural areas /heritage

In this case, the transnational tourism product must be conceived and structured around sport and/or wellness activities.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this call, by "sport activity tourism" it is meant tourism related to sport activities in a large sense, including the practice of recreational sport or of any other physical activity. By "wellness tourism", it is meant tourism motivated by proactive approach in seeking to improve and/or maintain health and quality of life.

As possible examples, projects on transnational itineraries/trails/tourism offers in natural areas related to the following aspects could be supported: hiking or cycle routes, adventure tourism trails, outdoor activities trails, equestrian itineraries, itineraries linked to sports events including practice of specific sports e.g.: running, fitness, skiing, winter sports, water-based sports, itineraries linked to wellness, including spa tourism etc.

This **list is not meant to be exhaustive**.

2.3.2.2.   Focusing on the theme related to cultural or industrial heritage

In this case, the transnational tourism product must be conceived and structured around a common theme related to European cultural or industrial heritage and this theme must be clearly identifiable.

As possible examples, projects on transnational itineraries/trails/tourism offers related to the following aspects could be supported: cultural or spiritual/religious routes, combination of industrial heritage and living industry (visit of enterprises and their museum), products around world-known historical figures (European or having lived in Europe) or European events or European places (tourism of memory / remembrance, e.g. around World Wars, steps in the European integration, products targeting diasporas (e.g. come and visit the place of your ancestors), routes around high-end/creative products (e.g. fashion, perfumes etc.), gastronomic routes with a European narrative (e.g. where an aliment was first introduced, how it spread through Europe, synergies with commercial routes), "experience-based" tourism (e.g. when tourists live for a moment the life of the hosting community). This **list is not meant to be exhaustive**.

2.3.3.   *Eligible activities for Theme 2 (both sub-strands)*

The project proposals under this strand must develop the following **"core" activities**:

1. Developing and strengthening a sustainable transnational tourism product through the development of concrete tourist offers/packages and the facilitation of their market uptake after the end of the project's co-financing period;
2. Promoting and enhancing the visibility of a sustainable transnational tourism product through joint transnational promotion-communication activities and by, among others, providing comprehensive and practical information to potential tourists and other tourism stakeholders;
3. Facilitating public-private partnerships and the integration of tourism-related enterprises, in particular small and micro enterprises, as well as local authorities, in the supply chain of transnational tourism products as well as into regional development and tourism promotional strategies;
4. Increasing SMEs skills and opportunities in transnational cooperation and developing sustainable tourism products, raising awareness about sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

Once the proposal contains the core activities, the following additional activities are also possible for funding, provided that applicants clearly motivate the choice and demonstrate that they are necessary for the better implementation of the abovementioned activities:

- Cooperation projects/activities involving public and private stakeholders;

- Conferences, seminars, awareness-raising events and other events relevant to the call's objectives;

- Training or research activities related to enhancing development of sustainable tourism and concrete transnational tourism products;

- Awareness and dissemination actions (e.g: the production of audio-visuals, communication activities, publications, websites, participation in fairs etc.);

- Actions aiming at the creation and the improvement of networks, exchanges of good practices;

- Studies, market analyses leading to the identification, the development and the marketing of transnational tourism products;

- Mapping projects (mapping of attractions, sites, destinations and tourism related services that could be linked to the identified theme), product development;

- Development of practical information and useful tools for potential tourists (including tourism offers/packages);

- Communication campaigns in Europe and outside Europe.

Non-eligible activities:

Development/improvement of infrastructure.

2.3.4. *General expected results (for defining outputs or deliverables) for Theme 2*

The project proposal shall target the following general expected results:

- Demonstrated contribution to the development of more sustainable transnational tourism offer in Europe and its diversification;
- Development of comprehensive and practical information on the product for potential tourists (including concrete and attractive tourist offers/packages);
- Better market visibility of attractive and sustainable European transnational tourism offer;
- Facilitation and consolidation of public-private partnerships and involvement of tourism enterprises, in particular micro and small, in the supply chain of transnational thematic tourism products as well as into regional development and tourism promotional strategies;
- Contribution to competitive and sustainable development, growth (increase in tourism flows) and employment in the tourism sector;
- Benefits and multiplier effects of synergies between tourism and sport/wellness/nature/culture related activities on economy and people's wellbeing;
- Creation of a "critical mass" of destinations, attractions, sites and tourism-related services, providing ground for attractive and sustainable sport/wellness/natural/cultural/industrial heritage tourism related offers;
- Better valorisation of the European natural, cultural and industrial heritage as well as fostering a greater sense of European identity (among tourism actors cooperating in transnational networks and among European and tourists from third countries, discovering other aspects of our European common heritage and assets).

As reflected in the award criteria, EASME is looking for projects that:

1. **support innovative activities** and promote different tourism products and offers than the ones already co-financed in the past through the tourism calls for proposals[36]. Project proposals relating to innovative/different transnational tourism products (linked to sport/wellness or cultural tourism) not covered by already co-financed projects in the past will be particularly welcomed.

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[36] http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/cultural/index_en.htm#cultural_tourism_projects

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/transnational-products/index_en.htm

2. **be transnational**. The transnational tourism product has to cover/be developed in at least 4 countries as listed under the point 6.1.3 a) and b).

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this call, a "transnational tourism product" is a set of tourism destinations/attractions/services which take the form of a transnational route/itinerary/trail/tourism offer, either physical (based on physical infrastructure) or conceptual (linking places/destinations/attractions) and which all share a common link/feature/theme.

Proposals promoting local offers only, without focusing on a transnational dimension of the offer, or promoting a general type of tourism only, without focusing on a concrete transnational product as a route/trail/itinerary/tourism offer are rejected.

3. **promote sustainable tourism**. The project shall propose exemplary and innovative ideas for the sustainable development of tourism, via transnational cooperation for the enhancement and promotion of sustainable transnational tourism products. Sustainable tourism is meant to be respectful of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental principles. **The project proposal is expected to show synergies with and benefits for the natural and cultural environment, local economy, local communities** etc.

The project shall clearly identify the sustainability aspect which it aims to improve (e.g.: the responsible use of natural resources, taking into account the environmental impact of activities such as the production of waste, the pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc., the use of 'clean' energy, the protection of heritage and the preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, the local economic fallout or customer care) and indicate how the improvement will be measured during the project's implementation.

2.3.5. *General indicators for the call for THEME 2*

Applicants must ensure that the project outcomes and impacts are presented against **all** the following indicators:

1. Number of countries participating in transnational cooperation projects;
2. Number of SMEs involved in the development of transnational cooperation projects;
3. Increased awareness about and visibility of transnational tourism offers (survey of key stakeholders);
4. Increased tourism flows in the areas concerned;
5. Increased awareness about sustainable tourism.

Moreover, specific outcome indicators have to be defined for each project proposal, depending on the concrete results/outcomes foreseen.

Instructions to applicants submitting proposals only for Theme 2:

Please proceed directly to section 2.5.

2.4. THEME 3 "Enhancing tourism accessibility - improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs"

This theme is subdivided in two sub-strands: Improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs focusing on sports/outdoor activities and on improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs focusing on cultural heritage.

2.4.1. *Specific objectives*

The specific objectives of this theme for the present call are to:

➢ Foster the adaptation of tourism products and services to the needs of people with special access needs;

➢ Address some of the most critical gaps and barriers in the provision of accessible tourism services;

➢ Help mainstream accessibility in all segments of the tourism supply chain, while at the same time creating a seamless chain of accessibility in tourism;

➢ Promote equal opportunity and social inclusion of people with special access needs;

➢ Provide value-for-money and quality accessible tourism products;

➢ Improve skills and training with relation to accessibility in the tourism supply chain;

➢ Strengthen cooperation, partnerships and management skills of public and private bodies in charge of developing accessible tourism products, also in cross-border activities;

➢ Provide adequate support and guidance to SMEs;

➢ Improve the marketing and promotion of accessible tourism products;

➢ Valorise Europe's cultural and natural heritage by making it accessible to all.

2.4.2. *Themes and priorities*

To support the view that accessibility is better served when it is mainstreamed in the "standard" tourism offer, the themes selected are in line with some of those presented under Theme 2, which are also areas for which the current offer of accessible tourism services in Europe is not satisfactory (see Section 1.2). More specifically:

Proposals must target accessible **tourism products (such as itinerary/trail/tourism offer) based on either "sports and/or outdoor activities" or "cultural heritage" and are integrated into the offer of mainstream providers.** Proposals combining **both** "sports and/or outdoors" activities and "cultural heritage" together are also admitted.

DEFINITION

*For the purpose of the call, **Accessible Tourism** (also referred to as "Universal Tourism" or "Inclusive Tourism") products refer to the set of "services and facilities (such as physical*

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environment, transportation, information, communication) directed to all, and especially to people with special access needs, i.e. people with permanent or temporary disabilities, such as people on crutches, or the elderly, all people that can benefit from more accessible services (e.g. parents with young children, etc.) and people that normally accompany customers with such access needs.

2.4.2.1. Focusing on sports/outdoors activities

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this theme, by "sport activity tourism" it is meant tourism related to sport activities in a large sense, including the practice of recreational sports or of any other physical activity that is open to persons with special access needs.

As possible examples, projects could be supported - **with special focus on the aspect of tourism "accessible to all", regardless of the disability or age of potential tourists** - on transnational itineraries/trails/tourism offers in natural areas relating to the following aspects: hiking or cycle routes, adventure tourism trails, outdoor activities trails, equestrian itineraries, itineraries linked to sports events including the practice of specific sports e.g.: running, fitness, skiing, winter sports, water-based sports, itineraries linked to wellness, including spa tourism etc. *This list is not meant to be exhaustive.*

2.4.2.2. Focusing on "Cultural heritage"

The accessible tourism product focusing on cultural heritage must be conceived and structured around a common theme related to the European culture or heritage and the theme must be clearly identifiable. "Cultural heritage" is meant in the widest possible sense and refers not only to the vast historical, archaeological, natural richness of the EU Member States, but also to the activities and industries linked to such heritage, such as creative industries, crafts, gastronomy etc.

As possible examples, projects on "Cultural heritage accessible itineraries/trails/tourism" offers related to the following aspects, that could be supported, include: cultural or spiritual routes, combination of industrial heritage and living industry (visit of enterprises and their museum), products around world-known historical figures (European or having lived in Europe) or European events or European places (tourism of memory / remembrance, e.g. around World Wars, steps in the European integration, products targeting diasporas (e.g. come and visit the place of your ancestors), routes around high-end/creative products (e.g. fashion, perfumes etc.), gastronomic routes with a European narrative (e.g. where an aliment was first introduced, how it spread through Europe, synergies with commercial routes), "experience-based" tourism (e.g. when tourists live for a moment the life of the hosting community). *This list is not meant to be exhaustive.*

2.4.3. *Eligible activities for Theme 3 (both sub-strands)*

The project proposals under this strand must develop the following **"core" activities**:

1. The "product" shall be either the **extension/upgrade/improvement of existing packages/itineraries/etc., or an entirely new tourism product (package/itinerary)**. The overall purpose of the action is to trigger a tangible transformation of the tourism supply chain in the destinations concerned. Ideally, at the end of the action businesses and operators which were not accessible (or very little) before, will be integrated into commercially

exploitable tourism offers, and destinations will be able to diversify and increase their attractiveness by catering also for a new market segment;

