



EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE BSR GO-ABROAD PROJECT

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Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union



RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

BSR Go-abroad

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EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE PROJECT BSR GO-ABROAD

Summary

Project overview: The objective was to strengthen the resilience of micro-SMEs in the Baltic Sea Region by promoting increased trade and collaboration within the region. The activities equipped micro-SMEs with the knowledge, tools, and networks needed to implement effective internationalisation strategies and build strong local value chains.

The project piloted an internationalisation programme for micro-SMEs, resulting in a practical blueprint of tools and recommendations to support local trade and value chain cooperation in the BSR. The blueprint was made available to micro-SMEs, business development organisations, and local authorities across the region. In the end, the project supported 258 micro-SMEs.

Purpose of the evaluation: The main focus of the evaluation was twofold: 1) to evaluate and to adjust and validate the internationalisation programme and its content during the project, and 2) to evaluate and confirm an increase in the participating companies' internationalisation readiness.

Methodology: A mixed-methods approach was employed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the need for adjustment of the programme and its impact. The evaluation combined data from the Screening Tool, questionnaires, and participatory workshops and meetings.

Findings: The findings indicate that the programme was successfully developed, piloted, and refined through a systematic evaluation process, resulting in a coherent and transferable programme for supporting internationalisation. Participating micro-SMEs demonstrated clear improvements in internationalisation readiness, particularly in market understanding, strategic planning, networking, and the development of an international mindset. The programme contributed to reducing uncertainty and strengthening firms' capacity to take concrete steps toward entering international markets. In addition, the partners enhanced their advisory capabilities, developed shared methodologies and tools, and strengthened cross-border collaboration. Overall, the results underline that effective internationalisation support for micro-SMEs requires an integrated approach that combines knowledge, practical tools, continuous coaching, and strong collaborative networks.

Key words: Project evaluation, Interreg Baltic Sea Region, cross-border project, internationalisation, internationalisation support, micro-SMEs

FOREWORD

When the BSR Go-abroad project was initiated, the ambition was clear: to support micro-SMEs in the Baltic Sea Region in taking their first or next steps towards internationalisation in a way that felt realistic, relevant, and practically achievable. From an evaluation perspective, this also meant designing a process that would not only measure outcomes at the end of the project, but also continuously inform how the programme should evolve in response to real needs, experiences, and constraints faced by participating companies.

Following the programme closely throughout its development and piloting phases has provided valuable insight into what internationalisation support for micro-SMEs really requires in practice. It became evident early on that readiness is not primarily a matter of knowledge, but of confidence and the ability to turn ambition into concrete action. Many participating companies entered the programme with uncertainty rather than defined strategies, and one of the most meaningful observations has been how structured support, practical tools, and continuous coaching helped transform that uncertainty into strategic direction.

This report reflects a learning process that has been shared between companies, business coaches, experts, and project partners. The evaluation has been less about judging success against predefined targets and more about understanding how and why certain approaches worked, where adjustments were necessary, and what can be carried forward into future initiatives. The close integration between programme delivery and evaluation has been central in allowing these reflections to take shape.

The intention of this report is therefore not only to document outcomes, but to capture experience and lessons learned. I hope that the reflections, results, and lessons presented here will be useful to practitioners, policymakers, and organisations working with micro-SMEs, and that they contribute to a deeper understanding of how internationalisation support can be designed in a way that is both structured and practical-centred.

Vaasa, 30th April 2026.

Henrik Virtanen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

BSR: Baltic Sea Region

BC: business coach

ED: evaluation design

IP: internationalisation programme

IR: internationalisation readiness

MM: matchmaking

NSP: Next Step Plan

P2P: peer-to-peer

Micro-SME: micro, small- and medium-sized enterprise

ST: Screening Tool

WP: work package

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this evaluation report is to assess the relevance and impact of the developed internationalisation programme (IP) in the BSR Go-abroad project, providing insights into its successes and areas for improvement. The report focuses on the programme's effectiveness, quality, and value (Fink, 2015), guided by the structured evaluation design (ED). The findings are intended to inform future project planning and decision-making, benefiting stakeholders with an interest in supporting internationalisation in micro-SMEs.

The report is structured as follows. In the first chapter, the project and the task of the ED are presented. The second chapter presents the development activities in the concept design workshops in the first work package (WP), and the deliverables. The chapter also presents the continuous evaluation of this development stage. The third chapter gives an overview of the main evaluation-related activities, meetings, workshops, and results in the piloting and implementation stage of the IP in WP 2. In chapters four and five, the conclusions from the evaluation are drawn, and the lessons learned are presented. The final chapter presents an overall conclusion of the report.

The scope of this report is limited to WP 1 and WP 2, in which the planning, development, and subsequent implementation of the IP were central activities. Furthermore, the report covers only activities, meetings, and workshops connected to the evaluation process, with the main aims of the ED in mind. All other project activities, meetings, and workshops are excluded from the report.

1.1. The BSR Go-abroad project

Micro-SMEs are vulnerable to global crises and external disturbances. However, those engaged in international markets are more likely to recover quickly. Therefore, enhancing local market presence and fostering collaborations within the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) will bolster micro-SMEs' resilience by diversifying their market base and establishing local value chains.

The project's goal was to increase the resilience of micro-SMEs and the BSR by promoting more intensive trade and collaboration within the region. This was achieved by equipping micro-SMEs with the necessary knowledge, tools, and networks to implement effective internationalisation strategies and to develop robust local value chains within the BSR.

To accomplish this, the project launched an IP for micro-SMEs, producing a blueprint of tools and policy recommendations to enhance and support local trade and value chain cooperation among micro-SMEs. This blueprint was adopted by micro-SMEs, business development organisations, and local authority business development departments throughout the BSR.

Table 1. Summary of the BSR Go-abroad project

Facts about the project	
Duration	1.11.2023-31.10.2026
Funding	Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2021–2027 programme within the priority "Innovative Societies". The programme includes nine countries along the Baltic Sea, of which eight are European Union members, and Norway, which is a non-member. Link: https://interreg-baltic.eu
Total budget	2 998 300 €
Partners	The project was coordinated by Business Hub Zealand (Denmark). Other partners were Novia University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Drivhuset Göteborg (Sweden), Charge AS (Norway), Startup Inkubaator Tehnopol (Estonia), Inkubator Starter (Poland), Business Lolland-Falster (Denmark) and Technikzentrum Lübeck (Germany)
Associated partners/advisory board	Tallinn City Government (Estonia), Business Promotion Agency Lübeck (Germany), Business Region Gothenburg (Sweden), Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship (Poland), City of Raseborg (Finland), Guldborgsund Municipality (Denmark) and The Oslo Region Alliance (Norway)
Link to the project	https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/bsr-go-abroad

1.2. The task of the evaluation and responsibility

The project aimed at developing an IP, with the intention of increasing the participating micro-SMEs' internationalisation readiness (IR). At the end of the project, the programme was transferred to the target groups of the project. The ED was essential for the quality assurance of the final programme. Therefore, the main focus of the ED was twofold:

1. To evaluate, as well as to adjust and validate the programme and the content of the programme during the project (evaluation on programme level).
2. To evaluate and confirm an increase in the participating companies' IR (evaluation on company level).

Thus, this report presents the evaluation findings on both programme and company levels. The evaluation of the programme was executed continuously, while the evaluation of the impact on the companies' IR was conducted when the companies entered and exited the programme.

Novia University of Applied Sciences was responsible for the completion of the evaluation and bringing the data for reviewing and decision-making, as well as drawing up the evaluation report and the final blueprint. The ongoing evaluation data were collected and disseminated to the project management and the working group. Collaborative evaluation was applied (Thomas, 2011). All project partners participated in the working group meetings, where feedback and adjustments were discussed. Moreover, input from all partners was important for the evaluation, as data and information from a broad representation of BSR companies were needed. The associated partners/the advisory board were also invited to participate in and give feedback on the delivery of the programme.

1.3. Evaluation methodology, objectives, and hypotheses

The ED aimed at providing evidence-based insights to prove the relevance and impact of the developed IP. It drew on the Lean Start-Up (see, e.g., Blank, 2013; Furr & Dyer, 2014) and Design Thinking methods, which have user feedback and agile adjustments at their core.

Design Thinking is an approach that encourages participatory engagement in planning and setting out objectives, as well as in ideation, development, piloting, testing, and refinement. Evaluation based on Design Thinking (see, e.g., Liedtka, 2015; Patton, 2010) is about problem solving by collecting data used as feedback to inform the next iteration of decision making. Similarly, Lean Start-Up as a methodology adopts a combination of experimentation, iterative development, and validated learning.

