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# Call for Proposals

for the Selection of Tourism SMEs to be Awarded Financial Support under the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme

## Guidelines for Applicants

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Co-funded by  
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List of Abbreviations:

- CfP = Call for Proposals
- EC = European Commission
- SME = Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Call for Proposals in a Nutshell

The present **Call for Proposals (CfP)** is launched in the framework of the EU-funded project Cross-Re-Tour. Under the CfP small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the Cross-Re-Tour project countries (The Netherlands, Spain (Catalonia), Germany, Slovenia, Portugal, Montenegro, Latvia, Malta) are invited to present innovative tourism project proposals to enhance their **green and digital innovation**. A minimum of **80 of the best rated innovative projects will receive funding of EUR 20.000 or EUR 30.000** to implement their innovation during 14 months in the framework of the **Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme**.

This document sets out the rules for application and selection of proposals, and the implementation of projects that are awarded financial support under the CfP of Cross-Re-Tour.

All information about the CfP including the online application form are available on the project website: <https://crossretour.eu/calls/call-for-proposals>

## 1.2 The Cross-Re-Tour Project

Cross-Re-Tour is a project co-funded by the European Commission (EC) under the Single Market Programme. **Its main objective is to support the innovation of circular, green, and digital operations of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry**. The project provides access to knowledge, tools and innovative solutions and connects tourism enterprises to frontrunners in the green and digital transition from outside the tourism industry to jointly take on the transition journey. This way, Cross-Re-Tour aims to trespass boundaries between sectors in support of sustainable tourism.

Cross-Re-Tour is led by a consortium of eight partners from across Europe, which are responsible for the project implementation on a local/country level:

1. [Breda University of Applied Sciences](#) - The Netherlands – Coordinator
2. [Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation](#) - Spain (Catalonia)
3. [Institut für Tourismus- und Bäderforschung in Nordeuropa \(NIT\)](#) - Germany
4. [ARCTUR](#) - Slovenia
5. [INOVA+](#) - Portugal
6. [Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs"](#) - Latvia
7. [Malta Tourism Authority](#) - Malta
8. [Regional Development Agency of Bjelasica, Komovi & Prokletije](#) - Montenegro

## 2. THE CROSS-RE-TOUR CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### 2.1 Objectives and General Outline

With the present Call for Proposals (CfP) the Cross-Re-Tour project aims to select **green and digital innovation projects** proposed by tourism SMEs to be awarded financial support and participate in the so-called **Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme**.

Under the programme **selected proposals by tourism SMEs receive direct financial support to implement their proposed innovation project**. SMEs receive financial support in the form of a **lump sum grant**. The grant has to be used uniquely to implement the proposed project activities through the support/contracting of service providers such as a mentors, experts, consultants or technology/ innovation providers same as partly for the purchase of goods, equipment and/or software instrumental and necessary for the project implementation. All activities proposed and implemented under the awarded innovative projects shall be conducive to boost innovation in tourism SMEs.

The call for proposals is launched on a transnational level in the following countries:

**The Netherlands, Spain (Catalonia), Germany, Slovenia, Portugal, Montenegro, Latvia, Malta.**

Cross-Re-Tour aims to select at least **80 innovative projects. A minimum number of 8 projects per country will be funded**. The selection of innovative projects will be done according to the procedure established in section 3.

Selected projects in each of the territories will **receive funding from their respective local organisation** (Cross-Re-Tour partner), which also functions as a so-called Local Contact Point (see section 2.4 for the list of contacts) and can be addressed by applicants on local level.

The **Cross-domain Open innovation Programme has a duration of 14 months**. This means that applicants should propose innovative projects, which can be implemented in this time frame.

**Applicants under this CfP with the intention to receive the financial support for their innovative project and participate in the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme are expected to:**

- Be motivated and committed to achieving a change towards green and digital innovation within their company/ies and the industry.
- Have at least one person from their staff assigned to follow-up on the implementation of the proposed project together with the service provider(s) and the Local Contact Point. Therefore, they need to dispose of the relevant personnel capacity and availability of time.
- Commit to submitting all requested information and documentation for the follow-up and reporting of the project implementation according to the procedures established under section 4.
- Actively participate in the activities and opportunities proposed by Cross-

- Re-Tour (training, knowledge sharing, events, etc.).
- Participate with minimum one person at the project launch and training workshop in Riga (Latvia) on 6-8 May 2025. Travel and subsistence costs to attend the event need to be covered through the granted financial support.
- Participate with minimum one person at the project closure event "Show and Share" in Valetta (Malta) in spring/summer 2026. Travel and subsistence costs to attend the event need to be covered through the granted financial support.