2. The proposals shall involve **operators that already provide accessible services or those who would like to diversify their business to cater also for tourists with special access needs**. The project should aim at the development of new tourism offers focusing either on "sports/outdoor activities" or on "cultural heritage" (please refer to sections 2.3.3.1 and 2.3.3.2 above). That said, the "product" itinerary should also encompass **the entire sequence of a tourism experience (e.g. booking, information, accommodation, food & beverage, etc.)** – please refer to section 1.2, in particular, concerning the key barriers of accessible tourism provision;

3. The proposals shall aim at delivering **excellence and quality of services**, not just "any" accessible service. Therefore, emphasis on training and skills development of staff is essential, as is the integration of customer/end users' needs, their satisfaction and feedback. Safe services and equipment shall be included in the proposal;

4. The proposals shall target services and tourism products aimed at fulfilling the **functional impairments of a wide range of potential travellers**. Please refer to the definition of "Accessible Tourism" in Section 1 above.

5. The proposals shall demonstrate a clear shift from the traditional approach of "tourism services for people with disabilities" to a new vision of "inclusive/universal tourism services". More specifically, special attention will be given to the **promotion and marketing of the tourism product.** The projects shall develop a **new narrative** based on attractive, convincing messages that are universally targeted towards all tourists and are effectively and strategically disseminated as mainstream offer.

Non-eligible activities:

Development/improvement of infrastructure.

2.4.4. *General expected results (for defining outputs or deliverables) for Theme 3*

The project proposal shall target the following general expected results:

- New partnerships and better cooperation among local authorities/relevant tourism authorities, chambers of commerce, tourism operators, in particular SMEs, training providers and disability stakeholders;

- A stronger focus on accessibility in local tourism development agendas and strategies;

- The creation of a "critical mass" of accessible destinations, attractions, sites and tourism-related services, as mainstream products providing quality and value-for-money;

- Staff trained to welcome and deal with tourists with special access needs;

- Managers, entrepreneurs and public authorities sensitized to the opportunities of accessible tourism;

- Higher satisfaction levels from travellers;

- A more positive image of the destinations concerned, thus boosting the overall image of Europe as a tourism destination welcoming for all;

- Increasing flow of tourists and maintaining viable tourism flows throughout the year;

- Positive returns for businesses, especially SMEs and micro-enterprises;

- Balanced employment levels across seasons enhanced and job creation supported;

- A new narrative and a new way of communicating about disability and special needs, based on a customer-centred/customer-satisfaction approach rather than on a "charity" approach;

- Multiplier effects on synergies between tourism and sports and culture-related activities;

- Better valorisation of the European natural, cultural and industrial heritage as well as the fostering of a greater sense of European identity.

As reflected in the award criteria, EASME is looking for projects that:

1. **Develop a transnational product**. Project proposals should develop a route/itinerary/trail/tourism product that ultimately results in a **truly transnational accessible tourism experience,** which includes the physical infrastructure, the service provision, and the conceptual aspect (e.g. a clear link between places/activities/attractions) across the chosen cultural theme or sport/outdoor activity (depending on the theme selected) covering at least 2 countries as listed under the point 6.1.3 a) and b).

Promoting local offers only, without focusing on a transnational dimension of the route/itinerary/trail, tourism product, will not be deemed sufficient and fulfilling the requirements of the call.

2. **Promote innovative and competitive accessible tourism products**. The present call will provide co-financing to proposals dealing with the design, implementation, promotion and marketing of accessible tourism itineraries/trail/tourism package (or "product"), allowing tourists with special access needs to fully enjoy exciting and diverse tourism experiences, which represent **the right value-for-money** and put them on an **equal basis with all other tourists**.

2.4.5. *General indicators for the call for THEME 3*

Applicants must ensure that the project outcomes and impacts are presented against **all** the following indicators:

1. Number of SMEs involved in the development of projects;

2. Increased awareness about accessible tourism offers (survey of key stakeholders and communication media and tools);

3. Increase in the number of nights spent by tourists with special access needs;

4. Increase in the number of tourism operators and providers who decided to adapt their business in order to cater to the needs of tourists with special access needs;

5. Number of countries participating.

Moreover, specific outcome indicators have to be defined for each project proposal, depending on the concrete results/outcomes foreseen.

Instructions to applicants submitting proposals only for Theme 3:

Please proceed to the next section (section 2.5).

2.5. General principles for all project proposals under all three THEMES

2.5.1. *Guiding Principles for the preparation of the proposals*

- **Be clear.** In order to ensure good structuring and clarity of the project, applicants are requested to divide the actions into work packages, having clear objectives, a clear description of the work, deliverables, milestones, and expected results measured by performance indicators. To do so, partners must fill in the template "Description of Work", provided together with the call.

- **Be coherent.** The proposal should clearly elaborate – among others - on the following aspects:

  a) Shortcomings and specific needs to be addressed;

  b) Identification of the target group and its justification/rationale;

  c) Logic link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results;

  d) Complementarity of the project with other actions being taken (if any) by the applicants.

- **Be supported by a short but robust action plan.** The proposal should briefly elaborate – among others - on the following aspects:

  a) Status quo (SWOT or similar) analysis of the current situation;

  b) Identification of needs the project wants to address;

  c) Analysis of alternative solutions to address the identified needs and their cost-effectiveness;

  d) Description of and reasons for the chosen solution as proposed in the project proposal;

  e) Estimation of costs and revenues and financial effectiveness, for the chosen solution in the medium term and a business plan after the EU co-financing period;

  f) The extent to which the outputs are likely to lead to clear and tangible results;

  g) Estimated impact of the proposed actions on target groups and on the local economies of targeted areas (indicators, data sources, tools and methodologies to measure short and medium-long term benefits/impact of proposed actions);

  h) Any evidence of transformative or spill-over effects, including the extent to which additional value is or could be created by its adoption more widely across Europe.

