



Business Cooperation in the European Union



Business Support on Your Doorstep

Enterprise Europe Network London

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Introduction

The aim of this factsheet is to provide a short and focused overview of the possibilities for cross-border business cooperation between small firms that the European Union's Single Market brings about, and that the Enterprise Europe Network aims to support through its services. We aim to give a clear and accessible guide to making the best possible use of the Enterprise Europe Network services that facilitate business cooperation within Europe. Finally, we will seek to explain more broadly the EU's other major cooperation initiatives in promoting a favourable business environment for small and medium sized enterprises as well as for entrepreneurship.

What is business cooperation?

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry defines business cooperation as follows:

'Any contract or agreement between partners, based on a common activity and mutual interest to be developed aiming to achieve well-established objectives and mutual advantages to make business. It might embrace an international dimension when partners from different countries are involved'

More concretely, typical business activities enabling cooperation include international trade fairs, matchmaking and networking events. As a truly Europe-wide network of some 4,000 business and information specialists, the Enterprise Europe Network would like to play a key role in facilitating these events and so, by extension, continued business cooperation between small and medium-sized firms across Europe.

Both globalisation and EU enlargement have affected the business environment in which SMEs operate, and they have created specific new conditions for business and industry. In this way, economic and industrial cooperation is an integrating factor and one of the most effective ways of boosting the competitiveness of small firms. It can also enable valuable transfer of technology, increased innovation and a wider range of products for small firms.

What are the benefits of business cooperation in the EU?

Expanding business activities beyond your own country's borders can be a daunting step. It is also a move which could create major growth in a business, not to mention new clients, an increased range of products and/or services and a wider company profile. One of the EU's most concrete economic achievements is the creation of the European Single Market – a market with around 500 million consumers – and SMEs can benefit greatly from this.

The Single Market is underpinned by the principle of the free movement of capital, goods, people and services. This has removed many of the barriers which, due to costs and red tape, would have previously made it difficult for small businesses to sell their products and services in another EU Member State. As a result, manufacturers and service providers have to keep prices down because they are selling into a more competitive market of 500 million people. The mutual recognition principle means that, in most cases, companies can do business across the EU simply by complying with the rules in their home Member State.

Finally, in many cases, rather than adding to red tape, Single Market rules often replace a large number of complex and different national laws with a single framework, reducing compliance costs for businesses. These savings are then passed on to consumers. The principle of mutual recognition also means that, in most cases, companies can do business across the EU simply by complying with the rules in their home Member State. This has made it much easier for small firms to break into markets outside their home country.

More information on the Single Market in the EU can be seen at:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/index_en.htm

What is the Enterprise Europe Network?

Launched in 2008, the Enterprise Europe Network merges and builds on the European Commission's two previous business support networks, namely the Euro Info Centre (EIC) and Innovation Relay Centre (IRC) networks. It unites over 500 organisations and 4,000 professionals across the EU and in certain neighbouring countries, by providing high-quality integrated business support services to SMEs.

The wide range of services provided by the network include: supplying information on EU policies, programmes and legislation; business partner searches and cooperation databases; networking and brokerage events for technology and knowledge transfer and promotion and information material. Individual on-site visits to companies to assess their needs are also provided, as well as tools engaging SMEs in European policy making. These services are made available by applying the 'no-wrong-door' principle, meaning that SMEs seeking advice anywhere in Europe will receive tailored assistance by any network partner, or will be personally directed to the most appropriate provider.

So the network is uniquely well-placed to offer and operate successful business cooperation schemes across the EU and beyond. More information about the network can be seen here:
www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

How is the network represented in London?

