

## **Calls for Expression of Interest for innovative Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that wish to internationalise their activities**

### **1 – Introduction**

RYME + is a transnational network geared to support innovative SMEs through the use of innovative mentoring and matching tools to internationalise their activity. It is carried by a consortium of nine partners (Business Innovation Centres, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and private companies) from the French region Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the Portuguese regions of Norte and Centro and the Spanish regions of Asturias and Murcia. It is co-financed by the Interreg V-B SUDOE programme.

### **2 - What's it about?**

The Calls for Expression of Interest are aimed at innovative SMEs from the countries mentioned above.

We are looking for innovative Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) wishing to develop their business knowledge of European (France, Spain and Portugal) and non-European countries (Brazil, Israel, Uruguay and The United States of America).

The RYME+ project is offering the interested companies the possibility to benefit from:

- Access to a partnership exchange platform specifically developed for the RYME+ project;
- Use of the online tools developed by the project enabling participants the access to the following:
  - o A self-diagnosis of their internationalisation potential and needs;
  - o Access to a two-stage analysis of the level of commercial preparation of the company;
  - o Self-training modules developed for the project and accessed via an e-learning tool;
  - o Speed-multilateral meetings enabling them to match up their requests and offers with those of the other participants in the project;
- Ongoing mentoring to benefit from the contacts and matchmaking opportunities generated through this access;
- Access to an international network of support;
- The possibility to take part in a B2B trade mission to one of the target markets (Brazil, Uruguay and the United States) or in a benchmarking mission to Israel with the purpose of transferring good practices of entrepreneurship and technology development;
- Follow-up support.

### **3 - Who can apply?**

#### 3.1. Size of the company

RYME+ will support SMEs<sup>1</sup> that fulfil the following criteria:

- 1) The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million;
- 2) Within the SME category, a small enterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million;
- 3) Within the SME category, a microenterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million.

#### 3.2. Countries and Regions

RYME+ will support companies from the following regions in South-west Europe:

- France – Nouvelle-Aquitaine;
- Portugal – Norte, Centro, Lisboa, Alentejo, Algarve;
- Spain - Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, País Vasco, Navarra, La Rioja, Aragón, Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Cataluña, Comunidad de Madrid, Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía, Murcia, Ceuta, Melilla, Islas Baleares.

#### 3.3. Sectors of activity

RYME+ will support companies from the following sectors:

- Health&Welfare;
- Energy, materials and industrial sustainability;
- Smart Cities;
- ICT and Creative Industries.

The companies from third countries given access to the platform and matchmaking tools are not targeted by the calls for expressions of interest.

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<sup>1</sup> COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (notified under document number C(2003) 1422) [JO L 124 20.5.2003]

#### 4 - What does participation involve?

The project is divided into three stages:

- Registration on the platform, use of the matching tool and self-diagnosis. Goal: 200 companies from the covered area will have access to this level;
- Access to self-training, mentoring, commercial preparation and speed meetings to improve their internationalisation capacities. Goal: Of the initial 200, a maximum of 100 companies will have access to this level;
- B2B meetings on company missions or *benchmarking* missions. Goal: 50 companies that participated in the previous stages.

It is expected that approximately 1/3 of the companies will be French, 1/3 Portuguese and 1/3 Spanish. Participation in each stage will be subject to a selection process which starts with the Calls for Expressions of Interest (see section 5).

Participants will be expected to:

- Comply with the criteria set out in section 3;
- Provide proof of their financial and fiscal situation and not be subject to any ongoing criminal or redress procedure;
- Commit to take part in all the selection stages of the project and, in the case of selection, participate in the concerned stage;
- Confirm the agreement with the project's Regulation;
- Adhere to EU principles on sustainable development, equal opportunities and gender equality.

Participants will be entitled to:

- Challenge the selection process within one week of the notification of the final result;
- Count on the fact that all financial and fiscal data will be confidential and just used within the scope of the project.

The estimation of the project's business support, per company, is valued between 1.500€ to 4.000€.

In the end of the project, the amount allotted to each participating company is going to be determined according to their level of engagement in the project, and shall be disclosed by the company in its *minimis* declaration<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid [JO L 352 24.12.2013]

## **5 - How will participants be selected?**

Selection will take place in each region. Each partner will set up an internal evaluation panel. Evaluators will base their initial evaluation of the following criteria:

- Eligibility of the application according to criteria set out in section 3 and 4;
- Average growth of exports for the last 3 years;
- Average growth of the investment in R&D for the last 3 years;
- Average growth of Total Sales Revenue for the last 3 years;
- Quality of Business Plan (Business Strategy, Financial Capacity and Human Resources);
- Synergies with the innovation ecosystem of RYME+.

Further selections will take place to enable participants to take part in the following stages (Trade and benchmarking missions).

The communication results will be in April 2017 and in June 2017. In the case of a draw between candidates, a first come first served principle will apply. Objections can be filed within one week (see above) of the notification of non-acceptance of an application. The objections will be considered by the project panel. A final decision will be communicated to the company.

## **6 - When and where to apply?**

The calls will be open from January 16th to March 17th at 19.00 CET and from May 2nd to 31st at 19.00 CET.

Please complete the application at [www.ryme-international.com](http://www.ryme-international.com).

If you have any doubt about the calls please contact RYME+ partners - [www.ryme-international.com/contactus](http://www.ryme-international.com/contactus).