- **Be technically and financially sustainable**. The project proposal should identify the management structure and explain how this will enable the project to meet its goals. It should also identify the staff to be involved and the distribution of tasks between partners and staff members.

The project should aim at the creation of a medium-to-long-term communication/promotion and market uptake strategy. Therefore, the project proposal shall clearly refer to how the action will be further developed after the end of the project period, both technically and financially.

The proposals should aim at the creation of successful tourism products and services, which have excellent marketing potential, are attractive and interesting for travellers and operators, and can continue after the end of the project period.

- **Generate real measurable results and long-term effects**. The expected results of the project should be clearly outlined (both short–term and medium-long-terms results) and they should be quantifiable and measurable. The proposal should indicate how the results can be measured (i.e. which indicators and sources can be used to measure the results, also after the end of the project).

   The work packages should also contain a final evaluation of results clearly demonstrating whether and how the relevant results (as well as other results specific to the proposal) have been achieved.

As reflected in the award criteria for all three themes, impact at regional, national and/or European level will be facilitated, if:

   a) the project proposal is accompanied by **one or more letters of support** to the project idea and to the activities proposed, **delivered by <u>a public national/or regional governmental authority of the eligible country,</u>** <u>namely a Ministry at national level or a Ministry at regional level</u> in charge of tourism and/or regional development, or of any other area which is in relation to the object of the proposal. Such letter of support will be an advantage, an added value for the proposal, testifying that the project has the support of public authorities;

   b) the partner's consortium covers more than the minimum number of eligible countries (see Section 6.2).

2.5.2.   *Reporting obligations*

- 1 progress technical report, in the month following the mid-term of the project (art. 14.1 of the Grant Agreement);

- 1 final technical report (including all deliverables) and 1 final financial report including a consolidated statement and a breakdown between each beneficiary (art. 15.4 of the Grant Agreement);

Reports must be submitted by the coordinator in English.

2.5.3.   *Kick-off meeting*

The applicant must foresee, in the budget proposal of the project, the participation of maximum two representatives of the project's consortium (including at least one representative of the coordinator organisation) at the kick-off meeting in Brussels, organised by EASME, at the beginning of the implementation period.

3. TIMETABLE

	Stages	Dates
a)	Publication of the call	(30/04/2015)
b)	Deadline for submitting applications	(30/06/2015) 17:00h Brussels time
c)	Evaluation period	(July-October/2015)*
d)	Information to applicants	(November/2015)*
e)	Signature of grant agreements	(February 2016)*
f)	Starting date of the action	(February - March 2016)*

* indicative

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND FUNDING OF PROJECTS

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at:

- EUR 1 700 000 for THEME 1 "Increasing tourism flows in low/medium seasons -for seniors and youth target groups", divided as follows:
  - EUR 1 000 000 earmarked for the co-financing of projects targeting seniors;
  - EUR 700 000 earmarked for the co-financing of projects submitted targeting youths;

- EUR 1 700 000 for THEME 2 "Diversifying the EU tourism offer and products – Promoting transnational thematic tourism products"; and

- EUR 900 000 for THEME 3 "Enhancing tourism accessibility - improving facilities and services for tourists with special access needs".

The maximum grant per project will be EUR 250 000 for THEME 1 and THEME 2 and EUR 125 000 for THEME 3.

EASME expects to fund approximately 8 project proposals for each THEME.

The grant is limited to a maximum reimbursement rate of 75% of **eligible costs.**

EASME reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be complied with:

- Applications must be submitted no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;

- Applications must be submitted as explained in section 14;

- Applications must be drafted in one of the EU official languages

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to the rejection of the application from the onset and without any evaluation process.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium composed of legal entities fulfilling the below requirements.

6.1. **Eligible applicants**

1. Applicants and all consortium members must be legal entities. In the event of private bodies, they must be properly constituted and registered under national law.

2. Applicants and all consortium members must correspond to the definition of the following target organisations active in the field of tourism or any other field that is strictly related to the objectives of the proposal.

Any public authority or private stakeholder active in the following fields: tourism, regional development or any other field that is strictly related to the object of the proposal. For example:

- Public governmental authorities and their networks or associations at European, international, national, regional and local level or organisations acting on behalf of a public governmental authority;

- Training or educational institutions including universities, research centres;

- Chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of handicrafts or similar bodies and their umbrella Associations;

- Destination management organisations and their networks/associations;

- Travel Agents and Tour Operators and their umbrella associations;

- Not-for profit/Non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, foundations, think-tanks, umbrella associations, networks or federations of public or private bodies, whose core activity falls under the following fields: tourism, regional development or any other field that is strictly related to the object of the proposal (e.g. disability organisations and charities, senior or youth organisations, sports or culture related organisations);

- International, European and national organisations/associations active in the field of tourism and related fields;

- Federations and associations operating in partnership across the borders of a number of countries with a proven cross-border outreach;

- Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) acting in the tourism sector;

- National, regional, local tourism organisations, public and private agencies related to tourism promotion, etc.

Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2.

For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

3. Only applications from legal entities **established in the following countries** are eligible:

   a) EU Member States;

   b) countries participating in the COSME programme pursuant to Article 6 of the COSME Regulation[37].

   Entities established in a third country, not specified in point a) or b) above, may participate in the action. However, the entities shall not be entitled to receive Union financial contributions. Moreover, these entities will not be taken into consideration at eligibility stage, when determining the minimum requirements relating to the size and nature of each consortium.

