

# GUIDE TO THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

*The contents of this document were validated by the EACI and by the members of the Partnership Process Working Group.*

**Final version (14 December 2011)**

# CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	4
THE TEN KEYS FOR SUCCESS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS .....	5
DOS AND DON'TS OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS.....	5
FLOWCHART OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS .....	6
PROMOTION.....	7
HOW TO MANAGE COMPANY ASSESSMENT .....	8
ABSTRACT .....	8
FLOWCHART COMPANY ASSESSMENT .....	8
1. FIRST CONTACT.....	9
2. PREPARATION OF THE COMPANY VISIT .....	9
3. COMPANY VISIT .....	10
4. COMPANY VALIDATION .....	11
5. COMMITMENT .....	12
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	15
HOW TO MANAGE PROFILES.....	16
ABSTRACT .....	16
FLOWCHART PARTNERSHIP PROFILES.....	17
1. QUALIFY CLIENT'S PROJECT AND NEEDS .....	17
2. CREATE A PROFILE .....	18
3. PROMOTE AND DISSEMINATE PROFILES .....	19
4. MANAGE THE PROFILE.....	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	21
HOW TO MANAGE BROKERAGE EVENTS AND COMPANY MISSIONS .....	22
ABSTRACT .....	22
BROKERAGE EVENTS.....	22
FLOWCHART BROKERAGE EVENTS.....	23
1. BROKERAGE EVENT CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT .....	24
2. PARTNERS AND PROJECT PLAN .....	25
3. LOGISTICS (lead time: minimum 6 months) .....	25
4. RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS AND CRITICAL MASS .....	26
5. MATCHING PROCESS .....	26
6. PREPARATION BEFORE BE DAY .....	27
7. DAY OF THE BROKERAGE EVENT .....	27
8. FOLLOW-UP .....	27
COMPANY MISSIONS.....	29
FLOWCHART COMPANY MISSIONS.....	30
1. ANALYSE AND SELECT A TOPIC .....	30
2. IDENTIFY PARTNERS .....	31
3. LOGISTICS AND PRICING.....	31
4. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS .....	31
5. FINALISE AGENDA AND TRAVELLING ARRANGEMENTS .....	32
6. FOLLOW-UP .....	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	34

HOW TO MANAGE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST ..... 35

    ABSTRACT ..... 35

    FLOWCHART EXPRESSION OF INTEREST ..... 36

    1. RECEIVING AN EOI FROM A LOCAL COMPANY ..... 36

    2. APPRAISING A COMPANY AND AN EOI ..... 37

    3. CONTACT WITH AN ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK COLLEAGUE ..... 38

    4. RECEIVING AN EOI FROM AN ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK COLLEAGUE ..... 38

    5. PASS EOI TO THE PARTNERSHIP PROFILE CLIENT ..... 38

    6. FOLLOW-UP OF THE EOI PROCESS ..... 39

    BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 40

HOW TO PROVIDE VALUE IN NEGOTIATIONS ..... 41

    ABSTRACT ..... 41

    FLOWCHART NEGOTIATION ASSISTANCE ..... 41

    1. QUALIFICATION OF THE FOREIGN COMPANY ..... 42

    2. STRUCTURE OF THE DEAL ..... 43

    3. MEDIATION ..... 44

    BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 45

HOW TO MANAGE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS ..... 46

    ABSTRACT ..... 46

    FLOWCHART PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS ..... 47

    1. ELIGIBILITY ..... 47

    2. COLLABORATION WITH NETWORK PARTNERS ..... 47

    3. PREPARATION OF PA DOCUMENTATION ..... 48

    4. PA FOLLOW-UP ..... 49

    BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 51

## ABSTRACT

The Enterprise Europe Network aims to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make the most of the business opportunities in the European Union. As a Network partner you have a key role to play here as you will be helping companies find partners for business cooperation, technology transfer and collaborative research. This guide to the partnership process will provide valuable support as you secure cooperation partners for your clients. The guide constitutes a reference document for all Network partners and the EACI. It describes the Network's agreed common standards and practices, which must be implemented to ensure that clients receive high quality services.

The goal of the partnership process is to reach transnational partnership agreements between SMEs or between SMEs and large companies, research institutes or other possible cooperation partners. The process to reach this goal needs to be efficient and of high quality in order to preserve the Network's good reputation and to use resources in an appropriate way.

The partnership process consists of six steps, all described in a flowchart. After having identified a potential client, these steps are:

1. Company Assessment
2. Partnership Profile
3. Brokerage Events/Company Missions
4. Expression of Interest (Eoi)
5. Assistance in Negotiation
6. Partnership Agreement (PA)

Of course, before embarking on the six steps, efforts have to be made to promote the Network services in order to identify potential client companies.

There are different types of cooperation but the procedures to reach success are, in most cases, the same. The process described in this guide is therefore a common process. Where there is need for specific consideration regarding technological, commercial or research cooperation, this will be dealt with in connection to the relevant step.

Reaching a partnership agreement is often a long process and it is important to state the responsibilities of the parties involved, primarily the Network partners and their client companies. These responsibilities can be set out verbally, in a letter of commitment or even a contract, which would be signed by the client company and the Enterprise Europe Network partner involved.

It is crucial that you regularly follow up on the company's progress. This is important in all phases of the partnership process. Through regular follow-up activities you will build a strong relationship with the company and will be able to offer a more tailored service. You will then have access to information when it comes to signing partnership agreement documents.

# THE TEN KEYS FOR SUCCESS FOR THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

The Working Group has agreed on ten principles, the "Ten Keys for Success", for the partnership process. These principles should play a major role in reaching successful transnational partnership agreements.

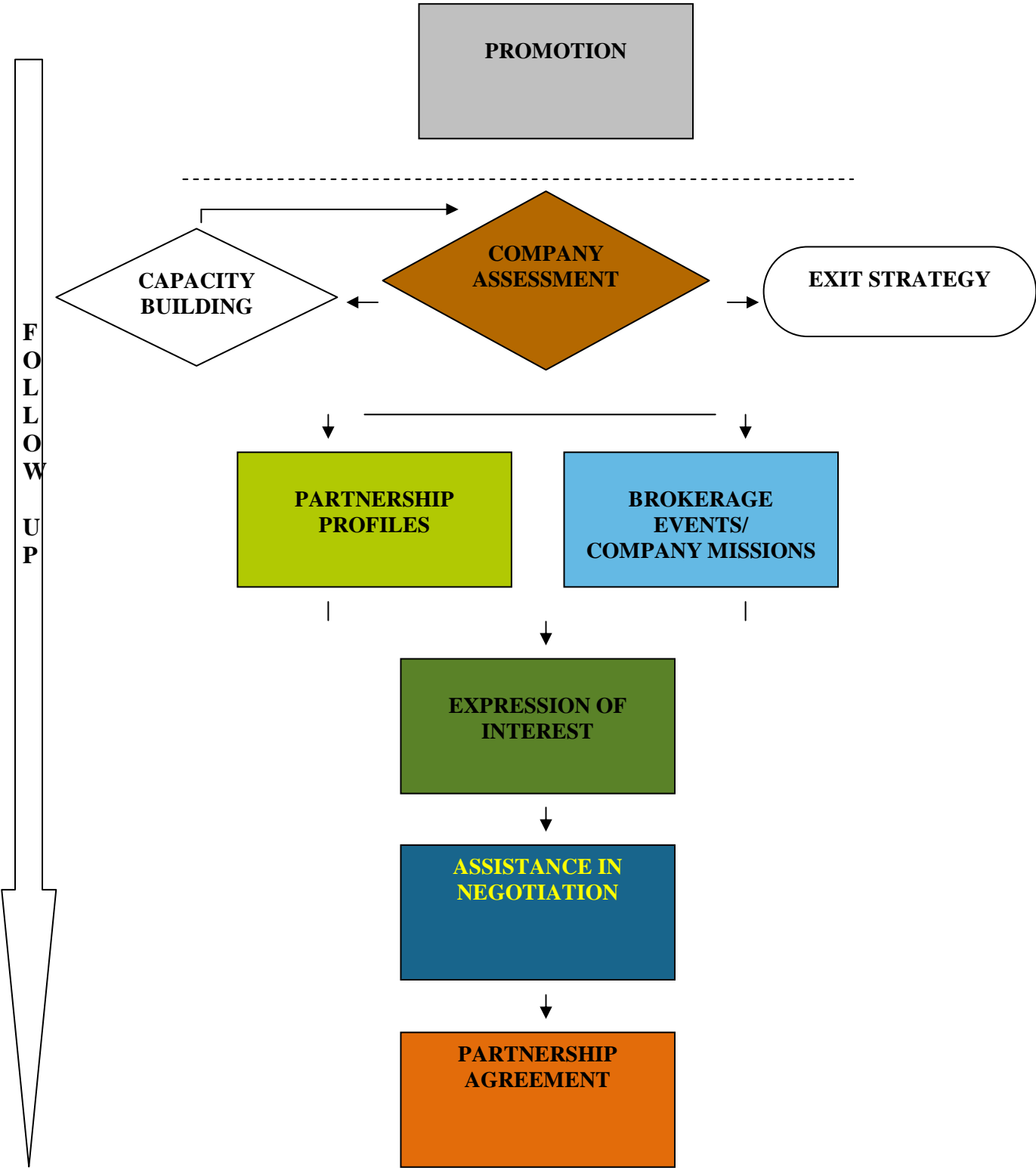
1. Know your clients and your Network partners
2. Know and respect the procedures of the partnership process
3. Work only with committed clients and partners
4. Be committed towards your clients and the other partners
5. Always think about the deal you want to happen – think about quality of partnership profiles, not quantity
6. Disseminate the partnership profiles
7. Follow up: communicate by keeping all parties informed and be responsive
8. Be professional by getting training and continuously improving your work
9. Read the guidelines provided by EACI
10. Respect the rules of the Code of Conduct

