



**EUROPEAN ENTERPRISE
PROMOTION AWARDS
2024**

OPERATIONAL MANUAL

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1. DEFINITION AND RATIONALE

1.1. An award that recognises excellence in promoting entrepreneurship

The European Enterprise Promotion Awards, instigated by the European Commission, recognise and reward outstanding initiatives that support entrepreneurship. The awards, which were launched in 2005, are not only a competition but also aim to raise awareness of enterprise – both policy and delivery activities – and celebrate success.

Each year, pan-European award winners will be identified and will serve as inspiration for others.

The geographical scope of the competition spans the 27 Member States¹ of the European Union as well as associate countries of the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme [Support to SMEs - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europea/europea_en)

1.2. Objectives

1. Identify and recognise successful activities and initiatives undertaken to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship
2. Showcase and share examples of best entrepreneurship policies and practices
3. Create a greater awareness of the role entrepreneurs play in society
4. Encourage and inspire potential entrepreneurs.

1.3. The importance of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship-friendly policy is inherently linked to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a vital part of the European economy accounting for over 99% of European businesses. The SME sector contributes to innovation, is a source of competition, provides flexibility in the labour market and, most crucially, is a resource for job creation.

DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs is therefore looking to reward initiatives that are facilitating business, in particular by recognising the importance of entrepreneurship.

Given the geographical and cultural scope of entries from across the European Union, best practices are most likely to reflect the different ways in which regions, centres, cities, towns and communities have creatively implemented entrepreneurship-friendly environments and practices.

1.4. Benefits to the award participants and winners

All entrants who have been nominated by their country for the European Enterprise Promotion Awards will be invited to participate in the awards ceremony.

Information on all the nominees' initiatives will be posted on the European Enterprise Promotion Awards' website, making these available to the widest possible public. A media relations and social media campaign will publicise the nominees, placing them in the spotlight.

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.
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There will be two types of award winners: category award winners for the creative implementation of entrepreneurship practices and one overall winner for the Grand Jury prize. In addition to receiving the award itself, the winners will be recognised for their creativity and successful implementation. They will therefore be in the position to inspire others by acting as role models across the European Union.

Media activities will take place at both the national and European levels to ensure that winners receive the recognition that they deserve within their own constituencies as well as in key European media.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Target audience

The competition is open to public authorities in the EU as well as associate countries of the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme [Support to SMEs - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#). Eligible entities include national organisations, towns, cities, regions and communities as well as public-private partnerships between public authorities and entrepreneurs, educational programmes, businesses and business organisations. For the category of Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship, private entities which fall under the SME definition as set out in [SME definition \(europa.eu\) are eligible to apply](#), provided that the project, which seeks to enter the competition is not the core business activity of the SME. The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are

1. staff headcount
2. either turnover or balance sheet total.

2.2. Categories

There are six categories of awards and each will recognise the local, regional or national initiatives that are successfully driving forward their enterprise performance:

1. **Promoting the Entrepreneurial Spirit:** recognises initiatives at national, regional or local level that promote an entrepreneurial mindset especially among young people and women.
Examples: Events and campaigns to promote the image of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs and a culture that encourages creativity, innovation and risk acceptance.
2. **Investing in Entrepreneurial Skills:** recognises initiatives at national, regional or local level to improve entrepreneurial, managerial and employee skills.
Examples: Promotion of specific skills such as technical skills needed in the craft sector, language capabilities, digital skills; mobility and mentoring schemes for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education in schools and universities
3. **Supporting the Digital Transition:** supporting the digital transition of enterprises enabling them to develop, market and use digital technologies, products and services of any kind.
4. **Improving the Business Environment and Supporting the Internationalisation of business:** recognises innovative policies and initiatives at national, regional or local level, which render Europe the most attractive place to start a business, operate it, make it grow and scale it up in the Single Market, simplify legislative and administrative procedures for

businesses and implement the “Think Small First” principle in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Examples: Measures to cut red-tape, get new businesses off the ground, support the transfer of business ownership, , facilitate access to public procurement markets for SMEs. Projects to support international business cooperation, information or match-making tools, support services or schemes that help SMEs go abroad

5. **Supporting the sustainable transition:** recognises policies and initiatives at national, regional or local level that support the sustainable transition and support environmental aspects such as the circular economy, climate neutrality, clean energy, resource efficiency or biodiversity through, for example, sustainable skills development and matchmaking as well as funding.

Examples: Supporting enterprises to adopt sustainable business models.

6. **Responsible and inclusive entrepreneurship:** recognises national, regional and local initiatives by authorities, public/private partnerships or SMEs that promote corporate social responsibility among small and medium sized enterprises. This category will also recognise efforts to promote entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups such as unemployed, especially long term unemployed, legal migrants, disabled or people from ethnic minorities.

Examples: Social or non-profit enterprises serving societal needs through entrepreneurship.

The European Jury will also award the Grand Jury Prize to the entry from any category that is considered the most creative and inspiring initiative promoting entrepreneurship.

