

INNOVATION express

Call Text

(2 April 2014)

Overview

What is BSR Innovation Express?

Innovation Express represents a common European approach for supporting the internationalisation of SMEs through cluster initiatives.

The funding instrument aims at facilitating internationalisation, smart specialisation, and cross-border learning and competence development by developing transnational linkages between SME networks, clusters and other specialised research and innovation nodes – for the benefit of their members.

BSR Innovation Express is a joint call for proposals implemented within the framework of the BSR Stars programme (www.bsrstars.org). The call is funded by national/regional funding agencies to initiate, develop or enhance transnational cooperation activities – leveraging cluster organisations (or similar) to develop proposals for their SME members.

Applications will be evaluated based on their potential to create benefits for participating cluster initiatives and companies, along with criteria from regional/national funding organisations.

Scope and opening of the call

BSR Innovation Express partners (see “funding partners for BSR Innovation Express” below) will support proposals submitted by groups of SMEs and/or cluster governances located in their geographical area and addressing transnational cooperation activities that benefit their SME members.

A broad variety of innovation activities, including technological partnerships, mobility and training programs, feasibility studies, strategic analysis and mutual benchmarking are supported, as well as many different stages of international cooperation (from initial contact and networking through to the final set up of a long-term innovation project).

Please refer to the table of supported innovation activities for each funding partner (below), and get in touch with the relevant contact person for more detailed information.

FUNDING PARTNERS		SUPPORTED INNOVATION ACTIVITIES	CONTACTS
Denmark	Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation www.fi.dk	A B C D E F G H I J K	Hans Henrik Lomholt hhl@fi.dk
Finland	Ministry of Employment and the Economy www.tem.fi	A C F G H I J K	Asta Wallenius asta.wallenius@tem.fi
Iceland	Innovation Center Iceland www.nmi.is	A B C D E F G H	Hannes Ottósson hannes@nmi.is
Lithuania	Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology www.mita.lt	A C G H K	Daiva Krasauskaite@mita.lt daiva.krasauskaite@mita.lt
Norway	Innovation Norway www.innovasjon Norge.no	C F H I J K	Eivind Ingdahl eivind.ingdahl@innovationnorway.no
Sweden	Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth www.tillvaxtverket.se	A B C D E F G H I J K (focus on clean tech and activities H J K in all sectors)	Wilhelm von Seth wilhelm.vonseth@tillvaxtverket.se
	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management www.havochvatten.se		Catarina Hedar catarina.hedar@havochvatten.se
	VINNOVA – Sweden’s Innovation Agency www.vinnova.se		Karin Nygård Skalman karin.nygardskalman@vinnova.se

- A. Dissemination and promotion
- B. Technological/Innovation advice
- C. Networking and speed-dating activities
- D. Technology transfer
- E. Financial engineering linked to RDI activities
- F. Recruitment/training/education
- G. Workshops and study trips
- H. Cross-sectorial inter-cluster activities
- I. Market research activities
- J. Feasibility studies prior to RDI projects
- K. Inter-cluster strategy development activities

Targeted cluster initiatives or SME networks can be located within the Baltic Sea Region, or elsewhere within or outside Europe. All activity sectors are eligible; however, Sweden has a particular focus on clean tech.

Submission of proposals will be opened from 1 May – 31 October 2014.

Application process

Targeted beneficiaries and eligibility criteria

BSR Innovation Express targets groups of SMEs and/or cluster initiatives and their partners (e.g. technology providers, large companies, universities, research centres, etc.) in the Baltic Sea Region. With their proximity to firms, cluster organisations (or similar) are considered as an effective vehicle for involving SMEs which have more difficulties to develop international cooperation. They can also help them identify relevant partners to initiate trust-building processes and generate market impact.

Eligible applicants are SME networks or cluster governances located within a geographical area where a BSR Innovation Express funding partner is present (see funding partners below). Proposals must be submitted by the representative of the SME network/cluster initiative for the benefit of its SME members – in accordance with them and driven by their internationalisation needs.

Eligibility criteria:

- The applicant is a legal entity representing an SME network, cluster initiative or other specialised research and innovation environment.
- The applicant is located in a geographical area where a BSR Innovation Express funding partner is present.¹
- Proposed activities must include the participation of at least 3 SMEs. (The participation of even more SMEs is strongly recommended. Participation of large companies, company associations, universities, research organisations, and other public organisations is encouraged; however these cannot be the sole beneficiaries.)
- Applications must target another cluster initiative or SME consortia in at least one other country (within the BSR or elsewhere internationally).
- Other eligibility criteria may be defined directly by the funding organisations.