## DOS AND DON'TS OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

The process steps are described below. Each section has a dos and don'ts list. Here are dos and don'ts of the partnership process:

DOS	DON'TS
Build a relationship with the relevant representative of the company (managing director/sales director or similar).	Be satisfied with only a telephone conversation with a person in the company who has not got enough influence to carry out a process of internationalisation.
Make sure there is real commitment in the company for internationalisation and for receiving Network services.	Write a partnership profile without the commitment or consent of the company.
Disseminate partnership profiles in a targeted manner.	Forget that the purpose of the partnership process is to develop transnational partnership agreements.
Follow up with your client during the whole partnership process in order to obtain signed partnership agreements.	Neglect to update your colleagues and client on any progress or obstacle in the partnership process.
Differentiate between companies ready to publish a partnership profile and companies ready to receive partnership profiles.	Send an EoI without information about the company behind it, their cooperation request and contact details.
Focus on the quality of partnership profiles instead of quantity of profiles.	Forget to include your colleagues when preparing submission of a PA.
Assess and qualify companies making EoI.	
Follow up on each EoI.	

**FLOWCHART OF THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS**



## PROMOTION

Targeted marketing activities are essential in order to raise awareness about the service. An unaware company transforms into an interested company that can become a client. After promotional activities have been carried out, the first contact can be established.

No flowchart is provided for this chapter.

A potential client for the partnership process can be a company, a research organisation or an individual who would like to find an international partner (in another Network member country) for commercial, technical or research collaboration.

Usually, the first contact results from promotional activities such as a web presence, brochures, mailings or participation in events like conferences or business fairs. It can also be the result of signposting from other organisations or from recommendations from existing clients. It is therefore important to define a structured marketing strategy including the services related to partnership.

For the purpose of promotion, the Branding Working Group has established a branding toolbox that should be used to promote partnership services. The branding toolbox makes it easier than ever to apply the Enterprise Europe Network brand and it contains all the guidelines, rules, visuals, messages, templates and tips and tricks you need to promote the Network.

There are plenty of "headline" figures that emphasise our value and influence. For example:

- We are active in 50 countries
- We are composed of almost 600 partner organisations
- We address the needs of 25 million SMEs
- There are 20 000 partnership profiles in our databases
- Our services include brokerage events, company missions, profile disseminations

The success of marketing activities for the partnership process can be measured by the number of first contacts established in proportion with the amount of effort put into the marketing activities.

For more information go to

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/branding>

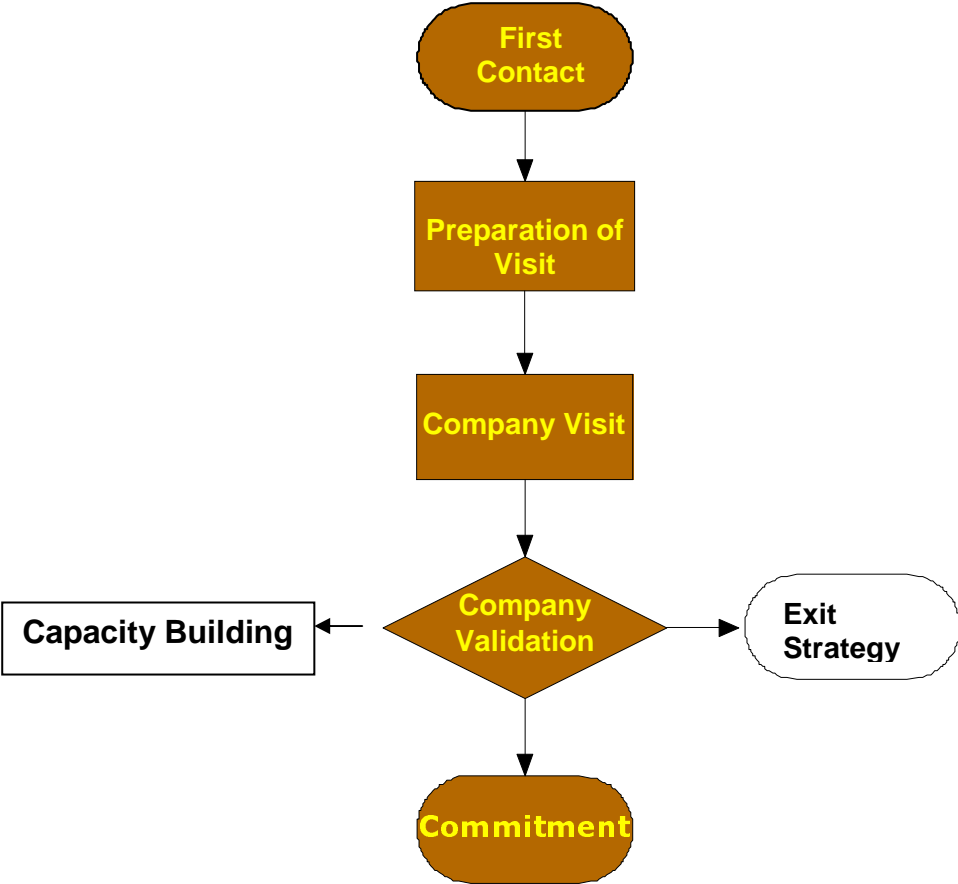
# HOW TO MANAGE COMPANY ASSESSMENT

## ABSTRACT

The process of company assessment is crucial from the moment our services are introduced to potential clients. The objective is to understand the company's experience, capacity and motivation to undertake transnational partnerships.

The final stage of the company assessment should include a commitment on the part of the company as well as on the part of the Network partner. This commitment should state our responsibilities and those of the company.

## FLOWCHART COMPANY ASSESSMENT





## 1. FIRST CONTACT

Resulting from the promotional activities described above, the first contact is important because this is the step where we can transform a potential client into a real client. Therefore, Network staff should act strategically to gain the interest of potential clients and answer their questions clearly.

If the potential client is expressing interest in our partnering services, we can proceed to the next step. If we cannot fulfil its needs, we can signpost the client to the appropriate person, inside or outside the host organisation.

### Follow-up and deciding on the next meeting

If the decision is made to go further, a face-to-face meeting must be arranged with the company.

DOS	DON'TS
Contact a high-level company representative, i.e. the managing director, sales director or innovation manager.	Ask for sensitive information about the company at this stage.
Give basic information about the our services.	Send any form for partnership profiles before the visit.
Show the benefits of being one of our clients.	
Explain that our services are free of charge.	

## 2. PREPARATION OF THE COMPANY VISIT

When preparing for the meeting, you should collect all necessary information in order to understand the explicit and implicit needs of the client. Furthermore, you should be sure that the Network staff member visiting the company is the most suitable to perform this task.

### Know your client

You must understand what kind of client you are dealing with (Is it a producer or a seller? What is its size? etc.). If possible, you should also have some knowledge about the client's sector of activity.

The objectives of the meeting are:

- to acquire information to qualify the company for the partnership process;
- to understand the needs of the company, explicit and implicit, which we can satisfy;
- to present our specific services that are of interest to the company.

### Acquire information about the client

You might like to start collecting information by studying the client's website before moving on to examine their databases along with those provided by relevant stakeholders. Additional figures can

be found in specialised databases, such as company registers or catalogues. You can then list the information which is not available.

The information cannot be considered valid if it is acquired only through the simple completion of a questionnaire by the company itself.

**Presentation of Network services to the company**

Now that some trust has been built with the company, it is time to present what we can offer in a more detailed way. When presenting the partnership process, it is worth preparing a Network showcase which could include:

- our success stories in the same the sector or for a similar service;
- company profiles taken from the databases.

DOS	DON'TS
Acquire as much information as possible about the client before meeting with them.	View the company visit as a pleasure trip.
Prepare the right questions to assess the client and understand their needs.	
Take documentation to present our services to the client.	

**3. COMPANY VISIT**

The company visit provides the opportunity to establish a long-term relationship between the Network and the company. You get a picture about the company’s products, activities abroad, processes and technologies. This knowledge is necessary for you to prepare further steps towards partnerships. The visit is a face-to-face meeting at the company premises (preferably), between the company manager or its marketing/innovation representative and yourself. During the company visit, we present ourselves and our services. Always remember, we are interested in developing long-term relationships.

**Interviewing and Brainstorming**

During the interview with the company representative, you should ensure that sufficient information is collected about the company’s level of internationalisation and innovation, and their need for support. You can help the company make decisions and develop a strategy for internationalisation or technology transfer. You can also provide it with market information and give financial advice.

In order to assess the readiness of the company you may use your methodology or opt for one of the tools developed by your colleagues. For example, you can use **the questionnaire for enterprise assessment proposed by the Internationalisation Working Group** as a foundation and you can add questions concerning the specific needs of the company. Some other tools to assess companies are available on the intranet.

### Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues to keep in mind:

- Is the product or service novel or innovative?
- Are there any IPR registered for the product or service, such as a registered trade mark, patent or registered design (formally, through intellectual property registrations, or less formally, for example the company has documented a process and kept it secret)? If that is the case, which countries are covered?
- Which organisation or individual owns the intellectual property (IP)? Does the IPR belong to a former employer or employee?
- Is the client aware of how intellectual assets (IA) and IP can be used as a business tool?
- Do the company's national and foreign competitors routinely safeguard or protect their IA/IP?
- Are there options to consider in commercialisation? Does the company understand what these are and the advantages/disadvantages of each to make an informed decision?
- Is a research project consortium agreement in progress?
- Should a confidentiality agreement be signed between the participants?
- If there are different models, which model has been chosen?

The IPR Working Group has elaborated an IP Toolkit, which can help you to deal with IPR issues. The IP Toolkit is available here:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/intellectual-property-completed>

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Identify a permanent contact person (manager or marketing representative).	Visit the company unprepared.
Show the benefit of being a Network client	Offer an unrealistic service.
Get detailed information about the company's products, market situation, certification etc.	
Discuss internationalisation strategy.	

## 4. COMPANY VALIDATION

The objective of the company assessment is to understand the company's experience, capacity and motivation to undertake transnational partnerships.

### Outcome of the assessment

The assessment methodologies listed below propose an overall scoring. However, this process requires more than mechanical scoring and the decision will be based on the answers to individual questions, and your experienced judgement.

Let the company know if it:

1. is not ready in terms of capacity and/or commitment;
2. needs signposting to other Network or non-Network services.
3. will be assessed based on additional information from another source;
4. may continue once some gaps have been addressed;
5. is likely to continue to the partnership profile stage.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Ensure that you have an understanding of international business issues.	Send an assessment form without discussing the company's information with the company.
Check for any problem identified through other business support providers or from background research.	Let the company think it will automatically create a partnership profile because it has answered the assessment questions.
Use electronic forms rather than re-typing information, where possible.	Forget to ask questions which are specific to activities between the host country and target countries.
Let the company know the outcome of the assessment as soon as possible (within an agreed timeframe).	Dismiss the possibility of other services, if it seems that they are not ready for full internationalisation.
Let the company know if there are gaps/issues it needs to address as a condition of continuing with the partnership process.	Assess the company if you know that it is far too early to internationalise based on earlier conversations.

## **5. COMMITMENT**

The final stage of the company assessment should include a type of commitment on the part of the company as well as on your part, as the representative of a Network partner. The involvement of the company, after having followed your thorough assessment and having defined the services it will receive, is essential in order to reach a specific agreement with potential partners. You should explain clearly that the Network seeks a long-term relationship with the company. This also underlines the need for continuous communication between the company and yourself.

In order to offer a proper service, you should reach a commitment with the company, thus assuring that the expressions of interest meet everyone's expectations.

The commitment phase has three main steps:

- Defining the services the company will receive from you;
- Agreeing on the commitment between the company and you – this can be expressed verbally or through a written 'letter of commitment', or even via a contract;
- Following up the commitment.

### **Defining the services the company is expecting from the Network partner**

Explain what kind of services you can provide to the company and what the company can expect from you. Additionally, the company must clearly understand what is expected from it in terms of responsiveness and information on progress in negotiation.

It is advisable to write down the services that you will provide the company. This should be done after the company has stated that it is willing to go international and has the capacity to do so.

### **Agreeing on the commitment between the company and the Network partner (verbally or through a written 'letter of commitment')**

The commitment of the company can be agreed upon verbally with the company or formalised in a letter of commitment signed by you and a person of responsibility in the company. The agreement of commitment, verbal or written, should include the following items:

- Your commitment as Network partner is:
  - to efficiently disseminate the partnership profile of the company in the Network;
  - to care about the participation in a company mission or at a cooperation brokerage event;
  - to provide the company with partnership profiles from the databases;
  - to keep the company updated on the progress of the partnership profile;
  - to evaluate and examine the cooperation proposals received to make sure that the information delivered by other Network partners is as relevant as possible;
  - to respond to correspondence from the company within five working days.
  
- The commitment of the company concerns managing its partnership profile and the Eols made and received. The agreement should state that the company:
  - is willing to go abroad;
  - provides the resources for going abroad;
  - will respond to your demands during the partnership process;
  - has the time and commitment to answer potential partners;
  - will notify the you whenever it does not need our services anymore;
  - must inform the us about all signed partnership agreements, at the latest 15 days after the signing of the agreement.

**Following up the commitment**

You should keep in contact with the company. It is important that you develop a close and continuing relationship with clients. The commitment between the company and the Network partners should be revised annually.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Be clear with the client about what kind of services they can expect from the Network.	Miss out on explaining the importance of commitment.
Be clear about the commitment we expect from the company.	Forget to tell the company that we expect a signature on the PA Statement Letter if they reach a cooperation agreement with our help.
Create a formal document, a Letter of Commitment if necessary.	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### General Documents

↳ Code of Conduct

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/code-conduct>

↳ A guide to company visits (Author: Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/guidelines-company-visit>

↳ Model of Letter of Commitment

(Hyperlink coming soon)

### Documents facilitating the assessment of the company's capacity to go international

↳ Questionnaire for enterprise assessment (First Diagnosis – Working Group Internationalisation)

[http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/system/files/documents/1\\_First\\_Diagnosis\\_vdef.doc](http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/system/files/documents/1_First_Diagnosis_vdef.doc)

Exclusively for Technology Transfer

↳ A guide to innovation audit (Author: Nbank)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/innovation-audit>

Exclusively for Research Cooperation

↳ FP7 check tool (Author: Chambre Régionale de Commerce et d'Industrie Auvergne)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/fp7-check-tool>

## HOW TO MANAGE PROFILES

### ABSTRACT

This chapter covers business cooperation, technology offers and requests, and research (mainly FP7) profiles. It addresses their creation, circulation, dissemination and matching within the Network.

Whether we publish a profile or disseminate a profile published by one of our colleagues, we establish a relationship with our Network colleagues, which is based on reliance and trust.

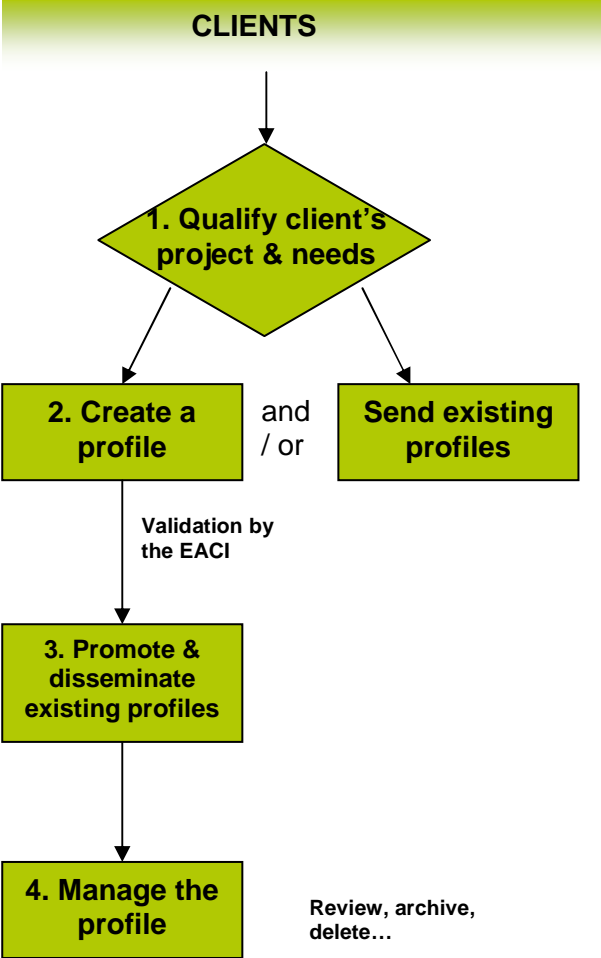
We rely on our colleagues:

1. To ensure that there is personal knowledge and assessment of the company behind the published profile (see step 1);
2. To provide us with high-quality profiles (based on a set of agreed standards, which are consistent across any type of profile) to be disseminated to our companies;
3. To disseminate the profiles we have published in a targeted way;
4. To follow-up in a timely and efficient manner.



# FLOWCHART PARTNERSHIP PROFILES

The flowchart presents the whole lifecycle of a partnership profile.



## 1. QUALIFY CLIENT'S PROJECT AND NEEDS

The knowledge we acquire about our client helps us decide whether they are ready and willing to publish a profile.

We have two options here:

1. We judge that our client is ready (i.e. it has the necessary skills) and willing (committed) to publish its own profile to find a partner. Then, we create a profile and publish it in our database.
2. Conversely, we can decide to simply send existing profiles to our client.

We should not create a profile for our client if:

- the client has not been through a readiness/diagnosis checklist;

- the client is not fully committed, but we need to chase our Performance Enhancement Systems (PES) targets;
- we have no personal knowledge of the company (that is, if the company is not one of our clients);
- we do not have the client’s agreement on the final version of the profile;
- our client only wants to sell products/services directly (i.e. not through a distributor/agent).

Option 2 is a temporary solution. After receiving some profiles, the company should publish its own profile if it has found a possible match and is willing to go ahead with Network partnering services. Of course, these steps should only be taken if we think that the company is ready.

We can also mix both options, i.e. publishing a profile and sending existing profiles to our client. This is highly recommended (see paragraph 3 - Promote and disseminate).