Therefore, the ED emphasised that the IP content was validated by the target groups iteratively from the initial development phase to the final stages of piloting. Specifically, evaluation checkpoints were planned in the ED, and target group input was used in the development.

There are many different frameworks and models to be used in evaluation, of which logic models are one option (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2011, Fink, 2015). Logic models are used to graphically display processes, sequences of activities, and factors that are presumed to generate results over time, for example, the ED presented in Figures 2 and 3 later in this section. The overall logical model for the lessons learned in developing and piloting the IP is depicted in Figure 1.

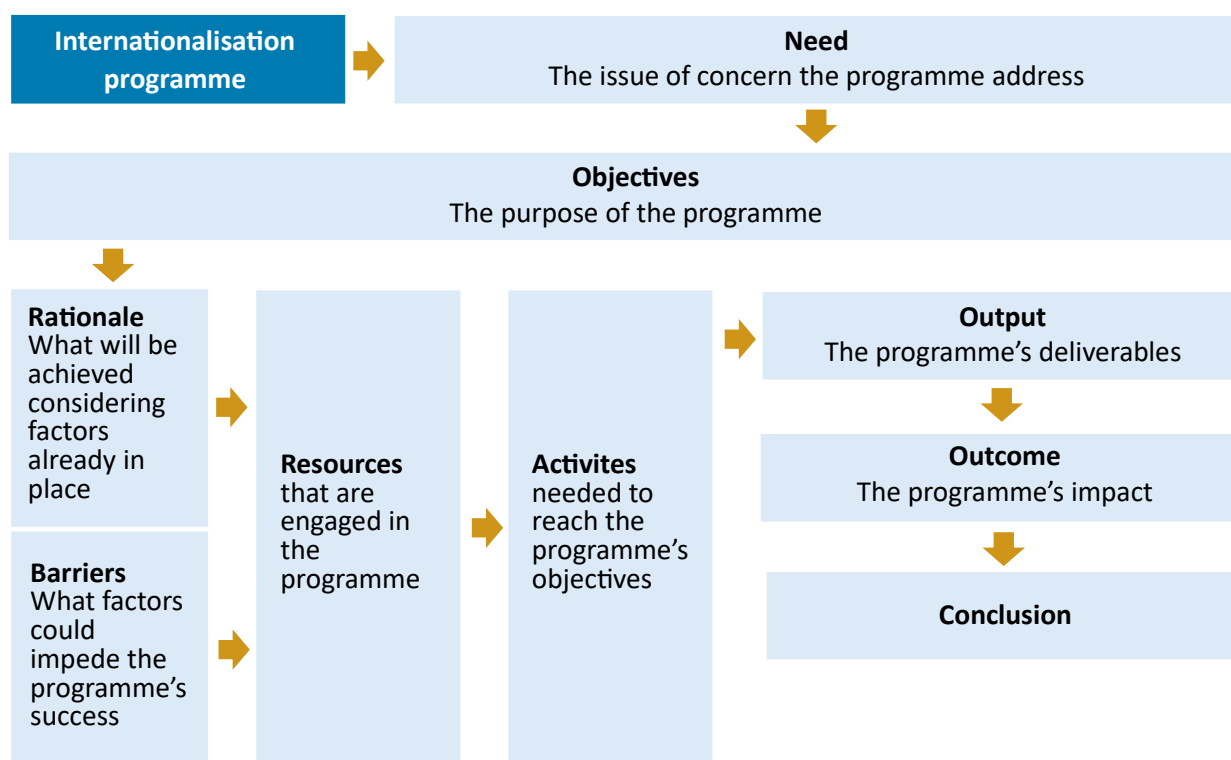


Figure 1. Programme logic model (adapted from Thomas, 2011)

The ED was developed and finalised in May 2024 (during WP 1), based on the following premises:

Evaluation hypotheses: As the objectives of the ED were twofold, the evaluation hypotheses were formulated accordingly:

- Evaluation objective 1: To evaluate the need for adjustments to the structure and the content of the pilot programme.
- Hypothesis 1: The pilot program requires testing and adjustments to enhance its effectiveness and achieve the desired outcomes.
- Evaluation objective 2: To evaluate the impact of the programme on the companies' IR level.
- Hypothesis 2: The companies' IR level will increase by participating in the programme.

Evaluation methods: First, formative evaluation was conducted to assess the components of the IP to fulfil evaluation objective 1. Second, a summative evaluation was conducted to measure the outcome of participating in the programme, that is, the change in the IR level, thus fulfilling evaluation objective 2.

Data collection methods: A mixed-methods approach was employed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the need for adjustment of the programme and its impact. The evaluation combined data from the Screening Tool (ST), questionnaires, and participatory workshops and meetings.

Type of data: Quantitative baseline (entering the programme) and endline data (exiting the programme) were collected to assess the improvement in the companies' IR. Qualitative interim data were continuously collected from different target groups to develop and adjust the programme and the content.

Sampling Strategy: The evaluation can be considered exhaustive, as no sampling strategy was employed. All companies participating in the programme were invited to provide feedback on the activities (formative evaluation). In the planning stage, all project partners and representatives of other stakeholders provided their feedback (formative evaluation). Finally, in the summative evaluation of the programme's impact, data from all participating companies were analysed.

Data analysis: Quantitative data from the ST and the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive and comparative statistics. Qualitative data from the participatory workshops and meetings, and the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were analysed thematically using an inductive approach.

Limitations: Some limitations should be noted. First, the response rate in the feedback questionnaires was satisfactory (ranging from approximately 25 to 50 % in each questionnaire), implying that it may limit the generalisability of the findings. However, for practical use, the response rate and the information received were sufficient for identifying areas for development. Second, a change in the companies' IR is not isolated to participating in the programme only. External factors may also have had an impact. Despite these limitations, the extent of data collected strengthens the validity of the findings.

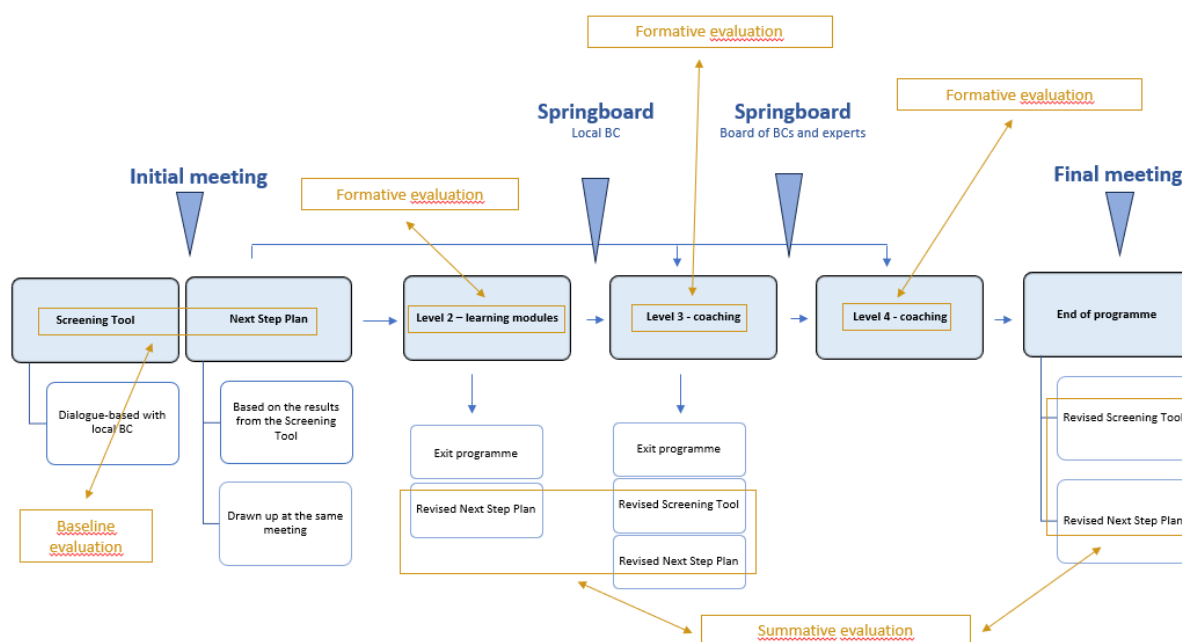


Figure 3. Evaluation of the impact on the companies' internationalisation readiness level

The formative evaluation focuses on the continuous improvement of the IP, while the baseline and summative evaluations measure the increase (or decline) in the companies' IR level.

2. WORK PACKAGE 1: PREPARING SOLUTIONS

The first WP aimed to prepare solutions to help address the identified challenges, ready to be piloted in WP 2. The WP leaders were Novia University of Applied Science and Charge AS.

WP activities: Arranging concept design workshops and preparing the ED.