## 2.2 General Financial Provisions

The **overall indicative amount available under this CfP is EUR 2,400,000**. Cross-Re-Tour partner organisations reserve the right to not award all available funds. The financial support **per SME/ project funded under this call is a fixed amount of either EUR 20,000 or EUR 30,000**. This means that proposed innovative projects and related activities need to be in a cost-efficiency relation to the fixed funding amount. In other words, it has to be **reasonable and feasible** to implement the proposed project at a cost of either EUR 20,000 or EUR 30,000, depending on the fixed amount opted for. The project should furthermore represent an added value and scope corresponding to the chosen funding amount.

The financial support is provided in the form of a **lump sum**, which is a **simplified way of cost justification based on the provision of project results and outputs**. The expenses of a project will be considered justified, and SMEs will receive the full amount of the funding or of sub-activities, if the indicated project results are delivered at a satisfactory quality level and on time. The verification of project activities will therefore be done based on the generated results in the form of outputs, deliverables or other evidence that illustrates their completion (e.g. reports, videos, screenshots, in situ verification, etc.). Any deviation or non-compliance will lead to a corresponding reduction of the funding. Applicants are required to indicate concrete activities and related expenses and foreseen evidence in the Annex 1- Project Financial Plan template.

Note on **State Aid "de minimis regime"**: The "Commission Notice on the notion of state aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union" clarifies that funding coming directly from the European Union, including from an Executive Agency, is not considered as State Aid. The funding awarded under this programme is therefore not taken into account under the de minimis regime.

**Participation in this CfP and in the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme is free of charge for all applicants.**

## 2.3 Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria

This section includes all relevant information concerning **admissibility criteria** (norms and the process you need to follow to be able to participate) and administrative and technical **eligibility criteria** (requirements to be able to participate).

## Admissibility:

Proposals are admissible if they comply with the following rules:

- Only one application per applicant SME
- Application is complete and includes all the required information
- Application is submitted through the online form following the established process. Applications submitted via e-mail or other means will not be accepted.
- Application is submitted on time (within the deadline).

In addition, applicants need to fulfil the criteria indicated in the **Declaration of Honour (Annex 2)** and sign the declaration stating they are not in any of the mentioned situations.

## Administrative Eligibility Criteria:

Innovative projects under this call can be submitted by any of the following applicants:

- A single tourism SME;
- A partnership of minimum two (2) and maximum four (4) tourism SMEs;
- A partnership comprising minimum two (2) and maximum (4) partners, including minimum one (1) tourism SME and minimum one (1) public or private entity that is/are instrumental for the tourism SME(s) to realise the project.

**In case of partnerships**, all entities must be based in the **same country**. Furthermore, **one tourism SME needs to act as main applicant** and in case the project is awarded, the financial support will be transferred to the main applicant, which will also represent the sole responsible entity before the Cross-Re-Tour project. The main applicant will be required to establish a partnership agreement with the further project partners. **If partners other than tourism SMEs participate in a partnership a maximum of 30% of the total grant amount can be distributed to these entities. Public entities participating in project partnerships cannot receive any funding.** Entities who receive funding under a partnership can only participate in one proposal. Entities who do not receive funding under a partnership (e.g. public entities, universities) can participate in several proposals. Information on the project partnership and financial arrangements need to be provided in the online application form and in Annex 1 – Project Financial Plan of the application. Project partners should not be confused with project service providers, which support the project with solutions, expertise etc. Project partners are beneficiaries of the results or impact of the project. The financial support cannot be used to reimburse or purchase services provided by the Cross-Re-Tour project partners.

**Main applicants under this CfP need to fulfil the following criteria in order to be eligible:**

- **Qualify as a SME:**  
This means applicants need to comply with the [European Commission](#)

[Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#) defining the criteria to qualify as a SME.

✓ Therefore, they first need to be considered an enterprise. "According to the definition, an enterprise is 'any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form' (European Court of Justice). It is the economic activity that is the determining factor, not the legal form. In practice, this means that family firms, partnerships and associations or any other entity that is regularly engaged in an economic activity may be considered as enterprises." SMEs must be independent from large enterprises or public bodies. If an enterprise is controlled by public authorities or larger companies, it does not qualify as a SME (EC SME user guide).

✓ The status of an enterprise as a SME further depends on the following two factors:

The **staff headcount** (how many people are employed by the enterprise) and the **turnover OR balance sheet total**. The following criteria are established by the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC:

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

✓ In this sense, start-ups, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and any other type of SME that fall under this definition are eligible to apply to the call.