## 2. CREATE A PROFILE

In any section of the profile, quality of contents is essential. The guidelines should be strictly respected. It is essential that the rules in the guidelines are fully understood.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Send a template to the company either in English or in your national language or pre-fill the document before sending it to the company.	Publish without proofreading and editing, or before checking that the guidelines are being adhered to.
Ask your client to approve the final version of the profile.	Forget to treat all partnership profiles with the same level of quality.
When editing the profile, keep in mind your audience: - usually to the potential partners of your client, i.e. to companies that understand technical language in the full description. - nevertheless, abstracts should be understood by Network officers so that they can target relevant companies in their region and disseminate the profile.	
Speak about IP issues (please, check the outcomes of the IPR Working Group).	
Try to balance between offers and requests.	
Validate the profiles written internally in the consortium. If the IT tools do not foresee this step explicitly, validation should be systematically organised through other means, such as the use of EasyPP or by sending the template via mail to a colleague.	

Use the EasyPP tool.

### 3. PROMOTE AND DISSEMINATE PROFILES

This phase concerns the responsibility of each Network partner to disseminate new and existing partnership profiles in an efficient and targeted way. It means both:

- disseminating profiles to targeted groups of companies through newsletters, the robot tool or the Automated Matching Tool (AMT) etc. (see references for more details);
- searching in the partnership databases for matching profiles as soon as we publish a profile for our client (as an additional service to our client when we publish its profile).

Some of our clients may not be ready or willing to publish a partnership profile at this time. We shall then suggest to the clients that we send existing profiles to them which may match their needs.

The dissemination will have more impact if carried out through local or sectoral newsletters (paper or electronic). In this respect, the relationship with internal or external stakeholders – such as professional organisations, clusters and regional authorities – is essential. For technology profiles from the BBS, the Stakeholder Tool makes it possible to embed an automated selection of profiles into an external website. This example of dissemination has provided good results and is very much appreciated by the 'hosting' organisation.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Create a subscription system for your (potential) clients (through your website, for instance).	Register a client to a subscription system without their agreement (subscription policy).
Use newsletters and RSS feeds to disseminate profiles.	Forget to ensure that the client can easily 'unsubscribe' or provide a change of contact details.
Use trade organisation journals to disseminate profiles.	Disseminate profiles through mass non-targeted emailing.
Build a client database for receiving profiles (based on sectors).	
You may translate profile abstracts in your own language to disseminate them more effectively, but you must explain that a minimum level of English is needed.	
As an extra service, try to find potential partners for your client through website searches or through your colleagues.	

**4. MANAGE THE PROFILE**

The company and its profile should not be forgotten once it is published. In fact, keep in mind that the partnership profile should remain 'alive', which means that you have to keep in touch with your client for possible updates.

It happens sometimes that the client behind the profile does not respond to incoming Eol. In this case, it is essential that you demand an explanation from your client, in order to provide feedback to the company which has expressed its interest. In case the client does not react, do not hesitate to remove its profile from the partnership database after prior notification.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
See your clients and review their profiles regularly (for instance every six months) in order to decide whether you keep the published profile or if it requires modification or deletion.	Do not leave a profile in the database if the client is not reacting or has found the appropriate partner.
	Forget to note the date for checking the profile after six months.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ↘ Guidelines for BBS profiles
- ↘ BBS validator's checklist
- ↘ Guidelines for BCD profiles
- ↘ BCD template
- ↘ BCD validator's checklist

The above mentioned documents can all be found here:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partnership-tools-documentation>

## TOOLS

- ↘ Easy PP Tool

<http://www.easypp.eu/>

- ↘ Automatic Matching Tool (AMT)

The AMT is an IT solution that can be embedded into Network partner websites. This plug-in enables companies to establish criteria for receiving technology offers or request from the BBS. When it comes to installing this feature, more information can be provided by the IT helpdesk.

- ↘ Robots

Robots is a feature in the BCD which automates the screening of Business Cooperation profiles following pre-established criteria. This tool is managed internally by each partner.

- ↘ IRC Stakeholder Tool (BBS profile)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/irc-stakeholder-tool>

- ↘ List of tools for the dissemination of research profiles. This list has been elaborated by the Working Group for Collaboration with FP7 National Contact Points.

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partner-search-dissemination-research-profiles>

- ↘ Partner search tools and tool sharing. This paper has been elaborated by the Working Group for Collaboration with FP7 National Contact Points and aims at briefly listing the possibilities for tool sharing between the FP7 NCP Networks and the Enterprise Europe Network.

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/fp7>

# HOW TO MANAGE BROKERAGE EVENTS AND COMPANY MISSIONS

## ABSTRACT

Face-to-face meetings are of real value to SMEs as a means of building trust for future business agreements. Unlike larger companies, many SMEs do not have the capacity or the resources to deal with different styles of communication or business behaviour. Visiting a business and its management team through company missions, or physically meeting a potential counterpart at a brokerage event, helps to establish mutual confidence. Conversely, such meetings can prevent mismatches at an early stage.

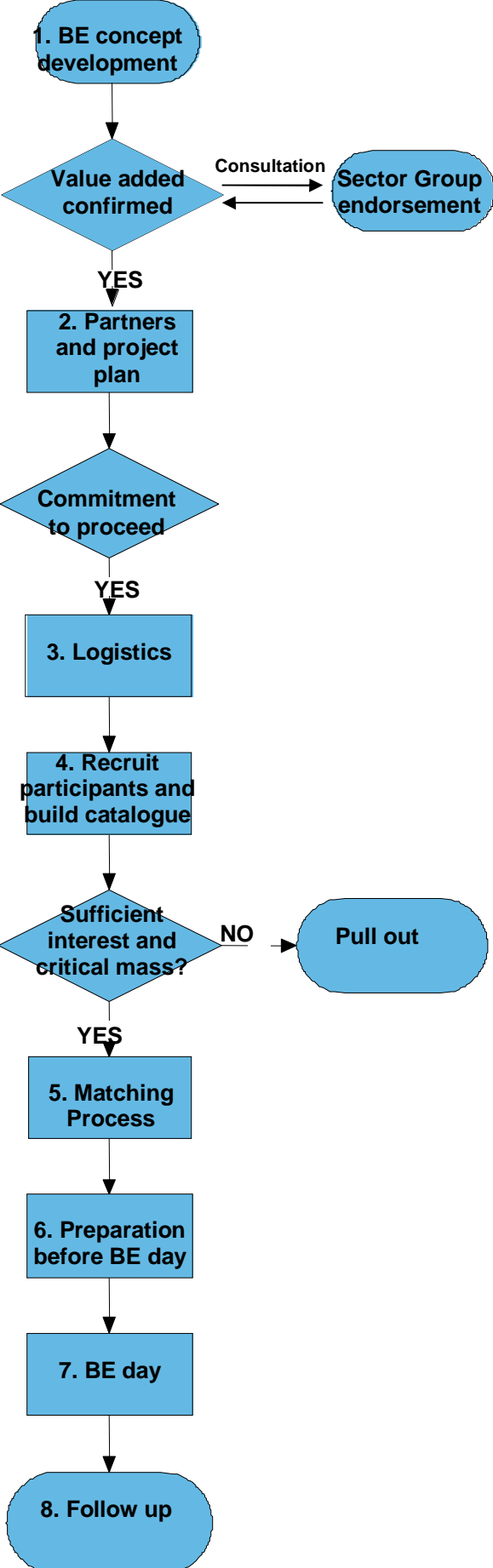
Brokerage events (BE) and company missions (CM) are both important and well established Network mechanisms that facilitate business meetings. However, organising an efficient and successful BE or CM takes a lot of effort. Thankfully, the Network provides everything that a company may need: resources and partners, interest and local networks.

## BROKERAGE EVENTS

A **brokerage event** offers a series of prearranged transnational meetings organised at a single venue for SMEs from across Europe and beyond. One or more local Network partners organise the venue in combination with a fair, a conference or other kind of event. Other Network partners bring companies and institutes to the event.

Based on partnership profiles (or a catalogue of profiles in the internet), all participants request meetings with other participants before the event. Some days before the event, a schedule for each participant is calculated showing the exact time and place for each meeting. Integrated tools can be used for the profile development, the validation and for the organisation of meetings.

**FLOWCHART BROKERAGE EVENTS**



## 1. BROKERAGE EVENT CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

### Deciding to hold a brokerage event

There are a number of issues to consider before organising a BE. Firstly, the organisation of or participation in BEs should be foreseen in the work programme; secondly, the partner needs adequate financial and human resources if they are to run a successful event.

There are several ways in which you can engage in a BE:

1. You can decide to be the project leader/coordinator of a brokerage event;
2. You can participate as a co-organiser or partner and actively contribute to the project management;
3. You can commit yourself to recruit companies to a BE.

### BE concept development (lead time: 12 months)

Look at the strategic justification for the event as well as how it fits regional economic and sector interests.

Ask relevant questions:

- Are there better alternatives to achieve the strategic aims?
- Are there adequate resources and contributing sponsors, trade associations, co-funders etc, to make the BE a success?
- Can a critical mass of companies be recruited to participate?
- Is there added value in organising the BE?

### Sector Group endorsement (lead time: 12 months)

A Sector Group (SG) is a group of Network partners who commit to work together in order to meet the specific needs of their clients operating in a particular sector. SGs – chaired by a Network partner – represent a framework to discuss, plan and implement collaborative activities that provide client companies with services which have a European added value. Brokerage events represent one of the core activities of the SGs.

When thinking about organising a BE ask the relevant SGs to list the BE in their rolling plan, or at least to list it as an interesting event. The endorsement provides important help for the BE in recruiting partners and companies. Re-evaluate, if you do not get an endorsement from an SG, and consider cancelling.