WP deliverables: IP methodology, including tools for screening and next steps, as well as the ED.

The partners developed the programme through seven concept design workshops during the period. All partners participated in this activity. An internal working group was established to manage and lead the activities. The internal working group comprised participants from the lead partner and the WP leaders and met online weekly. First, the internal working group consecutively planned the content of the concept design workshops and updated it according to issues that appeared along the process. Second, the group processed the information and feedback gathered from the workshops, and based on that, revised and developed the content, concepts, and tools to be presented and discussed further in later workshops. Third, the group also did the first procurement, interviews, and onboarding of the external content experts involved in the programme.

The purpose of the WP was to design an IP methodology containing a shared ST and Next Step Plan (NSP), as well as to plan specific learning programme content, including toolkits and competency modules used in the various programme levels. The programme was intended to be innovative because it would challenge the traditional method of extensive market analysis and planning

before going abroad in a lean startup-based manner. It would also encourage local market and customer validation and formation of local partnerships and value chains across the BSR from the very beginning, including the use of digital tools for quicker and more efficient responses from customers and partners. Moreover, the programme was intended to stimulate micro-SMEs that rarely go abroad on their own accord as well as to commence international collaboration, instead of the traditional focus on "born globals" and larger SMEs. Thus, by focusing on developing readiness and competencies on one side, and agile and responsive action on the other, the success rate of the micro-SMEs' internationalisation would increase.

During the WP, the ED was also prepared including a plan for ongoing user validation and adjustment steps as well as a final evaluation. Ongoing feedback and agile adjustments were at the core of the ED.

2.1. Timeline – main activities for developing the programme

The timeline for the concept design workshops and validation of the programme and ED is presented in Figure 4.

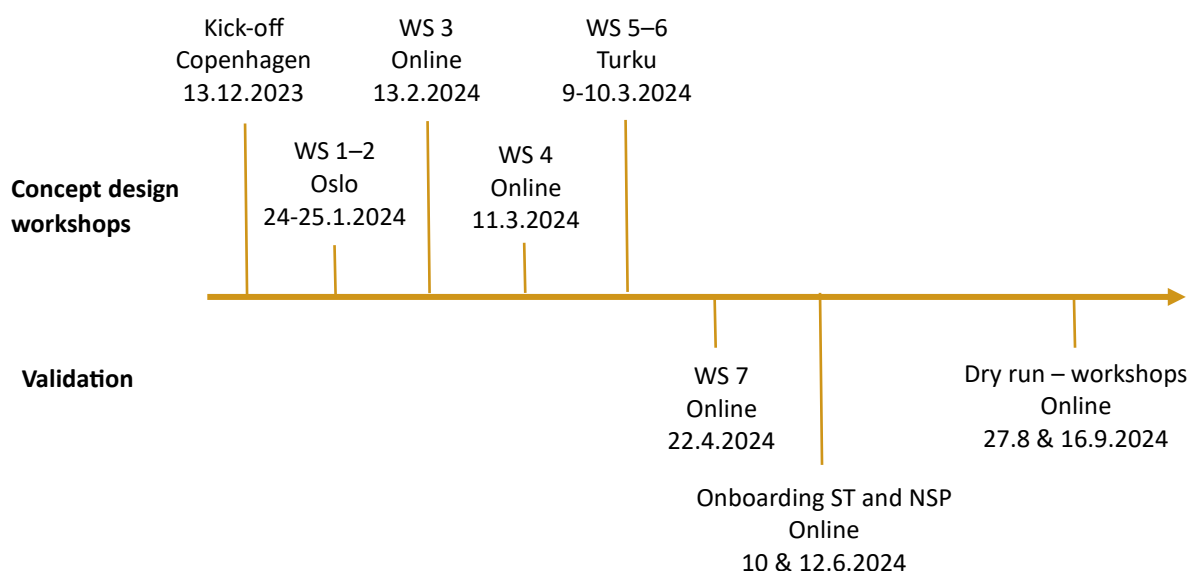


Figure 4. The timeline for the concept design workshops

A kick-off meeting was arranged in Copenhagen in December 2023. On the agenda was a presentation of the project and a discussion on the framework for the project. During the kick-off, the partners also got acquainted with each other and each other's organisations.

The first two concept design workshops (two days) took place in Oslo in January 2024. In the workshops, the first preliminary plans of the content of the programme and the expert workshops (levels 2, 3, and 4) were drafted. All material and information were documented and saved for processing by the internal working group.

Workshop three was held as an online meeting in February 2024. The internal working group presented the preliminary ST and NSP. The preliminary drafts were discussed, and the internal

working group documented the feedback for further revision. In the fourth workshop, which was held online in March 2024, the revised ST and NSP were further discussed, and feedback was given to the internal working group. Additionally, a draft of the content of the expert workshops (level 2) was presented and discussed. The internal working group continued with revising the content before the next concept design workshop.

Workshops five and six (two days) were arranged in Turku in April 2024. The content of the programme on levels 2, 3, and 4, the ST, the NSP, the ED, as well as the communication plan were further processed. The internal working group utilised the results and feedback from the discussion as input for finalising the programme and the tools before the last concept design workshop.

Workshop seven was arranged online in April 2024. The aim of the last design workshop was to present the preliminary programme to representatives from the associated partners/advisory board and to representatives from the target companies. Six representatives from the associated partners/advisory board participated, and one from the target companies. Besides presenting the programme, the aim was also to receive validation of and input to the programme content, to ensure coherence with the target groups' needs. The main questions discussed after the presentation concerned 1) the preliminary thoughts on the programme, 2) the challenges, 3) suggestions for improvement, 4) how the associated partners/the advisory board can promote the programme, and 5) whether the programme is realistic and viable. A questionnaire with the same questions was sent out after the workshop for additional feedback. It rendered five answers from the associated partners/advisory board. The conclusion of the workshop was:

- Challenges: 1) companies' commitment and resources, 2) to provide valuable support to every company individually, and 3) the companies have different needs.
- Improvements: 1) to offer financial support (it was limited what the programme could offer), 2) the programme should be less "theoretical" and more "practical" for "traditional" companies, and 3) more one-on-one mentoring (which was included on levels 3 and 4).
- Preliminary thoughts: A good, multi-faceted programme, with involvement of experts and practices.
- Support: The associated partners/advisory board were committed to supporting.

The feedback was considered in fine-tuning the final programme (see Chapter 2.1).

In June 2024, the finalised ST and NSP were onboarded among the business coaches (BCs) who coached the micro-SMEs through the programme. During the meeting, the tools were discussed, and the result of the discussion was that there was no need to update. The tools were ready for real-life testing. The BCs started test-screening a couple of micro-SMEs, and after the testing, it was further confirmed that there was no need to adjust the ST and the NSP. Later, during the project, it was not discovered that the ST and NSP needed updating.

In June 2024, interviews with the potential candidates for teaching in the workshops (level 2 and 3) were conducted, and the final content experts were contracted and onboarded. The content experts worked internally with synchronising the content of the workshops during the

summer of 2024. In August and September 2024, the content experts gave “dry run” presentations of their workshops to the project partners. They received feedback on what they could further consider, e.g., the amount of content, some smaller overlaps in the content between the workshops, including more practical implications and tools, including more motivational elements, and considering the target group (inexperienced small companies). The content experts revised their content accordingly. After that, the IP was ready to be launched or piloted in WP 2.

2.1. The internationalisation programme

The process for the IP and the content for the different levels was finalised during WP 1. The programme’s four levels are described in Figure 5.

Full Framework Overview BSR Go-abroad Internationalisation Programme

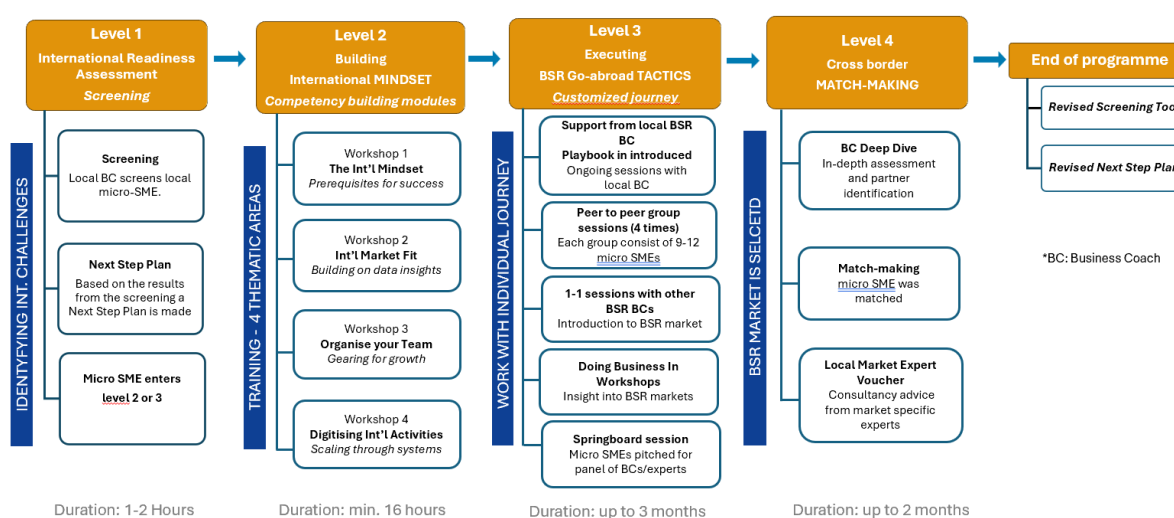


Figure 5. Description of the internationalisation programme

The IP was divided into four levels. On the first level, the goal was to pre-screen enrolled micro-SMEs, of which the qualified were chosen to continue to level 2 (target 250 micro-SMEs). On level 2, the companies participated in four mandatory competency-building workshops with the following thematic areas:

1. *The International Mindset*: Understanding why an international mindset is important for micro-SMEs and what it means for the company and management.
2. *International Market Fit*: Toolkit for making data-based market choices and understanding that a strong domestic value proposition is not easily replicable in international markets.
3. *Organising Your Team*: Understanding which type of team and organisational resources are needed and getting useful checklists and tools going forward in building the team lean.
4. *Digitising International Activities*: Toolkits and methods on how to utilise digital ways for scaling abroad.

Each session was planned to last approximately 4 hours and was facilitated by the content experts. All workshops were facilitated online, and the cohorts/participants consisted of companies from different BSR countries. Companies were expected to participate in all four workshops to complete level 2 and prepare homework in between the workshops. It was calculated that each micro-SME spent 16 hours in total on the four workshops. The sessions were recorded for participants who were unable to join in real time.

After level 2, the BCs decided who advanced to level 3. After completion of all four mandatory workshops on level 2, the BCs met (online or in person) with the companies to discuss if they were on the “right track” to move on to the next level. The companies were assessed by 1) motivation, 2) whether they had completed all four workshops, and 3) whether they had the right mindset. This assessment was conducted by the BCs who screened the companies and followed them during level 2. If a company was not ready to move on to level 3, they either exited the programme or paused until they were ready (or had time) to enter level 3 at a later stage. The target was that 175 companies would continue to level 3.

Level 3 included peer-to-peer (P2P) group sessions, which could be described as facilitated knowledge-sharing sessions with other micro-SMEs in the programme. The sessions aimed to create a safe space, founder-to-founder, where current business challenges and experiences were shared, which was a unique opportunity to discuss specific issues and brainstorm next steps among peers and content experts. All sessions were facilitated online. The content experts provided in-depth feedback for the companies in the P2P sessions.

Springboards between levels 3 and 4 were decided individually. The goal was that 60 companies would enter level 4. The micro-SMEs presented to the BCs their go-to-market strategy and the selected BSR market in focus. The purpose was to give feedback and decide if the company was ready to enter level 4.

The activities on level 4 could be described as facilitated partner search or matchmaking (MM). The MM included identifying opportunities with relevant partners, clients, ecosystems operators, customers, and investors in the BSR countries. These activities were managed by the BCs from the companies’ home markets in collaboration with the BCs in the target markets.

The timeline and the cohorts for the activities and sessions on levels 2 to 4 are depicted in Figure 6. All in all, different groups of actors were involved in delivering the programme. The project partners managed the practicalities. The content experts delivered the content of the sessions on level 2 and facilitated the P2P sessions on level 3. The BCs were working one-to-one with the companies and in collaboration with the BCs from the other BSR markets.

The ST assessed ten criteria in the companies' IR level. Figure 7 depicts the increase (or potential decrease) in the readiness level, from the entry (yellow) to the exit screening (blue) in a hypothetical case. The evaluation data were analysed quantitatively. Prioritising the different criteria for readiness can vary based on the specific industry, target market, and individual circumstances of the micro-SMEs. However, the ST was used uniformly for all participating companies. The criteria:

1. Mindset, competencies, and training: The foundation of IR. Without the right mindset, motivation, and skill set, other efforts are likely to be less effective.
2. Market research and needs assessment: Understanding the target market is critical. It drives the development of an appropriate value proposition and informs the strategy.
3. Market entry strategy: A clearly defined strategy is essential for navigating new markets, setting realistic goals, and establishing a roadmap for international growth.
4. Technology Adoption: In the digital age, leveraging technology for operational efficiency and market penetration is a key driver of international success.
5. Networking and collaboration: Building a strong network and collaborative partnerships can be a major accelerator for international growth and overcoming market entry barriers.
6. Financial support and funding: Adequate funding ensures the SME can sustain its international operations and grow without overstressing its resources.
7. Risk management: Identifying and mitigating risks is crucial to protect the company from potential international business uncertainties.
8. Regulatory compliance and quality control: Ensuring compliance with international standards and local regulations is necessary to operate legally and build trust with global customers.
9. Logistics and supply chain management: A well-managed supply chain is vital for delivering products and services effectively in new markets.
10. Sustainability framework: As expectations for corporate responsibility increase globally, sustainability can become a competitive advantage and is often necessary to do business with large corporations.

Specific instructions on how to assess each criterion with support questions are presented in Appendix 1.

Next Step Plan			
Prioritised areas of development			
[Based on 360 result, describe which areas will be the focus for further development]			
Short term priorities:			
Long term priorities:			
Short-Term Next Step Plan:			
Suggest actions needed based on prioritized areas.			
Area	Next Step Action Needed	Deadline	Status
1) Mindset, Competencies, and Training			
2) Market Research and Needs Assessment			
3) Market Entry Strategy			
4) Technology Adoption			
5) Networking and Collaboration			
6) Financial Support and Funding			
7) Risk Management			
8) Regulatory Compliance and Quality Control			
9) Logistics and Supply Chain Management			
10) Sustainability Framework			
Additional comments			
[Additional comments]			

Figure 8. Figure 8: Excerpt of the Next Step Plan

The NSP was dialogue-based, implying that the companies' plans were discussed and documented together with the BCs. The next step actions needed and the areas for discussion were based on the scores from the ten criteria in the ST. The plan included short- and long-term priorities in the companies.

3. WORK PACKAGE 2: PILOTING AND EVALUATING SOLUTIONS

The aim of WP 2 was to, together with the target groups pilot, evaluate and adjust the IP developed in WP 1. The aim was also to finalise a blueprint and the evaluation of the programme. After the WP, the programme and blueprint were ready to be transferred to the target groups in WP 3. The leaders of WP 2 were Business Hub Zealand and Startup Incubator Tehnopol.

The blueprint contained recommendations and how-to guides for stimulating and implementing successful internationalisation and value chain cooperation among micro-SMEs in the BSR, which can be used long-term within the partner network and by associated partners, as well as to be anchored and transferred to new actors (not in the project). The blueprint included:

1. Main findings and prerequisites for stimulating trade and value chains among micro-SMEs within the BSR
2. Tested programme methodology, including recommended content and specific toolkits

3. Policy recommendations and recommended action areas to stimulate trade and value chains for micro-SMEs within the BSR to be used in local business development policies and strategies in the BSR

WP activities: Screening of the micro-SMEs and running workshops on levels 2 and 3, as well as one-to-one coaching and MM on level 4. The activities also included preparing the blueprint, drawing up policy recommendations, and preparing the evaluation report.

WP deliverables: Pre-screening of micro-SMEs, of which 250 participate in the programme. 175 micro-SMEs continue to level 3 and 60 to level 4. Furthermore, finalising the blueprint and the evaluation.

The timeline for the main evaluation meetings and workshops arranged during the WP is described in Figure 9. Discussion of practical matters and arranging the activities in the programme were obviously also continuous during other meetings, e.g., project status meetings and BCs' meetings.