Doubts about the SME status may be resolved consulting the [SME user guide](#) (available in all other EU languages).

- Be legally established and registered in one of the countries of the partnership, in accordance with the national laws and regulations of that country: **The Netherlands, Spain (only Catalonia), Slovenia, Germany, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, and Montenegro.**
- Operate in the tourism industry, usually falling under one of the below categories/ NACE codes or their national equivalents. The list of codes is non-exhaustive. If SMEs can justify, they operate directly (not indirectly such as consultancy firms working in tourism or providers along the value chain) in the tourism industry, even though not registered under either of the listed codes, they are likewise eligible. SME not falling under either of the NACE codes are recommended to contact their Local Contact Point in writing for confirmation of their eligibility prior to the submission of a project proposal.
  - ✓ Hotels and similar accommodation (I5510)
  - ✓ Holiday and other short-stay accommodation (I5520)
  - ✓ Camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks (I5530)
  - ✓ Restaurants and mobile food service activities (I5610)



- ✓ Beverage serving activities (I5630)
- ✓ Renting and leasing of motor vehicles (N7710)
- ✓ Renting and leasing of recreational and sports goods (N7721)
- ✓ Travel agency, tour operator reservation service and related activities (N79)
- ✓ Organisation of conventions and trade shows (N82.3)
- ✓ Creative, arts and entertainment activities (R90)
- ✓ Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities (R91)
- ✓ Gambling and betting activities (R92)
- ✓ Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities (R93)
- ✓ Passenger rail transport, interurban (H4910)
- ✓ Taxi operation (H4932)
- ✓ Other passenger land transport n.e.c. (H4939)
- ✓ Sea and coastal passenger water transport (H5010)
- ✓ Inland passenger water transport (H5030)
- ✓ Passenger air transport (H5110)

### Technical eligibility criteria:

Technical eligibility criteria include the **innovative character and thematical focus** of your project, the **proposed activities and related costs**.

#### Innovative character and thematical focus:

In general, the Cross-Re-Tour programme places a strong emphasis on the **innovative nature of proposals**, including those that enable **access to new, inclusive, and sustainable markets or client bases**. In the frame of the project, innovation is considered as operational, process, product or business model advancements for SMEs within the tourism ecosystem, focusing on sustainable, lasting changes rather than revolutionary solutions for the entire industry. Given the service-oriented nature of tourism, disruptive technological innovation is often beyond the capacity of SMEs.

Particularly proposals that incorporate **tools, solutions, processes, etc. adapted from other sectors (cross-innovation), as well as those that apply corporate practices within an SME context are encouraged**. Cross-Re-Tour promotes adaptive and incremental innovations that have already proven successful in other domains or larger organisations within or outside the tourism industry. These solutions should be **imported, piloted, and tested in the tourism ecosystem**. Off-the-shelf products, tools, and technologies should be further developed and embedded in the overall project for a sustainable application.

Furthermore, we recognise that **innovation is contextual**. Solutions that are commonplace in one country or a specific company or industry segment may still be considered innovative in another region or for another company.

Proposals furthermore must have a **thematical focus relating to at least one of the 8 business areas** established by the Cross-Re-Tour project as

follows. The mentioned examples are provided for inspiration and should therefore not be understood as an exhaustive list or limitation.

- **WATER**

**Possible topics:** water conservation, irrigation systems, wastewater management

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** water-saving techniques or water footprint tracking inspired by the agricultural industry, water filtration used in the beverage industry

**Project Example:** Develop a comprehensive water management plan that includes best practices for water conservation and the use of digital tools for monitoring water usage and educational campaigns for tourists on responsible water practices.

- **ENERGY**

**Possible topics:** carbon footprint measurement, renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, energy audits

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** carbon offsetting strategies from the aviation industry, heat recovery systems from manufacturing, renewable energy microgrids (originating from off-grid communities)

**Project Example:** Consultancy for the transition to renewable energy sources, incorporating energy audits and digital tools for monitoring and optimising energy consumption, along with educational materials for tourists on energy conservation.

- **PLASTICS**

**Possible topics:** elimination of single-use plastics, reusable alternatives, plastic reduction strategies

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** biodegradable packaging solutions from the food industry, reusable packaging systems and business models from e-commerce and retail

**Project Example:** Develop a strategy or new business model to eliminate single-use plastics, including educational programmes for staff and tourists, as well as digital platforms for tracking and reporting plastic reduction efforts.