6.2.   **Eligible consortia**

1. Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of partner organisations. One of the partner organisations must act as the consortium coordinator. Several partner organisations, submitting a joint project proposal should choose within their midst a lead organisation, referred to as the coordinator.

   Applicants may be partner organisations in more than one project proposal per theme, but may act as project coordinator in only one submitted proposal per theme. Should a partner organisation act as project coordinator in more than one proposal per theme, all proposals within the same theme submitted by the same coordinator will be excluded[38].

   In this respect, an explicit declaration will have to be submitted by the coordinator accordingly and included in the proposal.

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[37] The following groups of countries are eligible for participation in COSME:
   a. European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement, and other European countries when agreements and procedures so allow;
   b. acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions, or similar arrangements;
   c. countries falling within the scope of the European neighbourhood policies, when agreements and procedures so allow and in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in the Union's programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements, Protocols to Association Agreements and Association Council Decisions.
   The updated list of eligible third countries is available on the following webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/index_en.htm
[38] Consortium coordinators are requested to take appropriate measures to ensure that their organisation does not act as coordinator in other proposals of the same theme under this call.

2. The consortium must gather a **minimum of five partner organisations –** different legal entities - covering at least:

    - **four countries** - as listed under section 6.1.3 points a) and b) – when applying for either THEME 1 or THEME 2;

    OR

    - **two countries** - as listed under section 6.1.3 points a) and b) - when applying for THEME 3.

3. The consortium must gather at least:

    a) two SMEs[39] – Small and Medium-sized enterprises - **acting in the tourism sector.**

    For the purpose of the present call, SMEs being partners in the consortium have to be active in one of the following fields:

    - tourist accommodation;

    - catering;

    - travel agencies and tour operators;

    - attractions;

    - leisure (recreational, cultural and sporting activities);

    - tourism related transport;

    - other tourism related fields if their relevance for the project proposal is duly justified by the applicant.

    Within the context of Section 6.1 – Point 2, SMEs active in other areas (e.g. in the fields of media, ICT development and others) can only be involved in the project as subcontractors (see point 11.1.e), or as partner organisations if they fulfill the requirements mentioned above.

    b) one national or regional or local public governmental authority

    For the purpose of this call, public governmental authorities at national, regional and local level are only the ones listed here after: ministries, regions, provinces, counties, voivodeships, oblasts, cantons, districts, departments, prefectures, municipalities, city councils and communes.

    A body/organisation acting on behalf (or with delegated powers) of a national, regional or local public governmental authority will not be sufficient to fulfil this criterion[40].

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[39] SME is defined as a company engaged in economic activities and having less than 250 employees, with a turnover of less than EUR 50 million or a balance sheet total of less than EUR 43 million (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm).

A network or association of regional or local public governmental authorities will be accepted under this category of partners under the conditions that 1) it is legally and formally established as a network or association[41] and 2) at least one member of the association/network is a regional or local public governmental authority (as mentioned above).

c) one association, federation or organisation:

- active[42] in fields of "youth" or "seniors" (only FOR THEME 1)
- active[43] in fields of "sports" and/or "wellness" or "natural or cultural" or "industrial heritage" (only FOR THEME 2)
- active[44] in field of "accessible tourism" or representing people with special needs (only FOR THEME 3)

ATTENTION:

The applicants must demonstrate that they fully respect the requirements set in the call. Please provide any supporting document that you consider useful as proof of the fulfilment of the above-mentioned compulsory requirements. Moreover, clearly indicate in the submitted proposal, the name of the applicants fulfilling them, in order to allow the evaluation committee to accomplish its assessment.

6.3. **Eligible proposals**

A proposal can only be submitted under one of the three Themes.

Moreover, as regards Theme 1, the proposal must clearly indicate which target group it is addressing since it is not possible to target both seniors and youths together.

Proposals must also comply with:

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[40] Any other "public body" which is not explicitly listed under point b), will not be accepted under this category (e.g indicative list of bodies which will not be accepted under this category of partner: university, state companies, tourism administrations and tourism organisations, research centre, development agencies, chambers of commerce, etc.)

[41] In this sense, informal aggregations or legal entities having among its members or being funded/established by governmental authorities will not be considered as complying with this requirement. For example, Regional or National Development Agencies, National or Regional Parks or Protected Areas, when not established formally as associations or networks of governmental authorities, do not satisfy this requirement.

[42] An entity is considered as active in the field of youths or seniors when the statute or any other official mission statement of the entity refers to it.

[43] An entity is considered as active in the fields of sport, wellness, natural, cultural or industrial heritage when the statute or any other official mission statement of the entity refers to it.

[44] An entity is considered as active in the field of accessible tourism or representing people with special needs when the statute or any other official mission statement of the entity refers to it.

- The maximum requested grants and the maximum co-financing rates set in section 4 of this call

Proposals' duration must be between:

- 12 months and 18 months for THEME 1 and THEME 2

- 12 months and 24 months for THEME 3

Applications for projects scheduled to run for a shorter or longer period than that specified in this call for proposals will not be accepted.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. <u>Exclusion from participation:</u>

Applicants and each consortium partner will be excluded from participating in the call for proposals procedure if they are in any of the following situations:

(a) they are bankrupt or being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;

(b) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment of a competent authority of a Member State which has the force of res judicata;

(c) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the contracting authority can justify including by decisions of the EIB and international organisations;

(d) they are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or with those of the country of the Responsible Authorising Officer (RAO) or those of the country where the grant agreement is to be performed;

(e) they or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity, where such an illegal activity is detrimental to the Union's financial interests;

(f) they are currently subject to an administrative penalty referred to in Article 109(1) of the Financial Regulation[45].