The **Enterprise Europe Network London** (EEN London) delivers the Enterprise Europe Network services in the Greater London area. EEN London brings together the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the London Technology Network. All the information on the services provided by EEN London can be seen at: www.een-london.co.uk

The Business Cooperation Database – how the Network can help

Within the Enterprise Europe Network, business co-operation between small firms across the EU is managed via a comprehensive service called the 'Business Cooperation Database'. This consists of a Europe-wide database of company profiles, all of whom are seeking cooperation or collaboration with foreign partners in their specific sectors. Typical cooperation offers include joint-ventures, acting as a subcontractor or for distributors. Common requests can include finding an agent or representative in a specific business sector, or finding manufacturers in another EU country.

The database is specifically designed to more effectively assist small firms in finding a partner elsewhere in Europe. To do this, the local Enterprise Europe Network centre encodes a company profile in the database, specifying the exact nature of the client company's co-operation request. The profile is then made available to the 500 network centres across Europe. The database itself is only available internally to network partners, and so local centres will act as the intermediary between companies. It is their responsibility to maintain the client company's profile, and to follow up expressions of interest received in the profile from network partners. Once encoded, company profiles can remain active on the database for up to one year.

Along with this service, the network also offers the opportunity to undertake a partner search on the database, as well as a free subscription to a 'Business Opportunities in Europe' bulletin, in which profiles of foreign companies seeking UK partners are displayed every two months. In addition, being a truly Europe-wide network, the Enterprise Europe Network can call on an extensive array of network

colleagues in different European countries for enquirers needing specific and detailed information on a certain country.

For further information about the Business Cooperation Database, please contact us by email at: europa@londonchamber.co.uk, or via our website at: www.londonchamber.co.uk/europe

What else is offered by the network at the London Chamber of Commerce?

The London-based Enterprise Europe Network offers a wide range of other services designed to support firms wishing to do business in Europe. A summary of these services is as follows:

Research and Enquiry Service

A comprehensive EU research and enquiry service is offered to SMEs, providing detailed advice, information and assistance on all EU-related issues. Direct access to the European Commission and to network colleagues across Europe helps us to provide up-to-date and country-specific information within two days of receiving the enquiry. The service is completely free of charge.

Tender Monitoring Service

All Europe-wide public sector contracts over £100,000 are published in the EU's Official Journal (OJEU) each day, and searching through the hundreds of daily offers is a highly time-consuming process. We therefore offer a dedicated tender monitoring service, whereby contract notices that match a unique profile of your company are emailed to you the day they are published in the OJEU. This ensures the maximum time to prepare your bid.

Accessing European and UK Funding

The EU provides a wide range of financial assistance programmes that are designed to further its major policy objectives, for example regional development, environmental protection and scientific research and development. In order to help navigate the complex range of EU funding programmes, as well as to identify a potential UK funding programme, we offer a 'Grantfinder' service.

We use an online database to locate UK and EU grants and loans that may be suitable for your project. More than 5,000 grants are available on this database which is updated each month. All you have to do is to complete an application with a few details of your company and we will filter those grants according to your profile.

Events

The London Chamber of Commerce's series of international seminars is designed to help businesses to fully benefit from international trade. A regular programme of specialist seminars, focusing in depth on specific overseas market for UK exporters, on commercial agreements and on doing business in a variety of countries, is operated. Courses on the mechanics of international trade, for example on finding distributors in a foreign country and documentary letters of credit, are also organised. For more detailed information on these events, please access the following webpage:

www.londonchamber.co.uk/lcc_public/article.asp?aid=4067

In addition, Enterprise Europe Network London offers other specialised services for companies looking to expand into Europe. These include:

Funding for Research and Development

The Seventh Framework Programme (known as 'FP7') provides funding for research and development projects. The broad objectives of FP7 have been grouped into three categories relevant to SMEs: Cooperation, People and Capacities. In addition, there is a programme called 'Eurostars' which is particularly targeted at smaller SMEs. We can help you find the most appropriate funding for your research project, and our experts can provide the following services:

- Tailored advice to identify the appropriate funding category
- Explanation of the funding requirements (e.g. partners, timescales, budgets)
- Support with finding partners within the UK and across Europe
- One-to-one support to help you through the application process;
- Advising on your application drafts to ensure they fully meet the evaluation criteria

Developing New Technology

The Enterprise Europe Network operates a technology co-operation database, known as the Bulletin Board Service (BBS). The BBS contains approximately 4000 technology profiles from companies, universities and research institutions from 40 European countries. The database is updated with new profiles on a weekly basis. A free email alerts service of new technology offers, as and when they are entered onto the Enterprise Europe Network database, is also available.

