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BSB Dialogue
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Practical Outline

COSME / Single Market Programme – Supporting SMEs and Entrepreneurship in the Black Sea Basin

Opportunities for the Black Sea Innovation Ecosystem

**Black Sea Innovation Platform
DialogueInnoHub**

www.dialogueinnohub.com

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Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a central role in the European economy. They represent more than 99% of all businesses in the European Union and provide a significant share of employment and economic value. Supporting the development, competitiveness and internationalisation of SMEs is therefore a key priority of European economic policy.

To address these objectives, the EU established the COSME programme (Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs), which has been integrated into the Single Market Programme (SMP) for the period 2021–2027.

The programme supports initiatives aimed at strengthening entrepreneurship, improving access to finance, facilitating market access and encouraging innovation among SMEs. Through various support mechanisms and networks, the programme contributes to creating a favourable business environment across Europe.

For the Black Sea Basin, this programme offers significant opportunities to strengthen SME ecosystems, promote cross-border cooperation, and enhance the competitiveness of businesses in the region.

How this outline matters to the quadruple helix actors

Public authorities & regional agencies

Use the programme to support local SME-support schemes, align regional strategies with EU priorities, and access resources for business environment improvements.

Businesses & SMEs

Access funding, internationalisation support, and business networks to improve competitiveness and reach new European markets.

Academia & research institutions

Contribute to innovation and technology transfer initiatives and collaborate with SMEs on research-driven projects.

Civil society & business associations

Advocate for improved business environments, support entrepreneurship programmes, and facilitate stakeholder engagement.



Overview of the Programme

The **Single Market Programme** brings together previous EU initiatives and strengthens the competitiveness and resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises. It provides a comprehensive framework for supporting SMEs through:

- Access to finance for SMEs and start-ups
- SME internationalisation and market access
- Entrepreneurship and innovation support
- Business support networks and advisory services
- Cooperation between business support organisations, clusters, research institutions, and public authorities

The programme also promotes cooperation between business support organisations, clusters, research institutions and public authorities in order to strengthen innovation ecosystems and support economic development.



Key Objectives of the Programme

The Single Market Programme establishes clear objectives to strengthen SME competitiveness across Europe.

Access to Finance

- Loan guarantees and venture capital
- Investment funds for innovative SMEs

Market Access

- Support for SME internationalisation
- Removing barriers to cross-border trade
- Access to new European and global markets

Entrepreneurship

- Support for start-ups and scale-ups
- Promoting entrepreneurial culture

Competitiveness

- Strengthening SME competitiveness
- Innovation capacity

Cluster cooperation

- Encourage collaboration between innovation clusters

These objectives guide the programme instruments and funding mechanisms available to SMEs and support organisations.



Key Instruments Supporting SMEs

The programme provides several support mechanisms that help SMEs develop and expand their activities.

1. Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)

The Enterprise Europe Network is the largest support network for SMEs with international ambitions.

Key services include:

- advisory services for SMEs
- innovation support and technology transfer
- partner search and matchmaking
- EU funding guidance and application support.

The network connects thousands of organisations across Europe, including chambers of commerce, innovation agencies and research institutions.

2. Cluster Collaboration Platforms

Industrial clusters play an important role in strengthening innovation ecosystems and improving competitiveness.

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform supports cooperation between clusters and innovation actors across Europe.

Cluster cooperation initiatives may include:

- joint research and innovation projects
- development of new technologies and products
- knowledge exchange and best practice sharing.



3. Access to Finance

Access to finance is one of the main challenges faced by SMEs. The programme supports financial instruments designed to improve SME access to funding.

These instruments include:

- loan guarantees
- venture capital support
- investment funds supporting innovative enterprises.

These mechanisms help SMEs overcome financial barriers and support business growth and innovation.

Opportunities for the Black Sea Innovation Ecosystem

The programme offers significant opportunities for the Black Sea innovation ecosystem:

Key opportunities include:

- strengthening SME participation in European markets
- promoting innovation and technology transfer
- supporting cross-border business cooperation
- developing regional innovation clusters.

By facilitating cooperation between businesses, research institutions and public authorities, the programme contributes to building stronger regional innovation ecosystems.



Types of Supported Activities

The programme supports a wide range of activities aimed at improving SME competitiveness and market access. Examples of supported initiatives include:

- **SME internationalisation projects** supporting SMEs in accessing international markets, developing export strategies and building international partnerships.
- **Innovation and digitalisation initiatives** supporting SMEs in adopting digital technologies, innovation management practices and advanced manufacturing solutions.
- **Entrepreneurship and start-up support initiatives** promoting entrepreneurial skills, start-up incubation and business acceleration programmes.
- **Cluster development and cooperation activities** supporting cooperation between industrial clusters and innovation ecosystems across Europe.

These activities help SMEs access new markets, adopt innovative technologies, develop entrepreneurial skills, and build collaborative networks across borders.



How Organisations Can Engage

Organisations in the Black Sea region can benefit from the programme through several practical steps.

Joining European Business Networks

Participation in networks such as Enterprise Europe Network can provide access to business advisory services and partnership opportunities.

Participating in SME Support Initiatives

Regional development agencies, business associations and innovation hubs can participate in EU initiatives supporting SME development.

Developing International Partnerships

Businesses and innovation actors can collaborate with European partners to develop joint projects and access new markets.

Monitoring Funding Opportunities

Calls for proposals related to SME support initiatives are published on the **EU Funding and Tenders Portal** and other European platforms.

It should be noted that each call for proposals has specific objectives and indicators to be achieved, as well as amounts of grant financing and number of projects that can be funded. In the calls eligible candidates, activities, expenses, evaluation criteria, expected duration of projects, and other specific terms and conditions are specified.



Relevance for Public Authorities and Business Support Organisations

Public authorities and business support organisations play a critical role in enabling SME participation in EU programmes.

These organisations can contribute by:

ADVISORY SERVICES

Provide advisory services to SMEs on:

- EU programme participation
- Internationalisation strategies
- Innovation management
- Funding application support.

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Promote innovation and technology transfer by:
connecting research with business
facilitating knowledge exchange
supporting collaborative R&D
building innovation capacity.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION

Support SME participation in international programmes:

- cross-border cooperation projects
- European network membership
- cluster collaboration initiatives.



Get in Touch

This Practical Outline is developed in the framework of the BSB 1104 DIALOGUE project (Dialogue for Innovation and Better Governance), co-funded by the INTERREG NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

For questions about this guide, partnership opportunities, or support navigating COSME / Single Market Programme funding, contact the Black Sea Innovation Platform - DialogueInnoHub.

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EU Funding & Tenders Portal: ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders