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[45] Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 (Official Journal of the European Union L 298 of 26.10.2012).

7.2.   Exclusion from award:

Applicants and each consortium partner will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

(a)   are subject to a conflict of interest;

(b)   are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the information required by EASME as a condition of participation in the grant award procedure or fail to supply this information;

(c)   find themselves in one of the situations of exclusion, referred to in section 7.1.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

Administrative and financial penalties may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, who are guilty of misrepresentation.

7.3.   Supporting documents

Applicants and each consortium partner must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 106(1) and 107 to 109 of the Financial Regulation[46], filling in the relevant form. Such declaration will however only be requested for the proposals that are recommended for funding, thus, not at the submission stage.

8.   SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1.   Financial capacity

Applicants and each consortium partner must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the period during which the action is being carried out or the year for which the grant is awarded and to participate in its funding. The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents:

a) Low value grants (≤ EUR 60 000):

    - a declaration on their honour.

b) Grants ≥ EUR 60 000:

    - a declaration on their honour and,

    EITHER

    ➤ the profit and loss account, the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts were closed;

    ➤ for newly created entities, the business plan might replace the above documents.

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[46] Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 (Official Journal of the European Union L 298 of 26.10.2012)

OR

> ➢ the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.

The above-listed documents will have to be provided at later stage, via an online tool and only upon request of EASME.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the RAO considers that financial capacity is not satisfactory, he may:

> ➢ request further information;

> ➢ propose a grant agreement without pre-financing;

> ➢ propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing paid in instalments;

> ➢ propose a grant agreement with a pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.4 below);

> ➢ where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries;

> ➢ reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants and each consortium partner must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action.

In this respect, applicants have to submit the following supporting documents:

> ➢ curriculum vitae (CV), preferably in European CV format http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu) or description of the profile of the main persons (at least of the core team) primarily responsible for managing and implementing the different activities of the action;

> ➢ a list of previous projects and activities performed during the last three years and connected to the policy field of the present call or to the actions to be carried out;

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Proposals under each topic will be processed and evaluated separately. Eligible applications will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

AWARD CRITERIA FOR THEME 1

Criteria	Points
1. RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIONS IN VIEW OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL	*30*
How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published call for proposals?	
Are the project concept and the activities proposed in line with the expected results?	
How strategically chosen are the project partners? (relevance of the partners to the project, degree of involvement of the partners) *Are the partners and the management set-up able to guarantee successful continuation of the project in the future?* *Have letters of support been obtained from a National or Regional Ministry in charge of tourism and/or regional development, or any other area which is in relation to the object of the proposal?*	
Has the project proposal a real transnational dimension? Does the proposed transnational mobility model/scheme correspond to the requirements of the call, and do the proposed activities demonstrate a European added value? *Are more than four countries involved?*	
Is there any complementarity between the proposed project and other actions being taken at European level?	
How well does the project fit with the expectations/needs of the identified target group?	
Is the proposed "pilot test" of the designed concept relevant to the objectives of the call? Does it offer sufficient elements (considering the evaluation methodology proposed) to reach significant outcomes? Does the pilot test cover more than two countries?	
2. QUALITY OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS	*30*
How clear and coherent is the overall project design (including preparedness for the evaluation and presentation of the proposal)?	
How appropriate and practical are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)? *Is there a logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results? Is this link well described and justified?*	

Are the proposed methodology and organisation (including the timetable and monitoring) effective?	
Are the actions proposed sound and sustainable? *Are the actions proposed of innovative nature and attractive? Do they facilitate the growth of quality and value-for-money tourism services?*	
3. IMPACT ON TARGET AUDIENCE	*30*
To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups and on the enhancement of tourism in Europe during low and medium seasons?	
Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators? To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact on tourism development and on the economy in Europe in general (e.g. increasing tourists' flows, development of tourism SMEs)?	
To what extent does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for evaluating the project outcomes?	
To what extent does the proposal contain specific elements for a follow-up with regard to the further development of the transnational mobility model/scheme?	
Does the dissemination of the expected results seem plausible? How effective, attractive and convincing are the promotional and communication activities? Does the proposal contain a sound communication strategy?	
Are the expected multiplying effects sound? To what extent does the proposal include elements of transferability (including lessons learnt and good practices) at EU level?	
4. BUDGET AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS	*10*
To what extent is the budget clear and detailed, as well as effective, to implement the action? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is reasonable in relation to the expected results?	
Do the probable results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant? Does the budget seem justified when compared to the expected impacts? To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?	
Maximum total score:	*100*

AWARD CRITERIA FOR THEME 2

Criteria	*Points*
1. RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIONS IN VIEW OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL	*30*
How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published call for proposals?	
Are the project concept and the activities proposed in line with the expected results?	
How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the project partners? (relevance of the partners to the project, degree of involvement of the partners) *Are the partners and the management set-up able to guarantee successful continuation of the project in the future?* *Have letters of support been obtained from a National or Regional Ministry in charge of tourism and/or regional development, or any other area which is in relation to the object of the proposal?*	
Has the project proposal a real transnational dimension? Does the proposed transnational tourism product correspond to the requirements of the call, and do the proposed activities demonstrate a European added value? *Are there more than four countries involved?*	
Is there any complementarity between the proposed project and other actions being taken at European level?	
How well does the project fit with the expectations/needs of the identified target group?	
To what extent do the expected results of the project contribute to the diversification of the European tourist services / products and to the better valorisation of Europe's common heritage?	
2. QUALITY OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS	*30*
How clear and coherent is the overall project design (including preparedness for the evaluation and presentation of the proposal)?	
How appropriate and practical are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)? *Is there a logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results? Is this link well described and justified?*	