- **TRANSPORT**

**Possible topics:** eco-friendly transportation options, digital ticketing, ride-sharing, navigation apps guiding tourists to sustainable transportation choices and less crowded areas

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** bike-sharing systems, multi-modal transport and last-mile practices used in logistics

**Project Example:** Promote sustainable transport options by creating digital marketing strategies that highlight eco-friendly transportation and nudge tourist to make more sustainable choices for transport and places to visit.

- **FOOD**

**Possible topics:** locally sourced food, food waste reduction, seasonal menus, certification

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** farm-to-table travel packages inspired by km0 agriculture, food waste tracking technology for industrial kitchens

**Project Example:** : Strategies on supply chain and business model revision for local and organic product sourcing while minimising food waste through the development of customisable menus and digital platforms for food ordering, engaging tourists in sustainable dining practices.

- **EQUIPMENT and FURNITURE**

**Possible topics:** circular economy, eco-design, sustainable sourcing, inventory management, accessibility of installations for social inclusion

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** accessibility adaptations inspired in the health industry, modular or recycled materials from the construction industry, 3D-printed equipment used in creative industries

**Project Example:** Strategy and adoption of circular economy principles in equipment and furniture choices by prioritising eco-design and sustainable sourcing, while promoting the resale or exchange of used items within the tourism community and other industries.

- **CLIENT NUDGING**

**Possible topics:** Sustainable behavior promotion, digital engagement, eco-friendly choices

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** Gamified energy-saving initiatives from smart homes, sustainable choices tracking from the retail sector, eco-badges used on online retail

**Project Example:** Design client nudging strategies that promote sustainable behaviors among tourists, such as gamified experiences or digital platforms that encourage eco-friendly choices and engagement with sustainable tourism options.

- **STAFF NUDGING**

**Possible topics:** employee engagement, sustainability training, behavioral incentives

**Possible cross-domain aspects:** Behavioral science in corporate wellness programmes, micro-competitions in the fitness industry, sustainability quotas for sales used in corporate sustainability programmes

**Project Example:** Foster a culture of sustainability within tourism organisations by creating incentive programs and workshops focused on environmental responsibility, encouraging staff to adopt sustainable practices.

In the project application form applicants are required to explain the focus of their project and link it to the indicated business areas.

Eligible project activities:

- **Mandatory activities:** Participation of at least one company representative at the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme launch and training event in Riga (Latvia) 6-8 May 2025 and at the "Show and Share" final event in Valletta (Malta) in spring/ summer 2026.
- **Planning and development** of green and/or digital innovation **studies, strategies, concepts, and/or action plans.** This may include: feasibility studies or impact assessments; exploration, screening or benchmarking e.g. of tools and solutions; business plans for innovative approaches; adaptation of internal policies; risk assessment and mitigation plans; development of metrics and KPIs for innovation success; establishment of collaboration and

partnerships; and participatory methods involving staff, customers and stakeholders in the process.

- **The improvement** of green and/or digital innovation **capacities of staff**. This may include: training; coaching; mentoring; peer learning; cross-departmental collaboration; participation in workshops and conferences; access to online learning platforms; certification programmes; the establishment of innovation labs or hubs for experiential learning; and/or other means and methods for skills development of staff members.
- **Implementation or piloting, adjusting or upscaling** of green and/or digital **innovation measures**. This may include: use or deployment of tools and solutions (for purchases see the below information on cost eligibility); implementation of strategies, adaptation of operations, products, and processes; process and impact monitoring; staff, customer, stakeholder and community engagement; etc.

Applicants have to lay down in their project proposal (application) **which activities they will implement and the related cost**. To this end, applicants are required to fill in the **Annex 1 – Project Financial Plan**. Instructions on how to fill in the template are given directly in the file.

The information included in this table will be used to evaluate the cost-efficiency of the project proposal.

#### Eligible costs:

Each selected innovation project will be awarded a fixed **lump sum amount of EUR 20,000 or EUR 30,000 (as selected)**. Project justification and reporting will therefore not be based on a cost declaration but on project results.