2.3. Two-step selection process

There will be two selection stages to qualify for the European Enterprise Promotion Awards. The first step will be at national level and only by completing the national selection stage can entrants be considered for the European Awards.

2.3.1. National level

Each participating country will appoint an EEPA Coordinator “Coordinator” – previously known as SPOCs or single points of contact.

The national Coordinator will promote the European Enterprise Promotion Awards in their respective countries and invite all suitable initiatives to enter the national selection process. The **deadlines in each country will be decided by each Coordinator.**

The Coordinator can decide whether or not to organise a national competition and award ceremony. The European Commission is making a standard entry form available should Coordinators wish to use it at national level.

The Coordinators will act as a help desk for potential entrants who need clarification or guidance during the application process. Guidelines for selecting the nominees are explained in this document.

On receipt of entries, the Coordinators will select up to two initiatives from two different categories as their country's nominees for the European Enterprise Promotion Awards.

The decision-making process will be at the discretion of the Coordinators for each country; however, each country must be able to substantiate their choices via transparent reporting – e.g. minutes of the selection meeting – if and when requested by the European Commission.

Each country shall have a maximum of two national candidates in two different categories for the European Enterprise Promotion Awards.

Entries at the Belgian level can be submitted in any one of the official Belgian languages and in English.

Entries should be sent **electronically only** as **both pdf and word** documents.

2.3.2. European level

Once the Coordinators have submitted their one or maximum two national candidates, the entry forms² – maximum 10 pages – will be forwarded to the European Commission.

The members of the European Jury will be selected by the European Commission.

The Jury will comprise of a representative of academia, a business organisation, a representative from the Spring European Council presidency who could be an entrepreneur, a business organisation, or a high-level government representative and a high-level government representative of the Autumn European Council presidency for that specific year. There will also be two permanent representatives, one from DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and one from the Committee of the Regions. The Commission would also invite the winner of the Jury's Grand prize in any given year to sit on the Jury for the following year.

A database of entrants will be kept and Jury members will receive all entries as electronic files. Additional information will be made available upon request.

The Jury will meet in Brussels to deliberate the entries. They will appoint a chairperson whose vote will be decisive in the case of a tie; a secretary from the contracted agency will be present at the Jury meeting.

The Jury will select a shortlist from the entries.

During the meeting, a winner for each category will be chosen from the shortlist as well as an overall winner of the Grand Jury prize. The Jury will make its selection on the basis of eligibility and award criteria that are described below.

The Jury may decide to move an entry to an alternative category if it feels this is appropriate and it can decide not to award a prize if it considers the quality of the entries insufficient.

² Note to Coordinators: the entry form is the form that must be used when submitting your nominees to the European competition. You may, if you so wish, use the same form at national level.
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The Jury will provide the conclusions of its deliberations to the European Commission, which will indicate the different category winners and the winner of the Grand Jury prize. The decision of the Jury is final.

All nominees will be invited to the award ceremony, where the category winners and the Grand Jury prize winner will be announced.

2.4. Eligibility criteria

The competition is open to all local, regional and national authorities in the EU or associate countries of the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme Support to SMEs - European Commission (europa.eu). This includes towns, cities, regions and communities as well as public-private partnerships between public authorities and entrepreneurs, educational programmes, businesses and business organisations. Projects stemming solely from private businesses or individuals are not eligible apart from the category Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship where Private Entities which fall under the SME definition as set out in SME definition (europa.eu) are eligible to apply, are eligible, provided that the project, with which the SME applies is not the core business of the company.

Joint nominations from more than one country for cross-border initiatives will also be accepted, as long as they are supported by all countries involved.

The objective of the European Enterprise Promotions Awards is to reward policies that promote entrepreneurship at local, regional or national level. Therefore, the Awards are open to all public authorities that are in charge of policy making.

Public authorities are defined according to each participating country's national context and may include policy-making institutions, funding bodies and implementing organisations.

The Awards are also open to public-private partnerships, i.e. "forms of co-operation between the public authorities and the private sector which aim to ensure the funding, construction, renovation, management or maintenance of an infrastructure or the provision of a service".³

Public-private partnerships comprise the following:

- A financial agreement for which the private partner is charged with the implementation of a policy crafted by the public authority;
- An agreement between the private partner and the public authority for which the private partner is involved – due to its expertise, knowledge or resources – in the policy-making process; and
- An explicit support, not necessarily of a financial nature, that the public authority grants the private sector partner in the framework of a specific project. For the purposes of the awards, the support needs to be explicit.

Private entities – SMEs which fall under the SME definition (europa.eu) are eligible to enter the category Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship ONLY.

³ Green Paper on public-private partnerships and Community law on public contracts and concessions, COM(2004) 327 final, Brussels, 30.04.2004
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Previous EEPA entrants

Organisations which have previously entered EEPA are eligible to apply with a new project/initiative or with the project that was previously entered if the project was not a category winner **and** significant changes/improvements have been made to the project.

Entries must refer to existing or recent initiatives in policy making, enterprise or education and the influence they have had on the region or place in question, showing an incremental evolution over a 15-month period.

Entries at the European level can be submitted in any one of the official Belgian languages and in English.