Are the proposed methodology and organisation (including the timetable and monitoring) effective?	
Are the actions proposed sound and sustainable? *Is the transnational tourism product and the actions proposed of innovative nature and attractive, contributing to diversifying the EU tourism offer? Do they facilitate the growth of quality and value-for-money tourism services?*	
3. IMPACT ON TARGET AUDIENCE	*30*
To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups and on the sustainable development of tourism in Europe?	
Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators? To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact on tourism development and on the economy in Europe in general (e.g. increasing tourists' flows, development of tourism SMEs)?	
To what extent does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for evaluating the project outcomes?	
To what extent does the proposal contain specific elements for a follow-up with regard to the further development of the transnational tourism product?	
Does the dissemination of the expected results seem plausible? How effective, attractive and convincing are the promotional and communication activities?	
Are the expected multiplying effects sound? To what extend does the proposal include elements of transferability at EU level?	
Does the project show synergies with local environments, the local economy, local communities, etc?	
4. BUDGET AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS	*10*
To what extent is the budget clear and detailed, as well as effective, to implement the action? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is reasonable in relation to the expected results?	
Do the probable results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant? Does the budget seem justified when compared to the expected impacts? To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?	
Maximum total score:	*100*

AWARD CRITERIA FOR THEME 3

Criteria	*Points*
1. RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIONS IN VIEW OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL	*30*
How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the published call for proposals?	
Are the project concept and the activities proposed in line with the expected results?	
How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the project partners? (relevance of the partners to the project, degree of involvement of the partners) *Are the partners and the management set-up able to guarantee successful continuation of the project in the future?* *Have letters of support been obtained from a National or Regional Ministry in charge of tourism and/or regional development, or any other area which is in relation to the object of the proposal?*	
Has the project proposal a real transnational dimension? Does the proposed transnational tourism product correspond to the requirements of the call, and do the proposed activities demonstrate a European added value? *Are there more than two countries involved?*	
Is there any complementarity between the proposed project and other actions being taken at European level?	
How well does the project fit with the expectations/needs of the identified target group?	
To what extent do the expected results of the project contribute to the diversification of the European tourist services by making EU tourism services more accessible to all?	
2. QUALITY OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS	*30*
How clear and coherent is the overall project design (including preparedness for the evaluation and presentation of the proposal)?	
How appropriate and practical are the activities proposed (including the internal plan of action/work packages)? *Is there a logical link between identified needs, specific objectives, proposed actions and expected results? Is this link well described and justified?*	
Are the proposed methodology and organisation (including the timetable	

and monitoring) effective?	
Are the actions proposed sound and sustainable? *Are the actions proposed of innovative nature and attractive? Do they facilitate the growth of accessible and value-for-money tourism services?*	
Is the strategy for the training and skills enhancement sound? *Is the package/product/itinerary able to ensure a truly accessible, holistic tourism experience?* *Does the proposal ensure a cross-impairment/multiple needs and inclusive approach?*	
3. IMPACT ON TARGET AUDIENCE	*30*
To what extent is the project likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups and on the sustainable development of tourism in Europe?	
Is the proposal suggesting clear, realistic and practical impact indicators? To what extent does the project contribute to creating a real, measurable impact on tourism development and on the economy in Europe in general (e.g. increasing tourists' flows, development of tourism SMEs)?	
To what extent does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for evaluating the project outcomes?	
To what extent does the proposal contain specific elements for a follow-up with regard to the further development of the transnational accessible tourism product?	
Does the dissemination of the expected results seem plausible? How effective, attractive and convincing are the promotional and communication activities?	
Are the expected multiplying effects sound? To what extend does the proposal include elements of transferability at EU level?	
4. BUDGET AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS	*10*
To what extent is the budget clear and detailed, as well as effective, to implement the action? Does the breakdown of the budget, category by category, offer a way of ensuring that the amount of the grant awarded is reasonable in relation to the expected results?	
Do the probable results stand in a reasonable relationship to the amount of the grant? Does the budget seem justified when compared to the expected impacts? To what extent is the proposed expenditure necessary for the implementation of the project?	
Maximum total score:	*100*

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will need to have passed an overall threshold of 70% in terms of total score. In addition, thresholds of 50% will be applied to each individual award criterion described above in order to ensure a consistent minimum quality for all award criteria. Proposals will be ranked according to their total score.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by EASME, a grant agreement drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the beneficiaries, as well as the procedures in view to formalise the obligations of the parties.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1 General Principles

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.[47]

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) Co-financing

Co-financing means that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action may not be entirely provided by the EU grant. It may take the form of:

- − the beneficiary's own resources;

- − income generated by the action;

- − financial contributions from third parties.

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[47] Directive 2004/18/EC of 31 March 2004 on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts (Official Journal of the European Union L 134/114 of 30.04.2004).

d) Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action is to be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants which foresee that costs will not be incurred in euros, are invited to use the exchange rate published on the Info-euro website available at: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm.

e) Implementation contracts/subcontracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary must award the contract to the bid offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interests and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Entities acting in their capacity of contracting authorities in the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC[48] or contracting entities in the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC[49] shall abide by the applicable national public procurement rules. The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation for the event of an audit.

Sub-contracting, i.e. the externalisation of specific tasks or activities which form part of the action as described in the proposal must satisfy the conditions applicable to any implementation contract (as specified above) and in addition to them the following conditions:

- it may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action;

- it must be justified having regard to the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;

- it must be clearly stated in the proposal.

f) Financial support to third parties.

Applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

11.2   Funding forms

Grants are calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget indicating clearly the costs that are eligible for EU funding. The grant amount may neither exceed the eligible costs nor the amount requested. Amounts are indicated in euros.