Application process

- Application forms (in word format) can be accessed through the BSR Stars homepage (<http://www.bsrstars.se/project/bsr-innovation-express/>) for preparatory purposes.

¹ The German Cluster Excellence Initiative go-cluster is preparing a parallel call to fund cross-border cooperation, which can be aligned with the BSR Innovation Express call. Interested members of go-cluster are asked to periodically check the corresponding website for updated information.

- Proposals must be in line with the supported innovation activities and other guidelines outlined by the funding agency in the applicant's geography (to be found on funding agency's own website). It is required that applicants contact their local BSR Innovation Express contact person (see above) in order to be informed about funding conditions.
- Application forms must be completed in English via the online application portal, which will be accessible through the BSR Stars homepage. Applicants must first create an account (registering personal data), and then create a new application. Applications may be completed and edited over time, with final submissions being made by **October 31, 2014 (September 30, 2014 for applicants from Lithuania)** at the latest.
- Completion and submission of additional forms may be required (according to guidelines defined by BSR Innovation Express funding partners).

Funding partners for BSR Innovation Express

- DK: Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (DASTI)
- FI: Ministry of Employment and the Economy
- IS: Innovation Center Iceland
- LT: Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA)
- NO: Innovation Norway
- SE: Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket), Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, and VINNOVA

Funding process

All proposals are expected to provide:

- Clarity and relevance of the content of the transnational cooperation activities (action plan)
- Added value and benefits for cluster/network initiatives and SME members involved
- Identification of clear outputs/deliverables or expected results

All submitted proposals will be registered in a common database and distributed to the relevant funding agency.

The funding decision (i.e. the level of funding and the costs covered) will be made dependent on the scope of the proposal (kind of activities, partners involved, etc.) and on the guidelines of the relevant national/regional funding agency. All usual national or regional programme rules apply.

Funding decisions will be made by regional/national funding agencies and communicated/registered in the common database.

The amount of money granted from funding partners will depend on the national/regional schemes used. It is expected that the amount granted will be 10-60.000 EUR per approved project per country.

Funding decisions will be communicated by the **end of November 2014 (or end of October 2014 for applicants from Lithuania)**.

Finding partners

Contact points across the BSR

In addition to the funding partners (listed above), other regional and national organisations are involved as associated partners in the BSR Innovation Express call. Both funding and associated partners agree to serve as a source of information regarding cluster initiatives in their geography (e.g. which exist, their areas of specialisation, their desired areas of collaboration, contact names, etc.), and will help to “open doors” and facilitate initial contacts between cluster initiatives.

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS			CONTACTS
Estonia	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications www.mkm.ee		Mihkel Susi Mihkel.Susi@mkm.ee and Tiiu Evert Tiiu.Evert@eas.ee
Germany	German Cluster Excellence Initiative go-cluster c/o VDI/VDE-Innovation + Technik GmbH, www.go-cluster.de		Gerd Meier zu Koecker mzk@vdivde-it.de
	Brandenburg Economic Development Board www.zab-brandenburg.de		Stefanie Zenk stefanie.zenk@zab-brandenburg.de
Latvia	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia www.liaa.lv		Ilze Vanaga ilze.vanaga@liaa.gov.lv and Anete Vitola anete.vitola@liaa.gov.lv
Poland	Polish Agency for Enterprise Development www.parp.gov.pl		Dorota Frączek Dorota_Fraczek@parp.gov.pl

Matchmaking event in Berlin 18-19 September 2014

In connection with the BSR Innovation Express call, a Cluster-to-Cluster Conference and Matchmaking event will be hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy - BMWi, targeted at cluster organisations and SME networks wishing to explore opportunities for international collaboration on behalf of their members. The program will focus on cluster to cluster matchmaking, workshops and other opportunities to establish cooperation. The matchmaking event will be organized by NetMatch (supported by the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation).

Additional resources

- Searching for cluster organisations on the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#)
- Contacting [EEN representatives](#) in targeted regions/countries
- Contacting [Eureka representatives](#) in your home country

Additional information

For more information about the BSR Innovation Express call, please contact Emily Wise (emily.wise@vinnova.se) until April 30, or Hans-Henrik Lomholt (hhl@fi.dk) who coordinates the BSR Stars activities in this area.