There might be special circumstances (connections, political will, etc.) for organising the event. In this exceptional case, you can proceed without SG endorsement but at least keep it informed.

In any case, the organisation of a BE in parallel with a SG BE should be avoided.

To know more about SGs and to see the list of SGs, go to:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/about-sector-groups>



## 2. PARTNERS AND PROJECT PLAN

### **Identify and select possible partners: (lead time: 12-8 months)**

Sector Group members, other Network partners, relevant associations, clusters, business networks and governmental organisation are all actors that should be considered in the search for relevant partners. Identify sources of co-funding, sponsorship and support for the event. Spread the information about the existence of the BE as wide as possible, including the FirstClass country conferences.

### **Project plan: (lead time: 12-10 months)**

- Check calendars for competing events and holidays etc.
- Identify the location: should the brokerage event be organised at a trade fair, at a conference or as a stand-alone event?
- Forecast size/number of participants and meetings.
- Develop a project plan that includes all relevant human and financial resources, along with a timeline and milestones.

### **Commitment to proceed: (lead time: 12-10 months)**

Get a clear feeling for the commitment of the potential partners. The first choice is Network partners; plan B partners are non-Network organisations. If there is no critical mass of interested and committed potential partners, stop the process. Do not waste time and effort on reluctant or unreliable partners.

## 3. LOGISTICS (lead time: minimum 6 months)

Detailed plans for the logistics including rooms, catering, technical equipment, transport and additional offers must be developed (checklist examples can be found in the references).

### **Of key importance:**

- Identify and book the venue (meeting rooms, tables, catering and hotels if required). Consider renting a conference room which connects to the exhibition halls. This is a great way to maintain a strong link with the fair while providing a quiet atmosphere in which to do business.
- Identify and licence BE management software and website software. Several tools are available for different stages of the process, starting from internet project pages through to registration, profile development, validation, meeting requests and matchmaking. The selection depends on the partners' choice (budget, CRM. etc).
- Set up a website which contains all the essential information: venue, maps, programmes, hotels, registration, on-line profile submission, catalogues, etc.
- Advertise on Calendar of Events of the central EACI public website.

## 4. RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS AND CRITICAL MASS

Recruiting participants is the most important step for all partners involved in a BE. Before the host partner starts to promote the BE, it is a good idea to have a certain number of profiles from companies in their own region uploaded in the catalogue. This provides a hook for other companies to register.

When recruiting companies, all partners should explain clearly:

- the purpose of the event, which is to find transnational partnerships;
- what is expected of the companies in terms of preparation, participation, attendance etc;
- what the companies can expect from the meetings.

If necessary, companies agreeing to participate could sign a commitment agreement. Participation fees can be charged, but this must be agreed at the project planning stage by all partners.

### **Intellectual property rights issues to keep in mind**

Target participants should be informed about IPR. Be cautious when revealing sensitive information. If needed, bring a model confidentiality agreement to the event.

Know the IPR of the participants and use symbols like © ® or ™ to make others aware that IPR are registered. Make sure that IPR are valid in the region hosting the event. If not, expand the IPR in advance.

### **Build catalogue (lead time: 4-1 months, set strict deadlines!)**

Ideally, final deadline for delivery of profiles should be four weeks before the event. The host partner should already have selected appropriate tools for the BE. The partners should ensure that profiles follow the BBS and BCD guidelines.

### **Sufficient interest and critical mass?**

Cancel the BE if you cannot achieve a critical mass of committed or sufficiently interested partners.

## 5. MATCHING PROCESS

### **Matching process (lead time: 4-2 weeks)**

Strict deadlines are recommended. Use the selected suitable tool for the matchmaking and scheduling. Encourage partners to select meetings: you will need to chase! You can choose whether the meetings need to be confirmed at this stage by the company receiving the request. This will most probably lead to fewer no-show meetings on the BE-day.

Marking the individual schedules, send out to participants and be prepared to revise if required. Remember to give sufficient time to draw up, send and revise schedules (two weeks is comfortable, one week could be tight).

## 6. PREPARATION BEFORE BE DAY

### Preparation before BE day (1 week to 1 day)

Finalise the detailed planning. Do not underestimate the pre-preparation required for the BE to run smoothly. As the organiser you are fully responsible for a hitch-free day and should be in full control. If you are bringing companies to a BE, confirm their attendance, ensure that they have their meeting schedules and that they know where and when to turn up.

- Reconfirm all arrangements (room, catering, tables, etc.).
- Organise promotional material, stands, etc.
- Prepare delegate packs. Print and include schedules. Each scheduled meeting should include a table number.
- Have several copies of the Master Schedule for yourself and other organisers.
- Print the catalogue, name badges, table numbers, etc.

## 7. DAY OF THE BROKERAGE EVENT

Remember to have enough helping hands on the day itself. Set up tables with numbers, chairs, coffee stands, registration stand, etc. Do not forget to put schedules in the delegate packs and have separate copies of the master schedule for the organisers. Collecting feedback about the meetings on the day itself is very useful. Have feedback forms ready and ask for feedback about the individual meetings.

## 8. FOLLOW-UP

### Direct follow-up with companies and partners

Ask the companies for direct feedback and evaluation. Where possible, follow-up activities should be coordinated by the host organisation, although it is clearly the responsibility of all partners to actively follow up and track discussions between the companies. Progress reports should be produced.

### Follow-up for Partnership Agreements (PAs)

In general, PAs are not finalised on the day of the BE. A coordinated follow-up must be carried out in several rounds using email, telephone or direct contacts after one month, three months, six months and one year after the event. The partner responsible for recruiting the company should do the follow-up and report the results to the host organisation. Remember to put the host organisation as Network partner three in the Partnership Agreement documents.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Consider organising the event in connection to other events such as trade fairs or conferences to create added value for the participants.	Organise a BE where there is no regional support or critical mass of participants.
Recruit companies and submit profiles as soon as possible. More profiles attract more participants.	Arrange BEs that last longer than two days as this reduces the chances companies have to meet.
Consider charging costs, at least the real organisational costs (catering, rent of rooms, etc.). This will dramatically reduce the number of no shows.	Rely on non-committed partners and underestimate the resources required to engage in a BE.
Only work with committed partners and seek SG endorsement and the inclusion of your BE in their rolling plan.	Representation of companies or institutes by Network partners is not optimal and should be avoided.
Be courageous enough to pull out early if critical mass/support/take-up is not evident.	Stop the follow-up procedure too early. Ask your companies frequently for results. The longest period between a BE and a successful PA known in the Network is eight years!
	Do not place the BE in remote locations or in minor fairs as this will lead to low levels of recruitment.

## COMPANY MISSIONS

A **company mission** (CM) brings together small groups of clients for prearranged, transnational visits. Face-to-face meetings can be part of a CM. Usually, a local Network partner organises a one- or two-day trip to selected companies and institutes in their region.

Some CM models exist:

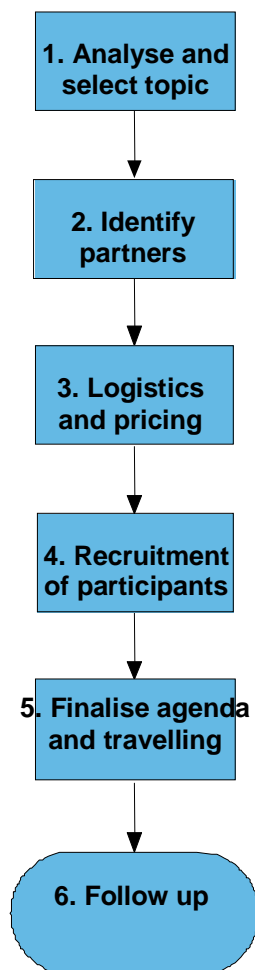
- Visiting the potential partner's premises allows the mission to get a feeling of the company's technology, production, management and 'culture'. A fixed scheduled round trip to the selected target companies and institutes is organised. Companies meet up with local and visiting Network partners and visiting companies' representatives.
- Companies meet in a more or less central place for bilateral meetings.
- Fair-based CM: if the target companies are exhibitors at a big, international fair, it is impossible to visit the premises of the exhibiting SMEs. In this case, arranging meetings with the companies' leading management at the fair offers a sensible way forward.

Company missions can be divided into two groups:

**Incoming CM:** the main driver and organiser is a local Network partner who has identified an interesting topic or a suitable situation such as a niche or an emerging interest, or a critical mass of local companies and institutes. At the same time, this Network partner will be looking for visiting companies or entrepreneurs from other Network partners. The local partner must be willing to organise the company mission in their region and will have the suitable personnel and infrastructure.

**Outgoing CM:** a Network partner can provide suitable companies willing to visit other companies and institutes in a foreign region. The Network partner will be trying to identify suitable regions with interested partners. Usually, the regional Network partner receiving a visit will organise the CM tour.

## FLOWCHART COMPANY MISSIONS



### 1. ANALYSE AND SELECT A TOPIC

Before taking steps to arrange a CM you should:

- **Analyse regional sectors** and identify suitable industrial sectors.
- Analyse the specific needs and strengths of your region.
- Find niches or 'monopolies' that are interesting for companies from other regions.
- Check changes in legislation which can create new needs.
- Take political priorities into consideration, including those from regional authorities.
- Identify attractive companies, institutes, centres which are potential hosts.
- Select the most interesting topic in your region.