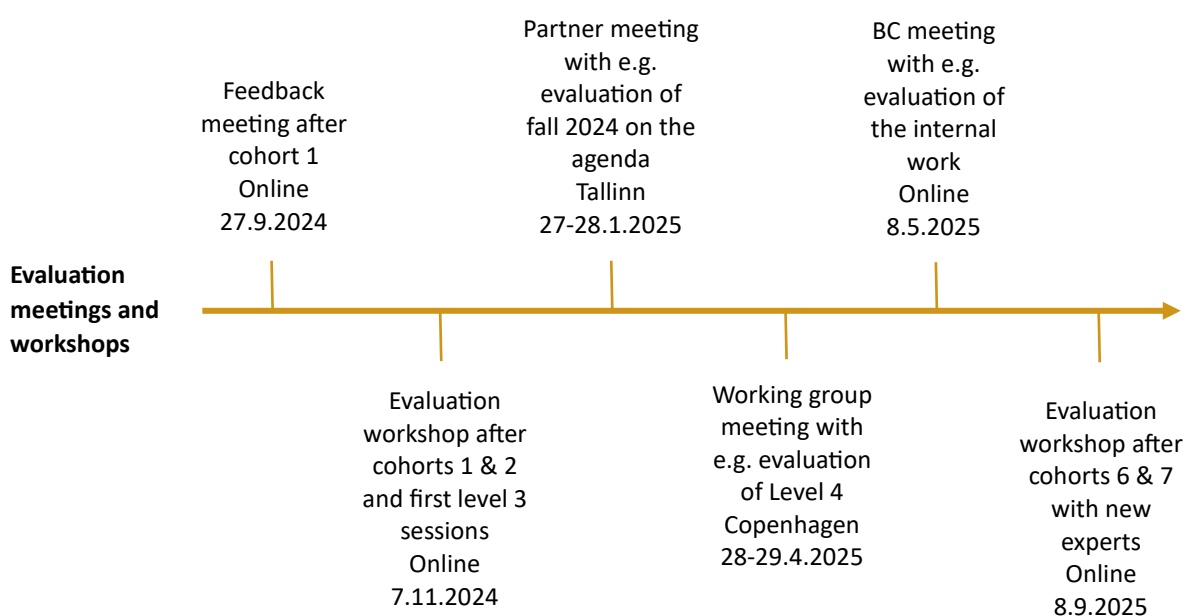


Figure 9. Evaluation meetings and workshops during work package 2

The first level 2 workshops or the first cohort started in September 2024. A feedback questionnaire was developed and sent out through MS Forms to the participants after each of the four workshops. Two versions were developed for the purpose of evaluation. Both included the same set of questions, but the second version had added questions to measure the coherence between the workshops and was sent out as the last questionnaire in the series of workshops (see Appendix 2).

The feedback data were analysed immediately after the first set of level 2 workshops, and the results were discussed with the content experts running the workshops. Overall, the results were good (the average in each question ranged from 3.17 to 4.67 on a 5-grade Likert-scale).

However, there was a need to make some changes to the content, e.g., making the content more coherent, shortening and skipping parts of the workshop, rethinking how to use breakout rooms to encourage interaction, and providing more practical examples and tools. It was also decided that a BC or project manager should shortly introduce each workshop to make the participants aware of how the workshops were connected and how they were connected to the BSR Go-abroad programme. The content was updated before the next cohort.

In October 2024, a meeting with the content experts was arranged to discuss how to approach the P2P sessions. The first level 3 P2P sessions started in November 2024. A feedback questionnaire, with adapted questions, was developed for evaluation (see Appendix 3). In November 2024, an evaluation workshop was held online. Feedback data from cohorts 1 and 2 on level 2, as well as data from the first P2P sessions on level 3 were presented and discussed. The feedback results from cohorts 1 to 2 improved significantly (the average in each question ranged from 4.11 to 5.00 on a 5-grade Likert-scale), most likely dependent on the changes to the content made after the first feedback meeting. In the workshop, short- and long-term development actions were drawn up together with the content experts (Table 2).

Table 2. Short- and long-term actions to develop workshops and the programme

Short-term actions (for cohorts 3-5)	Long-term actions (for cohorts 6-10)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts from project partners should take an active role. Encourage interaction, both expert-to-company and company-to-company • Kindly ask participants to keep their cameras on • Schedule regular breaks • Allocate time for discussions • Ensure documents are easy to find and distribute • Align visual presentations. Same template for all • Avoid excessive references to large scale-ups • Send out feedback questionnaires during the workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Better companies” (with more resources) should be found • A playbook should be developed, comprising all documents/tools that are used during the workshops • The journey of the companies through the programme should be smoother • In procurement, the playbook should be used as an alignment and the vision • Time between workshops. Arrange the workshops on the same weekday, not on Monday

The short- and long-term actions and feedback from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were further discussed and decisions made in the next partner meeting.

In January 2025, the next partner meeting was arranged in Tallinn. On the agenda were, e.g., presentation and discussion of feedback results from level 2 and 3 workshops during fall 2024, as well as discussion on how to practically approach the evaluation of level 4 activities. For example, the following concrete actions were taken after the evaluation workshop in November 2024, which was presented and discussed in the Tallinn meeting:

- To get more responses, an email with the link to the evaluation questionnaire was sent out during the workshops and not after. The content experts devoted time at the end of the workshops for the participants to fill in the questionnaire.
- Workshops were not optimal to arrange on Monday mornings. Wednesday afternoons were chosen as the time for the workshops. More breaks were included in the workshops.
- Companies wanted tools and templates used in the workshops beforehand. It was decided to extract the essential tools/templates from each workshop and share them with the companies. A playbook with tools and templates was developed during spring 2025 and taken into use for the cohorts later in the programme. OneDrive was also utilised actively for sharing lecture material.

Before the Tallinn meeting, the content experts gave feedback regarding the P2P sessions:

- Recap: A recap of the content at the beginning of the sessions was relevant.
- Duration: 2-hour sessions were appropriate.
- Group division: It would be good to divide the groups according to interest (e.g., B2C - B2B, software – hardware, etc.).
- Number of groups: The number of P2P sessions per cohort could be limited to two instead of four, as it was difficult for the participants to stick to the given topic.
- Set the stage clearly: It was important to frame the format from the start. The format of the sessions worked if everyone engaged actively.

The P2P sessions needed a change to enhance interaction and activity. The decision was that the BCs should facilitate the P2P sessions, and the content experts would act as support in the thematic areas and the relevant tools from the workshops or the playbook. The companies would be informed about specific homework from the playbook for each session. It was also decided to divide the P2P groups more according to sectors, i.e., according to common interests.

In the spring of 2025, a new procurement round for the content experts running the workshops on levels 2 and 3 was done. In April the new experts were contracted. To prepare for the workshops, the experts worked closely in three meetings with an internal working group. In the end of April 2025, the content experts performed a "dry run" of their developed content for the workshops for all project partners. No major issues that required revision in the content were discovered during the "dry run". The feedback mainly revolved around workshop practicalities and comments of minor importance on the content (e.g. remember the diversity of the participants, remember that the project embraced BSR and not other international markets, etc.). The level 2 workshops with the new content experts as instructors continued in May 2025. It was also decided that the concept for the P2P workshops changed at the same time as the new content experts were onboarded. From September 2025, the P2P workshops were mainly led by the BCs, and the content experts participated as support. The playbook was also more focused on in the workshops.

At the end of April 2025, a working group meeting was held in Copenhagen. Among other topics, how to practically evaluate the MM process at level 4 was discussed and decided. The

decision was to both monitor the KPIs and organise an internal evaluation meeting with the BCs managing the MM process. The internal meeting aimed to evaluate the need for improving the MM process.

The internal meeting with the BCs was arranged in May 2025 online. As said, the aim of the meeting was from the BCs' point of view to discuss and act on how to develop the level 4 activities. The following was decided:

- To aim at shortening the response time, e.g., between the companies' first contact and the time for the springboard meetings, and in the contacts between the BCs (the companies' local BCs and the BCs in the target markets).
- The information sharing process should be more structured, e.g., to acknowledge in writing the receipt of a MM request, to do status updates more structurally along the way, and to do weekly check-ups.
- To look more for matching between the companies already in the programme instead of searching for external partners. The BCs should check the participant lists from all cohorts and identify and document MM opportunities.
- To require the companies to be more focused when informing about which markets they are interested in. This should shorten the response time.

As an additional activity to the IP, it was decided to arrange two rounds of "Doing business in" seminars in autumn 2025. All in all, 14 seminars (two for each participating country) were held by external, local experts. The two-hour seminars were open to all participants in the programme (including previous cohorts). In the seminars, the focus was to complement the information on cultural aspects and general market info, which was not a specific topic in the level 2 workshops.

In September 2025, an evaluation meeting was held online together with the new content experts. The topic for the meeting was to evaluate the level 2 workshops for cohorts 6 and 7, focusing on workshop structure, participant experience, and areas for improvement, with contributions from partners and all content experts. Cohort 6 was the first cohort for the new content experts. Based on the feedback, the following issues were discussed:

- Workshop time management.
- What to inform, share, and do beforehand.
- More time for reflection on the tasks.
- More practical examples and how challenges were solved.
- More practical examples of the use of tools.
- More time in the session for the Culture Map.
- More networking.
- Check for possible repetition in the four sessions.