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[48] Directive 2004/18/EC of 31 March 2004 on the coordination of procedures for the award of public work contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts (Official Journal of the European Union L 134/114 of 30.04.2004).

[49] Directive 2004/17/EC of 31 March 2004 coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors (Official Journal of the European Union L 134/114 of 30.04.2004).

> **Maximum amount requested**

The EU grant is limited to a maximum reimbursement rate of eligible costs indicated in section 4. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimative budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see section 11.1c).

> **Eligible costs**

Eligible costs are costs actually incurred by the beneficiary of a grant which meet all the following criteria:

✓ they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;

  The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement. If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, expenditure may be authorised before the grant is awarded. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application (see section 11.1b);

✓ they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;

✓ they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;

✓ they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;

✓ they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;

✓ they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The same criteria apply to the affiliated entities.

Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are those costs which, **with due regard for the conditions of eligibility set out above**, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as:

- the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the applicant or equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, comprising actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that these costs are in line with the applicant's usual policy on remuneration. Those costs may include additional remuneration, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of their nature, provided that it is paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required and independently from the source of funding used;

- costs of the personnel of national administrations to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;

- subsistence allowances (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.) provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices;

- costs of travel (for meetings, including kick-off meetings where applicable, conferences etc.), provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;

- depreciation cost of equipment (new or second-hand): only the portion of the equipment's depreciation corresponding to the duration of the action/project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account by EASME;

- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the action/project;

- costs entailed by implementation contracts awarded by the beneficiaries for the purposes of carrying out the action/project, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met;

- costs arising directly from requirements linked to the implementation of the action/project (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, translations, reproduction);

- costs relating to a pre-financing guarantee lodged by the beneficiary of the grant, where required;

- costs relating to external audits where required in support of the requests for payments;

- non-deductible value added tax ("VAT").

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

A flat-rate amount of 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible under indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicants's attention is drawn to the fact that in the case of organisations receiving an operating grant, indirect costs are not eligible under specific actions.

> **Ineligible costs**

(a) costs related to return on capital;

(b) debt and debt service charges;

(c) provisions for future losses or debts;

(d) interest owed;

(e) doubtful debts;

(f) currency exchange losses;

(g) bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from EASME;

(h) excessive or reckless expenditure;

(i) deductible VAT;

(j) costs incurred during suspension of the implementation of the action;

(k) in-kind contributions provided by third parties;

(l) costs declared under another EU or Euratom grant (including grants awarded by a Member State and financed by the EU or Euratom budget and grants awarded by bodies other than EASME for the purpose of implementing the EU or Euratom budget); in particular, indirect costs if the beneficiary is already receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget in the same period.

> ➢ **Calculation of the final grant amount**

The final amount of the grant to be awarded to the beneficiary is established after completion of the action, upon approval of the request for payment containing the following documents:

- a final report providing details of the implementation and results of the action;

- the final financial statement of costs actually incurred.

EU grants may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the action. **Profit shall be defined as a surplus of the receipts over the eligible costs incurred by the beneficiary**, when the request is made for payment of the balance. In this respect, where a profit is made, EASME shall be entitled to recover the percentage of the profit corresponding to the Union contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred by the beneficiary to carry out the action.

11.3 Payment arrangements

Pre-financing payment

A pre-financing payment corresponding to 70% of the grant amount will be transferred to the beneficiary within 30 days of the date when the last of the two parties signs the agreement, provided all requested guarantees have been received.

Final payment

EASME will establish the amount of the final payment to be made to the beneficiary on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.2 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by EASME through a recovery order.

11.4 Pre-financing guarantee

In the event that the applicant's financial capacity is not satisfactory, a pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the Member State of the European Union. When the beneficiary is established

in a third country, the RAO may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if he considers that the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party or by a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or payments of balances to the beneficiary, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

12. PUBLICITY

12.1   By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Union on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer in accordance with the details provided in the grant agreement.

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

12.2   By EASME

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

EASME will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;

- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level[50] if he/she is domiciled within EU or equivalent if domiciled outside EU;

- subject of the grant;

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[50] Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (Official Journal of the European Union L 39 of 10.02.2007).

- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13.   DATA PROTECTION

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001[51] on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit A.1 of EASME. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/legal_notice/h2020-ssps-grants_en.pdf

Personal data may be registered in the Early Warning System (EWS) only or both in the EWS and Central Exclusion Database (CED) by the Accounting Officer of EASME, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 13 November 2014 on the Early Warning System[52] (for more information see the Privacy Statement on: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm),

or

- the Commission Regulation 2008/1302 of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (for more information see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm).

14.   PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under section 3.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or for the correction of clerical mistakes, EASME may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

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[51] Official Journal of the European Union L 8/1 of 12.01.2001.

[52] Commission Decision 2014/792/EU of 13 November 2014 on the Early Warning System to be used by the authorising officers of the Commission and by the executive agencies (Official Journal of the European Union, L 329 of 14.11.2014, p.68).

➢ **Electronic submission**

Applicants are requested to log in at https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cos-tour-2015-3-04-supporting-competitive-and-sustainable-growth-tourism-sector and follow the procedure for submitting an application.

➢ **Contacts**

EASME is available to answer questions relating to the content of the present call for proposals. All questions must be sent by e-mail to EASME-COSME-TOURISM-CALL@ec.europa.eu;

Answers will be published at https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cos-tour-2015-3-04-supporting-competitive-and-sustainable-growth-tourism-sector.

Annexes:

- Guide for applicants
- Description of the action templates
- Budget template
- Model Grant agreement
- Organisations' most recent activity report
- List of previous projects