## 2. IDENTIFY PARTNERS

### Search for Network partners in a targeted way:

- Discuss and introduce your CM idea to the suitable SGs. The best solution is to include the CM in the SG's rolling plan. If the rolling plan cannot be changed, try to find SG members interested in the topic and willing to participate. Other Network partners might also be interested.
- Contact colleagues in your personal network. Inform Network partners in the targeted country(ies) via the FirstClass national conferences. Get in touch with other stakeholders, such as clusters, local networks, industry associations, chambers of commerce, and known companies.

### Find committed partners

Depending on the CM concept, partners from one region can be enough. However, depending on the topic, a CM might be interesting to companies from several regions. Get a clear feeling for the commitment of the potential partners. The first choice is Network partners – fall back (or plan B) partners will be from non-Network organisations.

### Guarantee commitment

Finalise an agreement (verbal or written) with the partner or the partners for the project. Monitor the level of commitment of your Network partners, and if they are reluctant do not waste time and effort. If no reliable commitment with suitable partner(s) can be finalised, select an alternative regional topic and restart the CM process.

## 3. LOGISTICS AND PRICING

Put forward a proposal by taking into account all details and the price. With the committed partner(s), analyse the details of the CM, the travel options, the potential companies or institutes to be visited, cost estimation, (possible) sponsors and the price to be charged to the participating companies.

Select a suitable location. CM meetings can take place in a number of different locations, including company premises, hotels, partner offices, at brokerage events or at the local Embassy. The most productive locations are generally company premises.

The hosting partner can develop some additional activities for the CM in the target region depending on time, accessibility, distances and costs. A fair or an exhibition may be included in the programme.

## 4. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

- a) The committed partners in the outgoing regions have to identify companies or institutes willing to travel to the targeted region. The special needs and requests of the travelling companies can form the basis for the selection of the companies to be visited.
- b) Both partners decide how company recruitment will proceed:

- The host partner provides the (guest) partners with profiles to match;
  - Both partners provide profiles and all parties identify possible matches.
- c) The partners (Network and non-Network) have to finalise the list of companies and institutions willing to travel to the target region. When recruiting companies, the partners should explain clearly:
- the purpose of the event, i.e. to generate transnational partnerships;
  - what is expected of the companies in terms of preparation, participation, attendance, etc;
  - what the companies can expect from the meetings.
- d) The host partner finalises the commitment of the companies and/or institutes to be visited and checks that management will allow visits to premises that hold production or research facilities.
- e) Is there sufficient interest? If there is not enough interest cancel the CM and restart with new and alternative topics and other partners. Do not waste time and effort with unsuitable Network partners.

### **Intellectual Property Rights issues to keep in mind**

The target participant should be informed about IPR. Be cautious when revealing sensitive information. If needed, bring a model confidentiality agreement to the event. Know the IPR of the participant and use symbols like © ® or ™ to make others aware that IPR are registered. Make sure that IPR are valid in the region hosting the event. If not, expand the IPR in advance.

## **5. FINALISE AGENDA AND TRAVELLING ARRANGEMENTS**

Do not underestimate logistical tasks:

- a) Finalise all details of the company mission including the agenda, budget, timetable and travel arrangements. Remember also to contact a photographer, prepare handouts, organise a reception and involve external parties such as the media and business associations. Be sure to have enough personnel and transport facilities for last minute changes and delays, communication etc.
- b) Develop a catalogue with all details of the companies visiting and visited.

## **6. FOLLOW-UP**

Follow-up should be ensured by both partners. If you have organised or participated in a CM do not forget to:

- a) Collect direct feedback from your Network colleagues and from the companies and institutes that were involved in the visit.
- b) Clearly commit the companies and institutes to submit feedback on ongoing or new cooperation started by the CM, and clarify your interest and the interest of the European Commission as the funding organisation for documented PAs.



- b) Contact the companies after one month, three months, six months and after one year to follow-up the PA process connected to the CM. Continue the follow-up if appropriate and necessary.
- c) Write a success story for the EACI and collect PA.

DOS	DON'TS
Charge cost for the travelling companies. If the travelling companies have to pay for some of the organisational costs you may recruit less but more committed participants.	Rely on uncommitted partners.
Organise an optional information day for the travelling companies with presentations on the region to be visited. Presentations should provide information about the region's industrial sectors, as well as about international business and technology transfer issues.	Organise CMs that last longer than two days. This is normally the maximum period of time that most company representatives can afford to spend away from their companies.
	Organise a free touristic CM with accompanying spouse programme.
	Represent participants as a Network partner. In exceptional cases (e.g. last minute cancellation, illness), representation might be better than not showing up.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

↘ Brokerage Event Feedback Questionnaire

(Hyperlink coming soon)

↘ Brokerage Event Feedback Questionnaire

(Hyperlink coming soon)

## TOOLS

↘ Check list for Brokerage Events

(Hyperlink coming soon)

↘ Detailed Check list for Brokerage Events

(Hyperlink coming soon)

↘ Internet based matching tools

First Class public conference 'IT alternatives to the BEMT'

## HOW TO MANAGE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

### ABSTRACT

The Eol stage is one of the underrated steps of the partnership process, but it is essential in order to establish a first contact with potential partners.

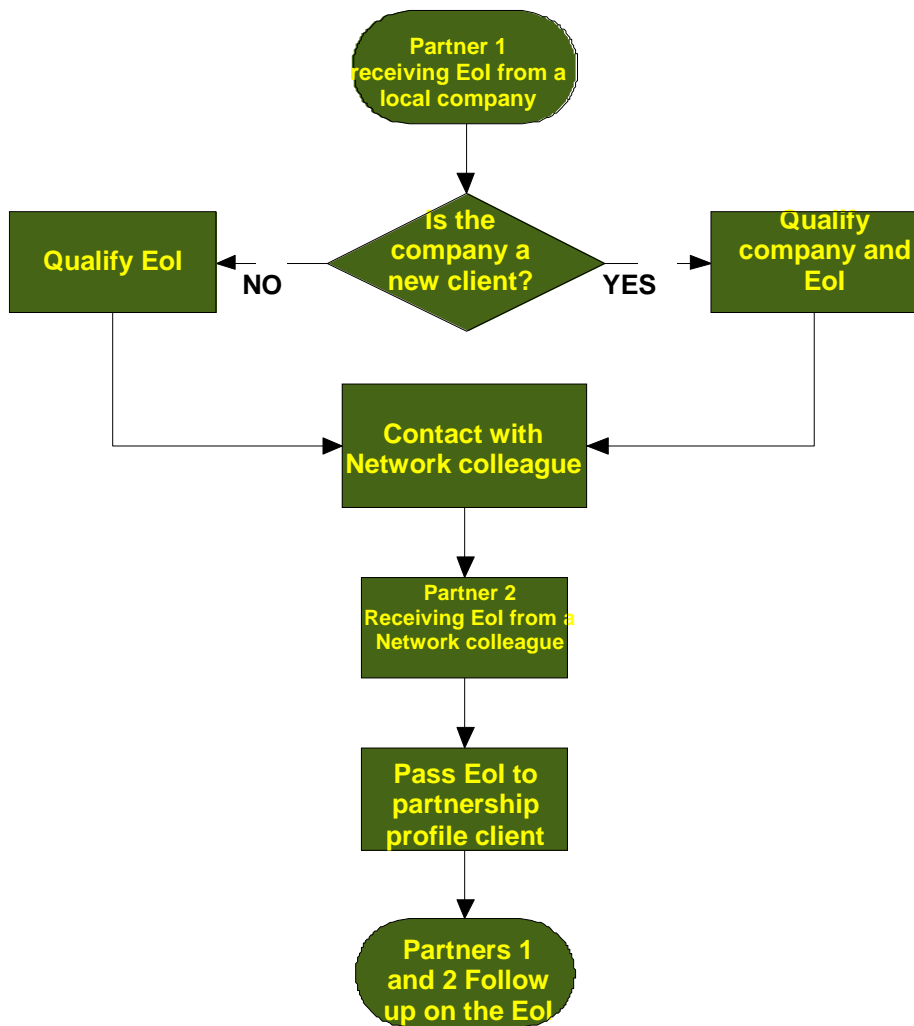
The message to give to our clients is that we bring them into contact with good potential partners. So it is our responsibility to do a first quality check of our Eol clients.

This starts with the way we organise the dissemination of the partnership profiles. We must send the message that companies that are interested in those profiles have to deliver a minimum amount of information about themselves and their activities. They must explain why they are interested in the profiles (or why they want to fill in an Eol form). A good company with real interest in a profile will see it as an advantage to provide this information because it wants to come into contact with the profiled company.

The assessment by Network partners of an Eol client and the content of an Eol form is as important as the assessment of clients publishing a partnership profile.

Taking the above mentioned considerations into account, a procedure has been designed to manage an expression of interest in an efficient manner.

## FLOWCHART EXPRESSION OF INTEREST



### 1. RECEIVING AN Eoi FROM A LOCAL COMPANY

Following the promotion of profiles by website, newsletter, company visits or seminars, you and other Network partners will receive Eois from local companies and R&D centres.

It is your responsibility to check the quality of the company and the relevance of the Eoi that you receive. It is also your responsibility to ensure, if appropriate, that this company makes contact with the company behind the partnership profile.

**2. APPRAISING A COMPANY AND AN EoI**

Before we send out an EoI to the partner behind the partnership profile, the quality of the company and the EoI have to be checked.