The project financial support (grant) can however only be used for the implementation of the above-mentioned project activities. Accordingly eligible costs include:

- Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for the attendance of the two mandatory Cross-Re-Tour project events and other well-justified causes. **Travel costs to attend the programme events are set at a fixed rate of EUR 1.000 for each of the events** (see Annex 1 – Project Financial Plan).
- Fees for service providers (e.g. consultants, experts, mentors, technicians, etc.)
- Specific training and capacity building necessary for the implementation of your project.
- Costs for the development, and/or implementation of innovation measures.
- Costs for sustainability certification and transition processes including EMAS registration and/or EU Ecolabel/other recognised certification schemes, leading on to environmental sustainability.
- Purchase of tools, solutions, goods, software, equipment, licenses, etc. **IMPORTANT: This cost category can only amount to a maximum of 30% of the total project cost and are only eligible if well justified as an integral, instrumental and necessary part for a successful implementation of the project proposal and innovation measure or pilot.** They need to be duly highlighted in the project financial plan and explained in the project proposal.

Ineligible costs are:

- Internal staff costs for the implementation of the project activities.
- The development or improvement of a physical infrastructure, such as, for example, office furniture or renovation of the building will not be considered as eligible activities.
- Any type of cost for activities that have received funding from another source or that have already been implemented/purchased before the award of the financial support and the launch of the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme.

## 2.4 Application Procedure

All applicants are required to submit their application through the following online application form: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/CrossReTour-CfP>

To facilitate the drafting and preparation of the information to be submitted through the online system, Cross-Re-Tour is providing a **courtesy application form** containing all questions and information required in the online application. The document is available for download on the Cross-Re-Tour website. Applicants are recommended to fill in the courtesy application form before pasting the information into the online system. If an applicant submits a proposal several times, only the latest submitted version is taken into consideration.

Applicants are furthermore required to attach the following documents to their application using the official Annex 1+2 templates:

- **Project Financial Plan (Annex 1)**
- **Declaration of Honour (Annex 2)**, including the SME declaration
- **Official document confirming the legal status of the applicant (registration certificate)<sup>1</sup>**

**The document needs to:**

- Proof the legal existence of the company
- Indicate the name(s) of the authorised legal representatives (coincide

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<sup>1</sup> The following document needs to be provided for applicants from the respective countries:

Netherlands: Extract from the Dutch Chamber of Commerce – Uittreksel KvK

Spain (Catalonia): Commercial Registry Extract – Copia simple del Registro Mercantil

Germany: Extract from the Commercial Register – Handelsregisterauszug

Slovenia: Extract from the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES) Business Register – Izpis iz Poslovnega Registra Slovenije (AJPES - Agencija Republike Slovenije za javnopravne evidence in storitve)

Portugal: Permanent Certificate from the Commercial Registry – Certidão Permanente de Registo Commercial

Montenegro: Extract from the Central Tourist Register of Montenegro – Izvod iz Centralnog turističkog registra

Latvia: Extract from the Register of Enterprises (electronic version) – Izraksts no Uzņēmumu reģistra (elektroniskā versija)

Malta: Certificate of Incorporation from the Malta Business Registry

*Note: In case of associations, foundations or other legal forms that do not dispose of the respective document, consult your local contact point to confirm which document to provide.*

- with the legal representative indicated in the application form) – if not, **Articles of association or Bylaws** need to be presented
- Any relevant powers granted to them, if not a **Power of Attorney Document** needs to be presented
- **Proof of Identity of the legal representative (ID or Passport)**

All documents and templates are available for download on the [Cross-Re-Tour website](#).

**Applicants are recommend filling the online application in English language. Applications submitted in any other language of the programme are likewise accepted (Dutch, Spanish, Catalan, German, Slovenian, Latvian, Maltese, Portuguese, Montenegrin).** The programme is aware that applications are submitted by non-native English speakers wherefore they are not evaluated based on the use of language but on the provided content.

#### **Further Information for Applicants:**

Questions or requests for technical assistance may be sent by e-mail no later than 5 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the following e-mail address [info@crossretour.eu](mailto:info@crossretour.eu), indicating clearly the reference: "*Cross-Re-Tour – Call for Proposals*". The Cross-Re-Tour project partners have no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Please note that all questions of public interest addressed to any of the contact points will be made available (anonymously) on the project website in the [FAQ section](#).

It is strongly recommended to inform your Local Contact Point about your intention to submit a proposal under this call and request support if necessary.