Entries must comprise the following:

1. The award category for which the entrant is applying
2. A word and pdf version of the entry form
3. Consent to collect and process personal data
4. Contact details
5. Signature of representative from submitting organisation⁴
6. Hard copy material is no longer allowed

In Belgium, participants in the national phase of this competition must submit their application by **3pm on 16/05/2024 at the latest**.

2.5. Award criteria

Once an initiative is considered eligible for entry, it will be judged on its entrepreneurship merits.

Points will be allocated to each entry based on the following criteria:

1. Originality & feasibility: Why is the project a success? What are its innovative aspects?
2. Impact on the local economy: Provision of figures to substantiate success claims;
3. Improvement in local stakeholder relations: Has more than one interested party benefited from the implementation of this initiative? Why were they involved and what was their level of participation?
4. Transferability: Could the approach be repeated in the region and elsewhere around Europe?

⁴ Signatures can be provided electronically, a scanned version of an analog signature is also accepted
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3. NATIONAL EVALUATION & SELECTION

3.1. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility questions	Yes	No
Was the entry received on or before the deadline?		
Did a legal representative sign the entry form?		
Has the entry form been fully completed and signed?		
Is the entrant based in one of the 27 Member States, or associate countries of the SME pillar of the Single Market Programme Support to SMEs - European Commission (europa.eu) ?		
Has the entrant submitted only one initiative for only one award category?		
Has the nature of any public/private partnership been explained?		
Did the existing or recent initiative take place over a minimum 15 month period?		

If all questions are answered with a "Yes", the entry will be accepted.

Should an entry not meet the eligibility criteria listed above, the national selection committee may decide to request that the applicant make the necessary modifications – this depends entirely on the selection committee's judgement, time and goodwill.

Once an entry is considered eligible, it will be submitted for selection at national level.

3.2. Selection criteria

Each entry will be evaluated by comparing it with the other entries in the same award category. The following matrix can be applied:

Selection questions	Maximum marks
Originality and feasibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was the initiative original and innovative?• Why is it considered successful?	20 points
Impact upon the local economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the impact of the initiative on the local economy?• Did it create jobs?• Is the initiative sustainable in the future?• What positive long-term effect will it have?	30 points
Improvement of local stakeholder relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was the local population involved in the initiative?• Did the disadvantaged communities benefit?• Were local cultural, environmental and social characteristics respected?	25 points
Transferability: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could the approach be repeated in the region?• Could the approach be repeated elsewhere in Europe?• Is the initiative inspiring?• Are there any relationships/partnerships being developed to share lessons learnt?	25 points

In each category, the entry with the highest total score will be deemed the winner.

The selection committee may decide to assign an entry to a different award category than originally applied for.

3.3. Selecting the nominees

A maximum of two entries from two different categories from the national level will be submitted to represent their country at European level.

4. Appendix

4.1. Example of a European jury score sheet

Scorecard Category 1 - PROMOTING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Project Name and Number

#31 ABC

TOTAL SCORE

79

Originality & feasibility		(max 20 points)
Remarks		
Reasons for the project's success	Stakeholders and potential participants were involved in the development of the solution to a clearly identified issue. The project was well researched and, based on evaluation results, has continued to grow and evolve. It provides a positive financial contribution to the implementation of successful projects.	18
The project's innovative aspects	The project successfully used technology to appeal to its target audience using its website, online forum and blogs and overcome their resistance to 'professional support'.	
Impact on the economy		(max 30 points)
What was the economic impact of the project?	2008: 114 businesses and 20 co-operatives created with 80% still active. No figures for subsequent years, but it is assumed that they will produce similar results	23
Did it create jobs?	No information given to directly support whether jobs were created	
Can the project be sustained in the future?	Whilst the financial incentive is important, it is likely that the project could continue now that it has achieved some momentum and commercial sponsors could be encouraged to provide the finance	
What are the long term positive effects of the project?	Changing the attitudes of young people towards enterprise and public authority and instilling an entrepreneurial mindset in future generations.	
Improvement of stakeholder relations		(max 25 points)
Was the local population and/or stakeholders involved in the project?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Whilst they were involved, it is something that will be enhanced in future editions of the project	18
Did disadvantaged communities benefit?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO This was clearly one of the strategies.	
Were local cultural, environmental and social characteristics respected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Although little direct evidence provided, assumption has been made based on identified strategy and results.	
Was the communication strategy effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO This is one of the most effective aspects of the project	
Transferability		(max 25 points)
Could the approach be repeated in the region and/or elsewhere in Europe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO This would be an easily transferable project and in fact could gain real momentum if it became pan European.	20
Are there any relationships / partnerships being developed to share lessons learnt?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Future collaboration with XYZ to introduce training for Entrepreneurs is based on experience from this project.	

Is the project inspiring?	X <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO This project is successfully tackling the issue of changing attitudes and inspiring a future generation to enter the world of business.	
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2. Summary of your impressions of the entry: A well thought through, clear and concise entry. Plenty of relevant detail and supporting evidence, would have liked more information on results achieved. Impressed with evaluation that has taken place.