As a result of the discussion, it was decided to continue with strong time management, to engage participants actively, to use real-life examples and cases, and to adjust break-out room discussions, assignments, and tool demonstrations on the spot. The content experts were also

invited to do more research upfront on participating companies to tailor real-life examples and cases, as well as to fine-tune what to share and inform beforehand.

The last workshops and P2P sessions were conducted according to the structure and content updated in the continuous evaluation meetings. The IP (WP 2) was concluded in April 2026. The following WP 3 did not include any activities involved in the ED.

4. EVALUATION RESULTS

The first objective in the ED was to continuously evaluate the need for adjustments to the structure and the content of the planned and tested pilot programme. This was needed to enhance the programme's effectiveness and achieve the desired outcomes. The evaluation results to fulfil this objective are concluded in section 4.1.

The second objective was to evaluate and confirm an increase in the participating companies' IR. This is discussed and concluded in section 4.3.

4.1. Continuous evaluation of the internationalisation programme

The continuous evaluation activities conducted within WP 2 demonstrate that the piloting, evaluation, and refinement of the IP were successfully implemented in line with the stated objectives in the ED. The evaluation process was continuous, systematic, and closely integrated with deliverables, enabling ongoing learning and improvement throughout the WP.

Feedback was collected at multiple stages using questionnaires, evaluation workshops, partner meetings, and internal reflections involving content experts, BCs, and project partners. Importantly, evaluation results were analysed promptly and translated into concrete adjustments to programme content, structure, facilitation methods, scheduling, and tools. This iterative approach led to measurable improvements in participant experience, as reflected in significantly higher feedback scores across later cohorts compared to the initial pilot phase.

The evaluation covered all programme levels addressed in WP 2, including workshops (level 2), peer-to-peer sessions (level 3), and MM activities (level 4). Identified challenges were addressed through targeted corrective actions, such as restructuring workshops for greater coherence, redesigning peer-to-peer formats to enhance interaction, strengthening the facilitation role of BCs, improving information flows, and refining MM processes. Learning from the evaluation was also institutionalised through the development of a playbook and the finalisation of a tested programme methodology.

By the end of WP 2, the IP had been refined, validated across several cohorts, and supported by a comprehensive blueprint and evaluation report. The results confirm that the evaluation process fulfilled its purpose of continuously improving the programme and ensuring that it was mature, coherent, and ready for transfer to target groups in WP 3.

4.2 Implementing the internationalisation programme

In the project, the target was to recruit micro-SMEs, of which 250 would participate in the IP. Of them, 175 would continue to level 3, 60 to level 4, and the MM. The targets and outcomes are illustrated in Figure 10. The targets for levels 2, 3, and 4 were exceeded.

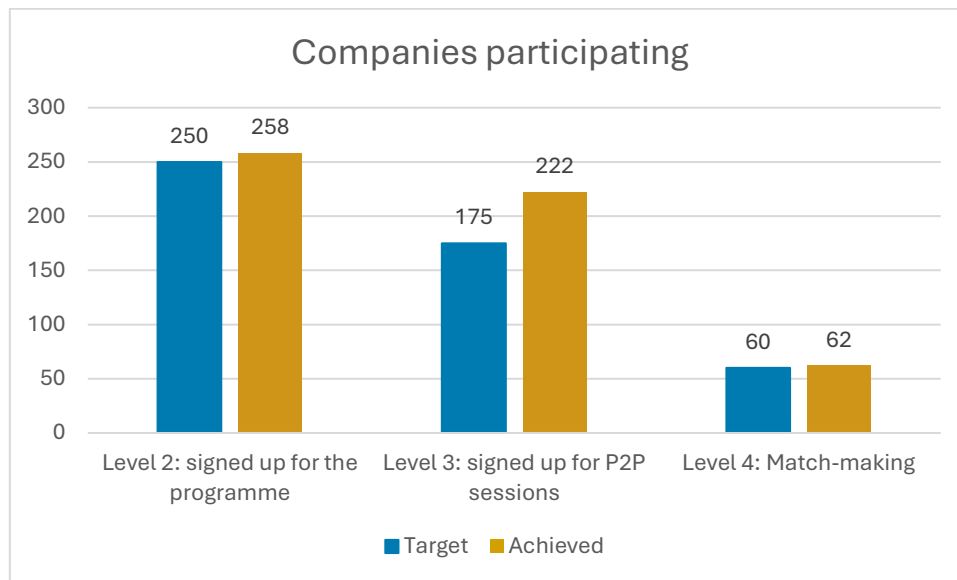


Figure 10. Number of companies participating in each level of the programme

Statistics on the 258 companies that entered the IP are depicted in Figures 11-14 and Table 3.

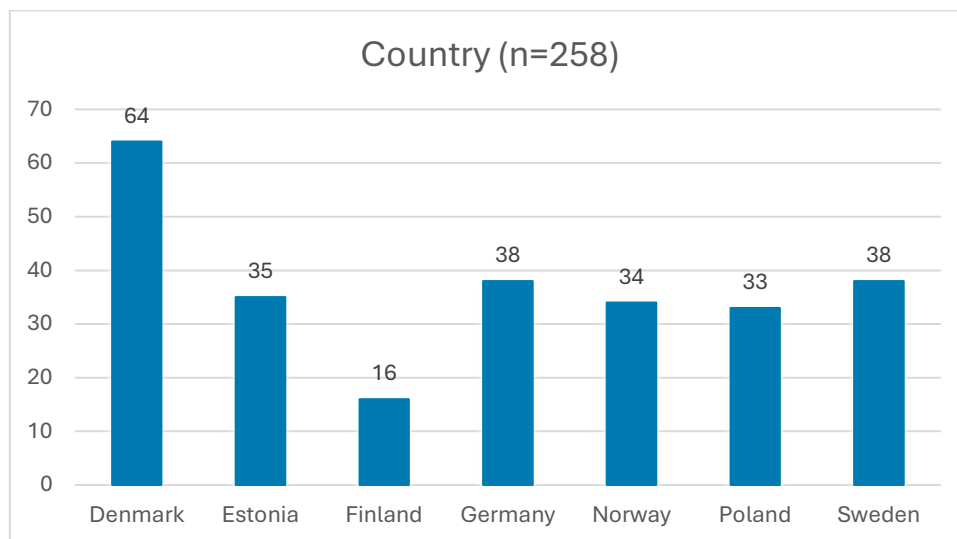


Figure 11. Number of companies participating from each country

The numbers do not indicate a difference in the companies' interest in the project; they show the internal division of work between the partners. The project had, e.g., two partners from Denmark, and the partner in Finland had a lower initial target.

The project's primary target group was micro-SMEs, i.e., companies with fewer than 10 employees. Some exception was, though, allowed for participation. Figure 12 depicts the participating companies' size, of which companies with 1-2 employees were the majority.

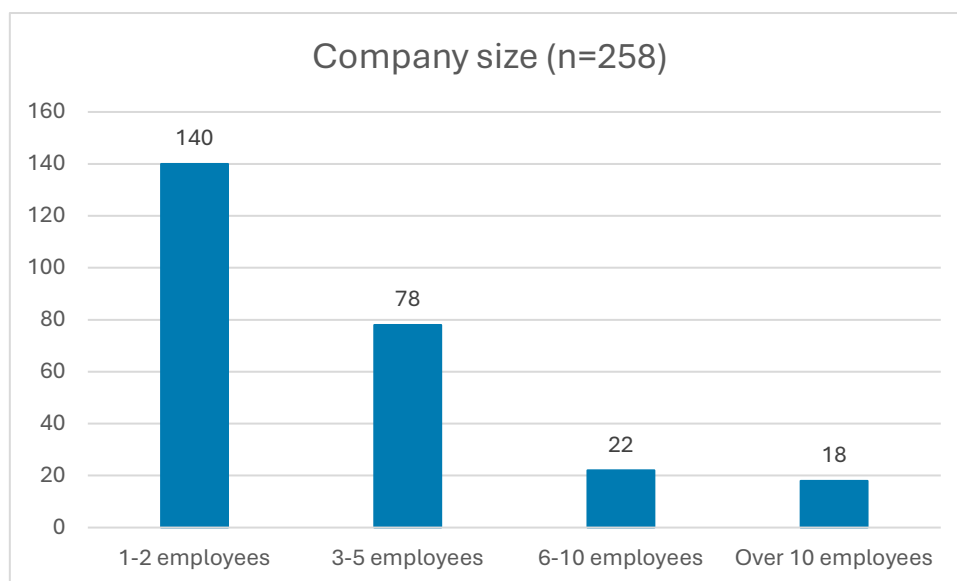


Figure 12. The size of the participating companies

Table 3 summarises which sectors the companies represented. Most companies belonged to the information and communication, as well as the manufacturing sectors. Summed together, most of the companies represented different service sectors.