#### **Contact information of Local Contact Points:**

<b>Territory</b>	<b>Name and E-mail contact person</b>
The Netherlands	Elisa van den Heuvel ( <a href="mailto:droll.e@buas.nl">droll.e@buas.nl</a> ) Jos van der Sterren ( <a href="mailto:Sterren.J@buas.nl">Sterren.J@buas.nl</a> ) Simone Moretti ( <a href="mailto:moretti.s@buas.nl">moretti.s@buas.nl</a> )
Spain (Catalonia)	Leonie Hehn ( <a href="mailto:lhehn@cambrabcn.cat">lhehn@cambrabcn.cat</a> ) Vicente Atienza ( <a href="mailto:vatiienza@cambrabcn.cat">vatiienza@cambrabcn.cat</a> )
Germany	Ulf Sonntag ( <a href="mailto:ulf.sonntag@nit-kiel.de">ulf.sonntag@nit-kiel.de</a> ) Berit Weiss ( <a href="mailto:berit.weiss@nit-kiel.de">berit.weiss@nit-kiel.de</a> )
Slovenia	Katarina Ceglar ( <a href="mailto:katarina.ceglar@arctur.si">katarina.ceglar@arctur.si</a> )



Portugal	João Morais ( <a href="mailto:joao.morais@inova.business">joao.morais@inova.business</a> ) Hugo Faria ( <a href="mailto:hugo.faria@inova.business">hugo.faria@inova.business</a> )
Latvia	Asnate Ziemele ( <a href="mailto:asnate@celotajs.lv">asnate@celotajs.lv</a> ) Iveta Skilina ( <a href="mailto:iveta@celotajs.lv">iveta@celotajs.lv</a> )
Malta	Tania Sultana ( <a href="mailto:tania.sultana@visitmalta.com">tania.sultana@visitmalta.com</a> ) Mary Rose Briffa ( <a href="mailto:maryrose.briffa.1@mtobservatory.org">maryrose.briffa.1@mtobservatory.org</a> ) Caldon Mercieca ( <a href="mailto:caldon.mercieca.1@visitmalta.com">caldon.mercieca.1@visitmalta.com</a> )
Montenegro	Jelena Krivcevic ( <a href="mailto:jkrivcevic@bjelasica-komovi.co.me">jkrivcevic@bjelasica-komovi.co.me</a> ) Snezana Maslovaric ( <a href="mailto:smaslovaric@bjelasica-komovi.co.me">smaslovaric@bjelasica-komovi.co.me</a> )

## 2.5 Timetable

Stages	Dates
Opening of the call	21 November 2024
Call closure (Deadline)	22 January 2025, 17:00 h, CET
Call online Info Session	2 December 2024, 10:00h, CET
Call evaluation results	February/ March 2025
Signature of Grant Contracts with awarded applicants	March 2025
Launch of the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme – Project implementation start	April 2025
Project launch and workshop in Riga (Latvia)	6-8 May 2025
Project closure “Show and Share” event in Valletta (Malta)	spring/summer 2026
Closure of the Cross-domain Open Innovation Programme –Project implementation completion	May 2026

# 3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

## 3.1 Eligibility Check and Evaluation

This section includes information about the evaluation and selection process of applications to this CfP that Cross-Re-Tour will carry out. The process will be managed and supervised by the Selection and Evaluation Committee, which will

ensure fairness and transparency.

The evaluation will be carried out in the following way, as detailed below:

- Admissibility and administrative eligibility check
- Technical evaluation of the proposal
- Selection procedure

**Admissibility and Administrative Eligibility:**

Before proposals are evaluated technically, their admissibility and administrative eligibility are verified. Only admissible and eligible proposals will be evaluated. The criteria as referred to in section 2.3 will be applied to discard non-admissible and/or non-eligible proposals.

Proposals identified as such will get a rejection letter and will not be considered in the further process. No additional feedback will be given.

**Technical Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria:**

Admissible and administratively eligible applications will be evaluated against predetermined evaluation criteria, applying predefined weighting factors and thresholds. Each proposal will be evaluated by **two independent evaluators** with experience in tourism and innovation. They will record their individual evaluation result for each proposal in an Individual Evaluation Matrix. The individual evaluation results will be resumed into a **Compiled Evaluation Matrix**. In case a high deviation (3 points in 2 or more evaluation criteria) is observed, a third evaluation is undertaken. The final evaluation result in that case is calculated as the average in between the three evaluations.