You must consider whether the interest is justified for the partnership profile in question. This is the case even if it concerns a client with a partnership profile of their own, or a company which previously expressed interests in profiles, or a contact who we know is interested in international cooperation.

**Quality test of content of EoI**

The EoI must have clear information that enables the other company to be sure that this is the type of partner they are looking for. This information should be placed either in a document that we send as an attachment or should be pasted into e-mail content.

**The EoI must contain:**

- The reference number of the partnership profile that the company is interested in. The title or the summary of the profile may be added to make sure that the reader knows which profile the company is interested in;
- The contact details of the company that is making the EoI, including the name of the company, contact person, address, telephone number, e-mail and website;
- The activities of the company behind the EoI;
- An explanation of what the company is offering or what it is looking for. Explain the motivation of the company behind the EoI and how this company is able to satisfy the needs of the company receiving the EoI.

**Quality test of EoI client**

We must be sure that our company is ready to go international. Has it got the capacity to develop or offer cooperation and is it able to communicate with other companies? In case all the information required for the formalisation of the EoI has not been gathered, you must contact the company (by phone, e-mail or visit).

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Collect all necessary information to make sure your Network colleague can evaluate the EoI.	Transfer an EoI only by an email with content as 'I have a company which is interested in profile ref. ... Please send me the contact details of your client'.
	Allow your EoI client to make direct contact with the Network partner behind the partnership profile for further information.

### 3. CONTACT WITH AN ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK COLLEAGUE

If you have ensured the quality of company and the related EoI, you can send the information to the Network colleague behind the partnership profile and ask for the contact details of the client. In some cases, the company behind the EoI wants to receive additional information on the partnership profile of the company behind the profile.

### 4. RECEIVING AN EOI FROM AN ENTERPRISE EUROPE NETWORK COLLEAGUE

It is the responsibility of the Network partner behind the partnership profile to evaluate the EoI and reply to the partner behind the EoI, **within five working days**, with one of the following messages:

- You judge for yourself that the EoI is not appropriate and you filter. You can then either refuse the EoI ('the match is not appropriate for this reason...') or ask for more information.
- You pass the EoI to the company behind the partnership profile to obtain its opinion and agreement to go further.
- You pass the EoI to the company behind the partnership profile to receive the requested information for the company behind the EoI.
- You judge that the EoI is appropriate and you send the contact details of your client (if such a procedure was agreed with your client).

### 5. PASS EoI TO THE PARTNERSHIP PROFILE CLIENT

In case of positive evaluation, you must inform the partnership profile client about the EoI. The company has to decide if they want to establish contact, get some more information or if they are not interested. They may also say that they are not yet ready to cooperate now, but maybe interested in the future. You then explain the client's answer to the colleague behind the EoI.

#### **Intellectual property rights issues to keep in mind**

In the first contact between clients, raise awareness about sensitive information at an early stage. If needed, make a confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement. Also, make sure that the client's IPR are valid. The IPR part of a client profile should also correspond to the client's wishes.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Inform the client with the partnership profile about the Eol as soon as possible.	Never decide for your customer unless you have agreed to do so.
Inform the partner behind the Eol as soon as possible about the company's answer.	
Make clear to our clients that it is the responsibility of both sides to contact each other at short notice.	

## 6. FOLLOW-UP OF THE Eol PROCESS

Each Network partner should stay in touch with their companies and ask about progress!

Ask the client behind the partnership profile for an explanation if there is no longer any interest in the Eol. This information might be of value to the client behind the Eol. The same applies if the Eol client is no longer interested.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
If partners get some information about the progress of discussions between the companies they should inform the other partner.	Forget about the client and the Network partner.
Each partner has an obligation to be honest and inform the other side that, in their opinion, there is no serious chance of reaching a partnership agreement. Each partner is best placed to assess the commitment of their clients.	
If a profile is 'dead' then all involved parties must be informed. The Network partner concerned should remove the profile from relevant databases.	

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

↘ Template for Eol on BCD

↘ Template for Eol on BBS

Both documents can be found at

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partnership-tools-documentation>

↘ Eol Checklist

(Hyperlink coming soon)

## TOOLS

↘ Best practice: e-mail model for Eol

(Hyperlink coming soon)



# HOW TO PROVIDE VALUE IN NEGOTIATIONS

## ABSTRACT

This section covers the process of negotiation between companies which are striving for a transnational partnership. The role of Network partners at this stage is to assist their client companies in the process of negotiation, which includes the following steps:

- Qualification of the foreign company;
- Pre-contract negotiations;
- Preparing a draft of the contract;
- Negotiating the draft of the contract;
- Conclusion of negotiations.

It is likely that neither you nor your host organisation can provide all the services required in the negotiation process. Therefore you should make it clear to your client which services you can provide as a Network partner and which ones can be (or have to be) outsourced. Be 'reasonable' in your offer, i.e. consider if you are capable of providing a sufficient level of quality and reliability.

It is very likely you will play the role of facilitator in all stages of the negotiation. Basically, as facilitator you should be capable of:

- Understanding what is going on in the deal and suggest the next steps if you are asked;
- Providing your point of view on the specific stage of the negotiation process;
- Making referrals to qualified service providers/organisations;
- Helping your client in the negotiation if they are insecure about their foreign language skills and/or ability to negotiate .

## FLOWCHART NEGOTIATION ASSISTANCE

It is essential to listen to the needs of the client so that you can deliver the right kind of assistance. You need to keep all possible issues in mind in order to be prepared should the company need help or if negotiation between the companies stalls.



## 1. QUALIFICATION OF THE FOREIGN COMPANY

Following the initial qualification requirements, which were taken into account in the previous chapters, this phase consists of a more detailed check of the potential partner.

The contact details of the prospect, its expectations and intentions, should have been submitted to your client already. It will depend on your client company whether it wants to start discussions. If your client decides to continue, it is likely that it will require further information about the prospect. The client will, of course, process its own verifications but, when needed and if possible, the Network partner should be able to suggest the next steps. Here are some examples to consider. Please, remember to involve your Network colleague as well.

### Company legal status

Is the company a legal and existing entity? This information can be found through web services, often provided by national entities (e.g. legal or tax authorities), or in business registers. Your Network colleague involved in the deal can help you directly or point you to official company registers (such as courts or chambers of commerce).

### Company financial status

Is the company financially stable? What is its credit score? Relevant Network colleagues that are either involved in the deal or not could help you to find the information. For example, they can look into commercial databases to which they have access, such as official governmental databases, etc.

### References

Check if there are former or existing partners or clients willing to recommend the company.

### Certifications

Does the company have the right credentials for the specific business they are running? For example:

- Is the prospect certified to deal with pharmaceuticals/chemical products in the respective countries?
- Does the offered technology satisfy necessary EU safety certification?
- Does the prospect employ people with the necessary certificates?

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Help your client as much as possible in checking potential partners by asking the right questions and providing information.	Neglect the company when they have been introduced to a potential partner.
Help your Enterprise Europe Network colleague with information about local companies – the local partner usually has easier access to databases with information on companies.	Proceed to checks on your own without being qualified to do so (e.g. a credit check requires specific skills).

## **Other legal, financial and practical issues**

Entering a new collaboration presupposes multiple issues (financial, technical, economic and legal) that your client has to tackle. You should know the internal and external resources in your region and/or in your country that are committed to helping SMEs. This will help you instruct your client where to turn.

Here we suggest some other issues that your client may face:

**National laws** - In some countries, activities can be subject to specific regulation. Within the single market, the Enterprise Europe Network can check if these constraints are compliant with EU regulation, such as CE marking or the services directive.

**IPR** - Are there any intellectual property rights that need to be considered? Is the product patented or protected in any other way? Please consult the outcomes of the IPR Working Group to provide a good service to the company.

**Taxes and VAT** - The company might need information on how to handle VAT and taxes when doing business in a new market.

## **2. STRUCTURE OF THE DEAL**

This phase concerns the deal negotiations. Many clients are unsure about how to act when they want to undertake transnational negotiations or when they have to draft contracts with a foreign partner.

### **Pre-contract negotiations**

At the very beginning of the deal, more detailed information is expected to be shared between both parties in order to clarify the offer or request on which an EoI has been raised. Your scope of involvement may vary. If your client is experienced, it may not need immediate help. However, it is highly advisable to insist on being in copy while, and if, information is shared between both parties via emails. Pre-contract negotiations mostly concern economic and technical issues. Your client or prospect is required to provide evidence on these issues, which will indicate if the subject of negotiation is worth a deal.

You may be asked to provide help as soon as both parties get to the point when a contract needs to be prepared (either a non-disclosure agreement or any following contract).

### **Preparation of the draft contract**

If you are capable and it is within your organisation's remit, you may offer your client assistance in the preparation of the draft contract. This does not mean that you will be the person who prepares the draft – an experienced lawyer should do that. The use of sample contracts is not recommended as every business case is different. However, you should look into specific samples to get basic understanding what specific contracts are all about. On the internet you can find sample contracts and related reading, such as the Lambert's Model Contracts: <http://www.ipso.gov.uk/lambert>

For more details, see the bibliography entry relating to key elements for drafting a contract.

DOS	DON'TS
Provide advice only on the issues you are qualified in (in some countries and in some areas only entitled bodies can provide certain kinds of advice).	Rely in standard contracts without checking specific conditions for the companies involved and for the specific deal.
Signpost clients to relevant support actors (attorneys, IPR experts...).	