An emphasis on promoting innovation in business is also provided by technology audits, innovation management courses and intensive contact with Special Interest Groups. For more information on these services, please consult the Enterprise Europe Network London website at:

www.een-london.co.uk/developing-technology.php

Are there other online resources supporting business cooperation at the European level?

A number of other online resources designed to facilitate doing business in the Single Market also exist. A selection of these programmes and initiatives can be seen below:

Free movement of goods

This is a useful overview of the principle of the free movement of goods, which is a key principle of the internal market. In particular, it includes information on the relevant articles in the EC Treaty and on the principle of 'mutual recognition'. This means that a product legally marketed in one Member State should be allowed to be marketed in any other. It also contains information on important European legislation that is related to the free movement of goods.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/goods/index_en.htm

Living and working in the Single Market

This provides details of the rights that EU citizens - including entrepreneurs and the self-employed have to move to and work in another Member State under the Single Market. The site provides information on mutual recognition of 'professional qualifications', as well as the 'freedom of establishment', and what this means in practice when setting up in a new country:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/index_15_en.htm

Your Europe - Business

This website contains practical information and advice on doing business in another country within the European Union. It includes information on registration, public procurement, taxes, business directories, funding and employment law in the different Member States. Useful links and addresses by country and language, including information specifically for SMEs

<http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/nav/en/business/index.html>

SOLVIT

A free online network where EU Member States work together to solve, without legal proceedings, problems caused by the misapplication of Single Market law by public authorities. Services exist for complaints coming from citizens as well as businesses.

http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/site/index_en.htm

Services in the Single Market

The principles of freedom of establishment and free movement of services - two of the 'fundamental freedoms' central to the EU Single Market - contribute towards helping the European economy to perform better. This website provides information and signposts on a number of areas related to the

free movement of services: the Services Directive, transparency of regulations on services, professional qualifications, financial services, postal services, business-related services, e-commerce, media, and network services.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/index_19_en.htm

Standardisation

An overview of how standardisation can support competitiveness within the Single Market, based on consensus amongst different economic actors (industry, SMEs, consumers, workers, NGOs and public authorities). It explains the EU's role and activities in various fields, such as in relation to the environment and services; the general framework and applicable regulations, and how standardisation can benefit SMEs doing business across Europe.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards_policy/index_en.htm

Harmonised standards

An overview of how European harmonised standards are used for technical harmonisation of product requirements within the Single Market. Compliance with these "harmonised standards" ensures conformity with the essential requirements and permit a product to bear the "CE" marking and be placed on the market in any EU Member State

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newapproach/standardization/harmstds/index_en.html

Multilingual terminology database

IATE, the Interactive Terminology for Europe database, is a one-stop shop for EU-related terminology, with over 8 million terms covering all 23 official EU languages. It offers free and reliable access to EU-related terminology. Search for a specific term in a source language and find the corresponding terms in one or more target language.

<http://iate.europa.eu/iatediff/switchLang.do?success=mainPage&lang=en>



This factsheet was produced by the Enterprise Europe Network London team at London Chamber of Commerce. The Enterprise Europe Network London brings together GLE, London Chamber of Commerce and London Technology Network. The Enterprise Europe Network London is funded by the European Commission and the London Development Agency.

We provide practical, hands-on support and information for London's small and medium businesses seeking funding, hoping to expand their business into Europe, or wishing to develop (technology) partnerships with other European businesses. For more information please go to:

www.een-london.co.uk

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