The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Weight	Score	Description
Relevance	15%	0 - 5	Extent to which the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aligns with the overall vision and strategy of the applicant SME/ partnership towards a sustainable transformation.</li> <li>• addresses and aligns with one or more of the business areas and activities defined by Cross-Re-Tour.</li> <li>• addresses a specific challenge faced by the applicant SME/ partnership.</li> <li>• responds to industry trends and necessities.</li> </ul>
Innovation	35%	0 - 5	Extend to which the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• goes beyond the state of the art in the industry.</li> <li>• reflects an innovation or significant improvement for the individual applicant SME/</li> </ul>



			<p>partnership in terms of operations, processes, products, services, business models, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopts, uses or transfers a solution from another sector or industry or a corporate solution to an SME context.</li> <li>enables access to new, inclusive, and sustainable markets or client bases.</li> </ul>
Impact	25%	0 - 5	<p>Extent to which the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>results in an improvement of the applicant SME's/ partnership's environmental, social and economic sustainability (e.g. efficiency, CO2 emissions, resource use, circularity, cost savings, community impact, inclusiveness, effectiveness of sustainable measures, etc.)</li> <li>is scalable and/or ensures continuity and long-term sustainability for the applicant SME/ partnership.</li> <li>is transferable to or inspiring for other businesses as industry benchmark or good practice.</li> </ul>
Implementation	25%	0 - 5	<p>Extent to which the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is well developed and defined in terms of provided detail and clarity.</li> <li>demonstrates a cost-effective intervention (project financial plan and cost breakdown).</li> <li>appears feasible and realistic within the proposed timeframe (14 months) and budget limitations (EUR 20,00 or EUR 30,000).</li> <li>demonstrates skills and experience of the applicant SME's staff/ partnership to manage the project implementation.</li> </ul>

For each criterion a **score from 0 to 5** is given and weighted accordingly across the different evaluation criteria (Relevance, Innovation, Impact, Implementation). Successful proposals must pass the **minimum thresholds of 2/5 points in each individual criterion**. Proposals not reaching the minimum threshold will not be

considered for funding. Proposals passing the minimum threshold are **ranked by country and in an overall ranking**. Passing the threshold does not guarantee funding for the innovative project. The **highest ranked proposals per country will be awarded financial support until the call budget per country is exhausted**. If in a specific country not sufficient proposals have reached the minimum threshold or funds are not fully exhausted, proposals from other countries according to their ranking in the overall scoreboard (country-independent) are considered.

## 3.2 Ranking and Selection

The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will follow the rules below:

- Rule 1: the proposals will be ranked based on their overall score in the Compiled Evaluation Matrix;
- Rule 2: in case following rule 1 there are proposals with the same score, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score in "Innovation";
- Rule 3: in case following rule 2 there are proposals with the same score, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score in "Impact";
- Rule 4: in case following rule 3 there are proposals with the same score, priority will be given to the proposal that has been submitted earlier according to the time stamp of the latest submission of the proposal as registered in the online application form.

At least 80 proposals (if passing the threshold) will be selected in total. A minimum of 8 projects per country will be selected (if passing the threshold). Proposals that have passed the threshold but are not awarded will remain on a **reserve list** in case other projects drop out.

In case a lower number of applications than the total amount of funding available is selected, the Cross-Re-Tour project may decide to re-open the call at a later date.

The list of selected proposals will be published on the Cross-Re-Tour website. All applicants will be informed via e-mail about the evaluation result of their application. According to their evaluation result they will receive a rejection/ reserve list letter or invitation letter for grant contract signature (awarded projects).

## 3.3 Transparency, absence of conflict of interest, equal treatment and non-discrimination

The selection and evaluation process under the Call for Proposals (CfP) will be conducted with full transparency, ensuring equal treatment for all applicants. Evaluators will be required to submit a formal declaration of no conflict of interest, certifying their impartiality and independence throughout the process.

The evaluation will follow an independent review system to ensure that all proposals are assessed fairly and without bias. Cross-Re-Tour is committed to non-discrimination, and all project submissions will be evaluated based solely on their quality, feasibility, and alignment with the CfP objectives, irrespective of the applicant's background, nationality, or other unrelated characteristics.

In the event of any disputes, applicants will have access to an appeal process,

ensuring a transparent and fair resolution of any issues raised during the evaluation.

## 4. POST-AWARD PROCESS

### 4.1 Negotiation Phase and Grant Contract Signature

After the evaluation process is concluded and the applicants have been notified, Cross-Re-Tour will start the Grant Contract preparation with the selected SMEs. The **Grant Contract sets the legal conditions and requirements for receiving financial support.**

In case the evaluators in their report have indicated a necessity for adjustments in the project financial plan in terms of budget allocation or activities, Local Contact Points and awarded applicants will enter a **negotiation phase** entailing possible project adjustment. Project adjustments may include the reduction of the grant amount from EUR 30,000 to EUR 20,000 in case the cost-efficiency assessment by the evaluator indicates it. Adjustments cannot change the essence or general outline of the project, which would put its selection into question. Adjustments in the negotiation phase may only refer to adaptations related to the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the project. Local Contact Points and awarded applicants may always agree to adding additional activities to the project.