Table 3. The participating companies' sectors

Sector NACE (n=258)	Count
A. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4
C. Manufacturing	40
D. Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	6
E. Water Supply: Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	3
F. Construction	5
G. Wholesale and Retail Trade: Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	11
H. Transportation and Storage	3
I. Accommodation and Food Service Activities	7
J. Information and Communication	75
L. Real Estate Activities	2
M. Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	22
N. Administrative and Support Service Activities	7
O. Public Administration and Defence: Compulsory Social Security	1
P. Education	9
Q. Human Health and Social Work Activities	15
R. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	10
S. Other Service Activities	37
T. Activities of Households as Employers: Undifferentiated Goods and Services	1

Just under half (45,7%) of the companies had no previous experience of international activities before the project (see Figure 13).

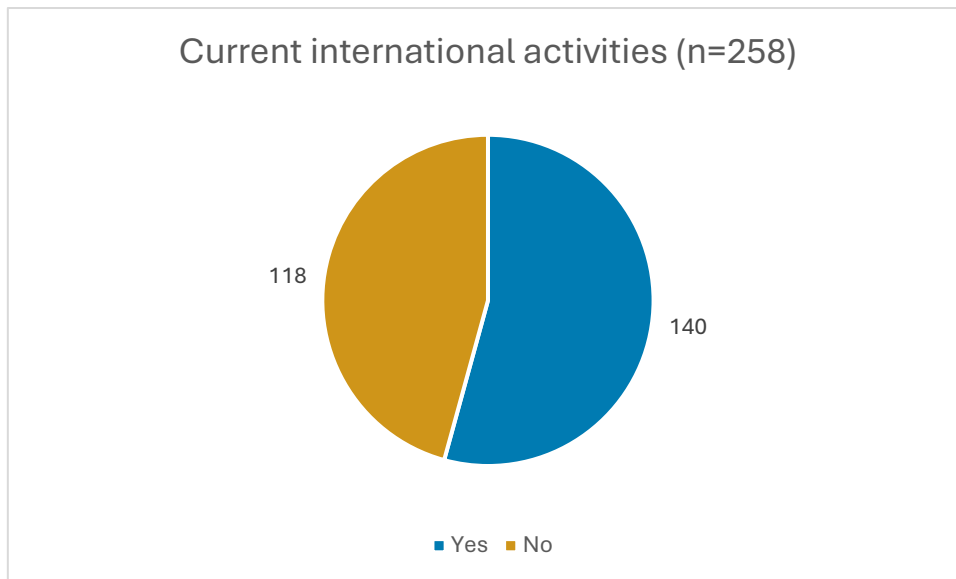


Figure 13. The companies' experience of previous international activities

The companies' motivation for participating in the project was also asked before entering. A vast majority mentioned that their motives were market-driven, i.e., driven by customer needs, market demand, and opportunities, or competitive pressure.

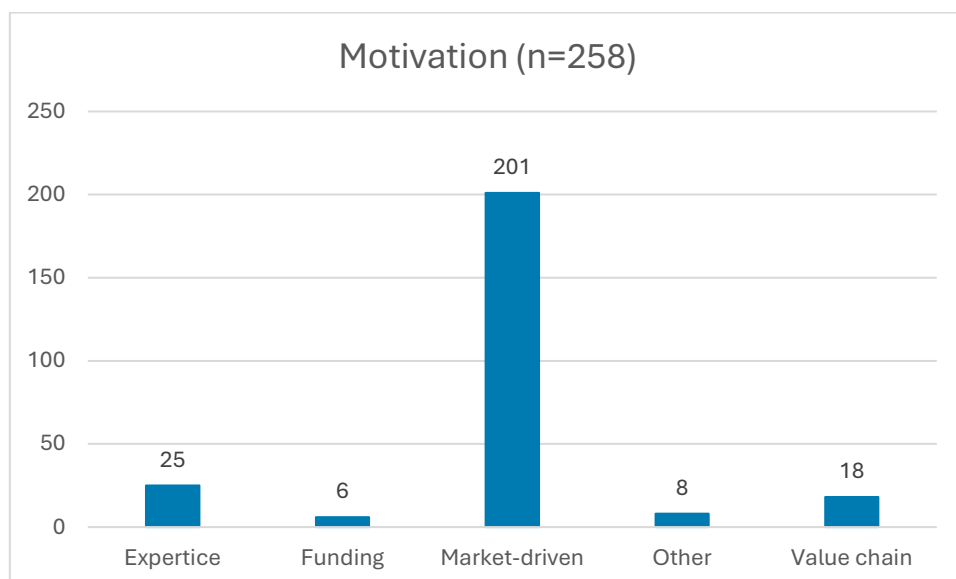


Figure 14. Motivation for participating in the project

4.3 Evaluation of the internationalisation readiness

In March 2026, a partner meeting was held in Lübeck. Among others, a workshop to internally assess the observed impact of the project was on the agenda. In Table 4, the results are summarised.

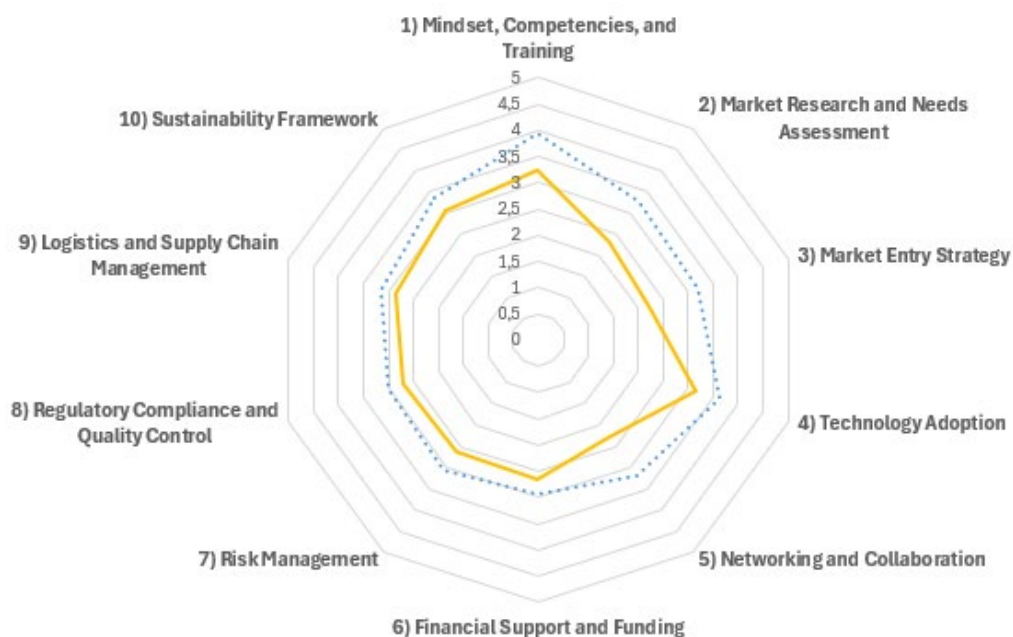
Table 4. Impact of the project on the micro-SMEs and the partners

Area	Observed impact	Why the impact is important	Meaning
Strategic clarity & decision-making	<p>Companies: clearer market priorities, faster and more confident decisions, and better understanding of what is needed.</p> <p>Partners: improved ability to guide micro-SMEs strategically, and clearer focus on internationalisation.</p>	Strategic ambiguity is a major barrier to micro-SME internationalisation; clarity reduces risk, delays, and wasted resources.	The project functioned as a sensemaking and strategic alignment mechanism, turning vague ambition into structured direction.
Capability & competence development	<p>Companies: improved international market knowledge, cultural awareness, export readiness, and use of tools (playbook, AI, frameworks).</p> <p>Partners: strengthened advisory competence, new tools and methods, and improved understanding of micro-SMEs' needs.</p>	Internationalisation is capability-intensive; lasting impact requires skills and readiness, not just information.	Indicates deep learning and capacity building, embedding internationalisation capabilities at both firm and support-organisation level.
Activation & movement to action	<p>Companies: increased willingness to act, initiation of international activities, and application of step-by-step frameworks.</p> <p>Partners: improved ability to activate companies, not only to prepare them.</p>	Many programmes stop at preparation; activation is a strong indicator of real behavioural and strategic change.	The project bridged the preparation–action gap, lowering psychological and organisational thresholds for action.
Network & ecosystem access	<p>Companies: access to international networks and contacts they could not reach alone, and P2P learning.</p> <p>Partners: new international partnerships, better access to foreign startup and business ecosystems, and stronger interregional collaboration.</p>	Networks are critical enablers of internationalisation and reduce market entry barriers for micro-SMEs.	The project acted as a network multiplier and ecosystem platform, creating trust-based, cross-border connections.
Methods, tools & new ways of working	<p>Companies: practical tools and frameworks, structured playbook, and MM.</p> <p>Partners: new approaches, repeatable workflows, and shared tools for cross-country program delivery.</p>	Scalable impact depends on transferable methods, not one-off activities.	Demonstrates proven methodological robustness, increasing scalability and repeatability of internationalisation support.
System-level & long-term effects	<p>Companies: increased long-term strategic thinking even when still early-stage.</p> <p>Partners: strengthened collaboration models, foundation for future projects, and improved international strategies.</p>	Funders and policymakers increasingly value structural, system-level impact over isolated outcomes.	The project generated meta-capabilities—ways of collaborating and supporting that persist beyond the project lifecycle.