### Negotiating the draft of the contract

In this stage, your value may lie in provision of advice and opinion relating to negotiated paragraphs in the contract. You may also be able to supervise the negotiations to make sure they do not fizzle out. The goal is to find a win-win solution. However, to do this job properly, you should have experience in negotiating contracts accompanied by sound judgement.

### 3. MEDIATION

This phase concerns mediation between companies trying to find a suitable form of cooperation.

**Language.** For some companies, language might be an obstacle to reaching agreements with potential partners. Some Network partners offer translation and interpretation services at an early stage. It is especially important for the company to make sure that they understand all parts of the contract. If the company is uncertain of terms in the contract, due to confusion about languages, the Network partner can advise them to get the contract translated by a professional.

**Cultural understanding.** Make sure that the company has an understanding of the business culture in the country that they want to do a deal in.

### Conclusion of negotiations

It is rewarding for all parties to reach this final stage. Make sure that your Network partner prepares all necessary documents for reporting, according to the EACI guidelines, and that your client signs a PA Statement Letter. You should ensure that the next steps between your client and its counterpart are set and have milestones. You should continue the assistance after the deal is concluded, and you should clearly define where Network cost-free services end.

Most of deals are terminated because they become unfeasible at a particular stage. That is life. If such a situation arises then the Network partner whose client decides to pull out must notify their Network colleague without delay.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

↘ Guide to international contracts (Author: Agence Régionale d'Exportation de Picardie)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/guide-international-contracts>

↘ Guide 'Preparing international meetings' (Author: CRCI Centre – Orleans)

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/preparing-international-meeting>

↘ For third countries, see country fact sheet prepared by WG on Internationalisation

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/internationalisation-completed>

↘ FP7 Consortium agreement models. Some examples elaborated by private businesses can be found on the IPR Helpdesk webpage under the links/docs section

<http://www.ipr-helpdesk.eu/>

↘ Checklist for a Consortium Agreement for FP7 projects

[ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/fp7-consortium-agreement-checklist-2011v2\\_en.pdf](ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/fp7-consortium-agreement-checklist-2011v2_en.pdf)

↘ Example of key elements for drafting a contract

(Hyperlink coming soon)

## HOW TO MANAGE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

### ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of the partnership process is to ensure that Network partners' clients finally sign-up to long-term collaboration with proper and adequate companies which match their needs and expectations. In the Enterprise Europe Network, this long-term collaboration is called a Partnership Agreement (PA).

To record the Partnership Agreements some documents have to be signed by the clients acknowledging the help provided by you and other Network partners. These are:

- The PA Report signed by Network partners
- The PA Statement Letter signed by the Network partners' clients

For Network members, the number and impact of these PAs are two of the most important performance indicators for measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of brokerage activities. In order to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Network's activities, PAs should, in most of the cases, be the result of assistance provided by two Network partners.

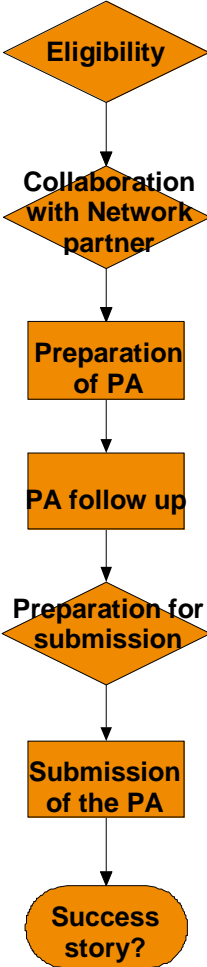
Within the Network, PAs need to meet strict eligibility criteria in order to be reported as deliverables. All information about eligibility (activities, parties involved and documents to be sent to EACI) can be found in the PA Guidelines.

PA documents should be prepared jointly by you and the other Network partner(s) involved in the process and sent to both companies to get their signatures on the Partnership Agreement Statement Letters.

**FLOWCHART PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS**

The following flowchart presents the process of a Partnership Agreement. The six main steps will be described hereafter.

**1. ELIGIBILITY**



There are different types of partnership agreements specified in the PA Guidelines published on the Network Intranet. The PA Guidelines also indicate the submission and validation processes.

**2. COLLABORATION WITH NETWORK PARTNERS**

Communication between you and the other partners concerned is essential. Therefore, as soon as a partner knows that an agreement has been signed by its company it is important to inform the other

Network partner(s) involved in the signing process. Timetables for other procedures, like preparing PA reports and statement letters, have to be agreed together.

If the PA is a one-way agreement, then the relevant Network partner prepares PA Report and Statement Letter by itself.

In each case, the PA Report must clearly indicate the services provided by the partner to its client, as well as the benefits resulting from the agreement. This should be done before the report is sent to the company, which will then sign the PA Statement Letter.

Both Network partners must agree on the contents of the report before submission.

Special attention should be paid if one of the clients estimates that the agreement with the other party is not fully concluded and wants to wait before signing the PA Statement Letter. If this happens, you, or the partner in question, should wait until claiming the PA.

Brokerage events are one source of PAs. The co-organiser of the brokerage event will be reported as a third party in the agreement. This will show how many PAs an event can generate and will help measure its efficiency and success. Therefore, when a PA generated after a BE meeting is reported, the partner will always inform the relevant organising partner(s) about the conclusion of the agreement and provide the relevant information in the statement letter and report.

**Intellectual Property Rights issues to keep in mind:** if the client agrees that the PA could be used for Network promotion purposes it will tick 'yes' in the appropriate box in the PA Statement Letter. Of course, every promotion activity will keep sensitive issues confidential.

In case the client ticks 'no', i.e. they decide to keep the PA confidential, make sure that no information that conflicts with IPR provisions is agreed upon between the two parties.

DOS	DON'TS
Inform other Network partners involved in the partnership agreement.	Start writing the Report and Statement Letter before informing the Network partners.
Visit or contact your client and inform them about the procedures.	Forget to inform third party Network members.
Send the PA Report and the Statement Letter to the Network partner.	

**3. PREPARATION OF PA DOCUMENTATION**

PA Statement Letters should be filled in by each Network partner involved and signed by each client assisted by a Network partner in reaching the agreement. The PA Report should be prepared jointly by you and the other Network partners involved. These documents have to be filled in according to the PA Guidelines in order to avoid mistakes and problems that may cause invalidation.

It is important to inform clients about the PA Statement Letter and signature at the beginning of the partnership process (see 'How to manage company assessment'). It should be stressed that a Partnership Agreement is not a legally binding document, but is in fact an acknowledgement that a brokerage service has been provided by the Network partner. This is because clients might shy away from signing what they consider as a legally-binding contract. It is necessary to contact the company directly before sending the PA Report and PA Statement Letter for signature. This direct contact can



be a face-to-face meeting if possible, or a phone call to remind them why you need their signature and what this statement letter means.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Check PA Report and Statement Letter samples and the Guidelines.	Be late in preparing the report and statement letters after the agreement is reached. Companies can forget and may not be willing to sign.
Prepare your report and statement letter according to the samples and the Guidelines.	Forget to tick the success story box in the statement letter form if it is OK with the companies.
Send the PA Report to other Network partners to fill in their parts and add their contribution into the report.	
In the PA Report, ensure that the order of the Network partners and client's number is the same.	

**4. PA FOLLOW-UP**

At the end of, or after this process, you have to do a regular follow-up. Most of the time, clients are busy so they may forget to sign the PA Statement Letter. Therefore, you should remind them regularly via e-mail or telephone until you receive the signed statement letter. Visiting companies to get the letter signed is highly recommended. This way, you can answer all the questions clearly to avoid any misunderstanding (see Preparation of PA documentation).

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Receive an original signed PA Statement Letter.	Disturb your client during this process by phoning too often and putting them under pressure.
Remind clients that this document has no legal value and that it is used merely to record Network services.	

**5. PREPARATION FOR THE SUBMISSION**

After receiving a signed PA Statement Letter and PA Report from the client, both files should be made electronically available in PDF format. These two files should be named according to PA Guidelines. If your client does not want this PA to be used as a success story, please make sure that you check the relevant box in the PA Statement Letter.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Make sure you have two PA Statement Letters and one PA Report.	Forget to check PA Guidelines.
Sent your statement letter to Network partner.	
Convert both files into PDF format and make sure it is easy to read.	

## 6. SUBMISSION OF THE PA

The PDFs should be sent via FirstClass to the Partnership Agreement mailbox and should respect the PA Guidelines (Submission address is 'Partnership Agreement' in the FirstClass "to" field). The Network partners who supported the company/organisation (see PA Guidelines) collects all documentation and submits the PA in separate files. If the PA is potentially a success story, please report it as a success story to EACI.

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
Put other Network(s) partners in cc.	Forget to submit all files in one e-mail.
Make sure that you have updated the PA Report and signed Statement Letters in the PDF version.	Forget to convert files into PDF.
Check once more the names of files.	Forget to keep the original statement letter.
Submit the PA Report and the two signed Statement Letters in three different files via FirstClass.	Consider the PA as a success story. If so, submit a success story according to the guidelines to EACI.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

↳ Partnership Agreement Guidelines

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partnership-tools-documentation>

Title: <b>Guide to Partnership Process</b>		Nature of document: <b>Working Group deliverable</b>	
Creation Date: <b>June 2010</b>	Last update: <b>14 December 2011</b>	Number of version: <b>7</b>	
Contact person (EACI): <b>Giovanna D'Addamio, Business Services Sector – Unit 4</b>		Contact person Network: <b>Members of the Working Group Partnership Process - <a href="http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partnership-process-0">http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/partnership-process-0</a></b>	