At the end of the negotiation phase, the **Grant Contract will be signed between the Local Contact Point and the SME.** By signing the Grant Contract, the SME accepts the grant and agrees to implementing the project under its own responsibility and in accordance with the provisions outlined therein and described in the presented project proposal (application). In case no agreement is reached during the negotiation phase in case adjustments are required, Local Contact Points reserve the right to not award the contract.

#### **Note on project partnerships:**

If an application for a project in partnership was submitted (see section 2.3), the main applicant SME will be required to sign a partnership agreement with the respective entities. The agreement is signed solely in between the SME and the partners. Local Contact Points do not interfere, provide or impose a format for this agreement. The sole responsible entity for the reception of the financial support and the implementation of the project remains the main applicant SME.

#### **Post-Award Required Documentation:**

To validate the financial information of selected applicants, the following documents will be required together with the Grant Contract signature:

- Financial Identification Form verifying the bank account information of the SME, signed by the SME's legal representative and the bank representative (alternatively a recent bank statement can be attached).
- Any other document requested by the Local Contact Point to verify the status of the awarded applicant SME.

All documentation needs to be provided and signed duly and within the indicated deadline communicated by the Local Contact Point (maximum 1 month after the

award communication). **Failure to follow up on the indicated procedure and provide the necessary information will result in a rejection of the SME proposal.** In that case, the subsequent SME in the ranking will be awarded and invited to sign the grant contract.

## 4.2 Reporting Procedures and Payments

As regards reporting and payment arrangements the following applies for selected SMEs:

SMEs are required to report on the state of their project implementation on a regular basis to their Local Contact Point and inform and consult them about possible issues (if any) at any time during the programme duration.

Three official reporting and feedback rounds are foreseen:

- **Inception questionnaire**, 2 months after the start of the Programme to provide an initial feedback and update on the project.
- **Mid-term report**, after month 7 of the programme consisting in an online questionnaire and an individual interview with the Local Contact Point including the verification of the activities and deliverables indicated by the SME in the project financial plan (Annex 1).
- **Final Report**, after completion of the project after month 14 consisting in an online questionnaire and an individual interview with the Local Contact Point including the verification of the activities and deliverables indicated by the SME in the project financial plan (Annex 1). At the latest at the end of the project all deliverables/ results need to be submitted to the local contact point and verified.

The payments will be made based and conditional on the fulfilment of the commitments indicated by the SMEs in their application, project financial plan and reporting and verified by the Local Contact Points (except the first payment):

- 30% of the total grant amount as pre-financing payment at the latest 30 days after the signature and entry into force of the Grant Contract.
- 30 % of the grant amount after the approval of the mid-term report.
- 40% of the grant amount after the approval of the final report and the provision of all project results as stated in the project financial plan.

## Processing Of Personal Data, Confidentiality And Communication

All information submitted by applicants will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and handled by the Cross-Re-Tour project team and external evaluators who are bound by strict confidentiality obligations. The identity of the applicant and the content of the proposal will be treated as strictly confidential and will be accessed only by authorised personnel who are committed to performing their duties with impartiality and the highest ethical standards.

Applicant information will be securely stored on a web-based, password-protected collaborative platform, accessible only to authorised Cross-Re-Tour

members and project evaluators. Data related to the proposal may also be shared between Cross-Re-Tour partners and evaluators via secure corporate email channels. Applicants must clearly mark any information they consider confidential. The disclosure of confidential information is at the sole discretion of the applicant and should be limited to what is necessary or desirable for the evaluation of the proposal.

The Cross-Re-Tour consortium will adhere to the confidentiality provisions outlined in its consortium agreement and will not use any confidential information provided by applicants for purposes other than those related to the objectives of this Call for Proposals.

Applicants who have been selected to receive financial support will be publicly listed (Company name, country, link to their website) on the Cross-Re-Tour website and other channels. A summary of their project will be furthermore promoted and publicly shared on the mentioned channels.

Regarding communication, any public communication or publication made by participants or selected SMEs under this Call for Proposals (CfP) must clearly acknowledge the financial support received from the European Commission within the scope of the Cross-Re-Tour project (Grant Agreement No. 101121518). This includes prominently displaying the EU logo on all printed or digital materials, including websites and press releases. The following disclaimer must also be included:

*"The content of this [insert appropriate description, e.g., report, publication, conference, etc.] represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains."*

Selected SMEs under this CfP are required, throughout their participation in the Cross-Re-Tour project, to take proactive measures to engage with the public about their involvement and to highlight the support of the European Commission.