The synthesis of the results in Table 4 is that the project strengthened the micro-SMEs' IR through accelerating their internationalisation by converting uncertainty into strategic clarity, building durable capabilities, and activating concrete action. Moreover, the project strengthened the partners' capacity to deliver stronger cross-border support.

4.3.1. Pre- and post -screening

The results for the pre- and post-screenings are presented in Figure 15. The yellow line represents the entry scores and the blue line the exit scores.



Assessment	Entry Score (1-5)	Exit Score (1-5)	Progression (%)
1) Mindset, Competencies, and Training	3,25	3,95	22
2) Market Research and Needs Assessment	2,32	3,28	41
3) Market Entry Strategy	2,2	3,18	45
4) Technology Adoption	3,15	3,62	15
5) Networking and Collaboration	2,29	3,18	39
6) Financial Support and Funding	2,64	2,92	11
7) Risk Management	2,63	3,07	17
8) Regulatory Compliance and Quality Control	2,72	3,02	11
9) Logistics and Supply Chain Management	2,86	3,15	10
10) Sustainability Framework	3,04	3,34	10
<i>Aggregated Readiness</i>	<i>27,1</i>	<i>32,71</i>	

Figure 15. Project pre- and post-screening of the companies' internationalisation readiness

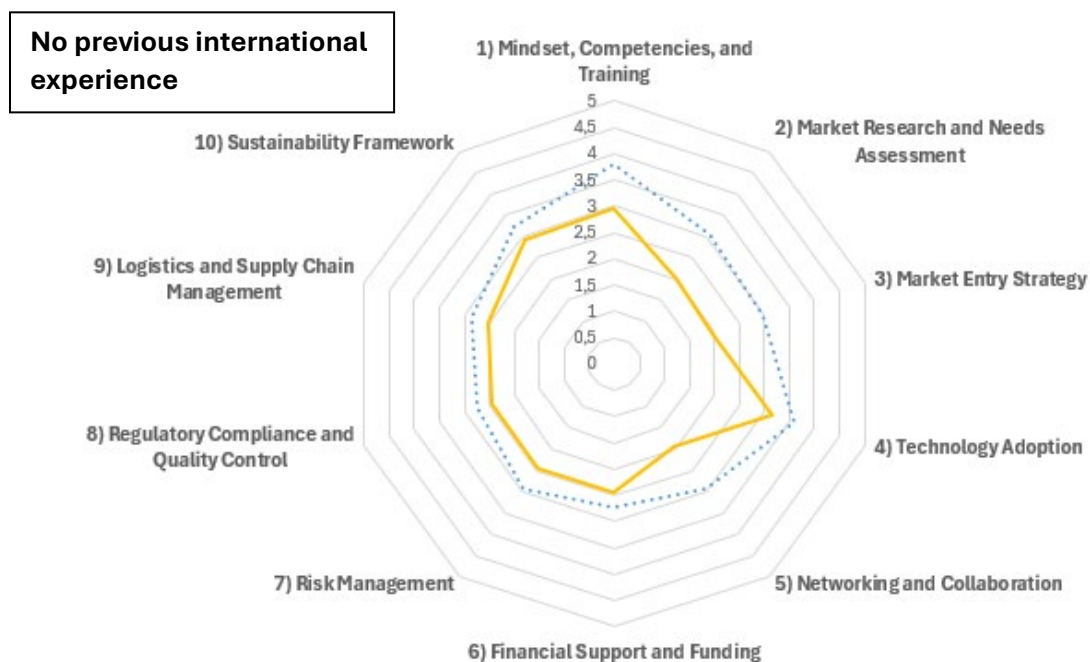
Based on the results, a conclusion is that there was an increase in the IR on all dimensions. However, the most significant increase was in the understanding of international markets through market research and needs assessment (41 % progression from starting level), the

definition and clarification of market entry strategies (45%), and the creation of networks and collaboration (39%). A significant increase was also visible in the mindset and competencies needed for internationalisation (22%). The four mentioned dimensions were also in focus in the workshops in the programme.

The numbers in Figure 15 show the IR on an aggregate level (all companies). An analysis of the screenings on an individual level (single companies) identified a smaller group of companies, where the rise in readiness was very high. In 23 of 258 of the companies (8,9%), the IR total score rose over 50 percent.

The increase in the IR was also analysed in relation to the companies' home country, company size, and their motivation for participating in the project. However, these analyses did not show significant differences based on the variables. The pre- and post-screening scores showed a similar pattern as for the whole group. As a curiosity, it can be mentioned that the IR increased the most in the Germany companies. However, there is no obvious explanation as to why, probably due to statistical coincidence.

The increase in the IR was also compared with previous experience of international activities. The increase in the IR among the companies with no previous experience is shown in Figure 16.

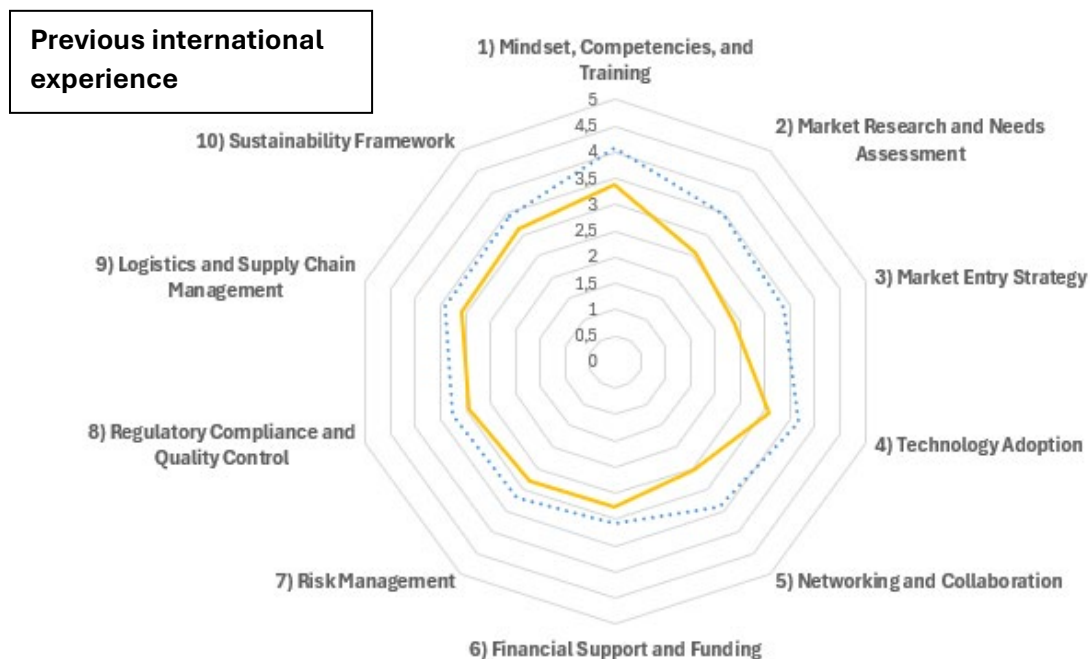


Assessment	Entry Score (1-5)	Exit Score (1-5)	Progression (%)
1) Mindset, Competencies, and Training	2,96	3,81	29
2) Market Research and Needs Assessment	1,99	3,05	53
3) Market Entry Strategy	1,95	2,96	52
4) Technology Adoption	3,15	3,58	14
5) Networking and Collaboration	1,93	2,94	52
6) Financial Support and Funding	2,46	2,73	11
7) Risk Management	2,45	2,94	20
8) Regulatory Compliance and Quality Control	2,44	2,73	12
9) Logistics and Supply Chain Management	2,54	2,86	13
10) Sustainability Framework	2,9	3,22	11
<i>Aggregated Readiness</i>	<i>24,77</i>	<i>30,82</i>	

Figure 16. Internationalisation readiness scores for companies with no previous experience

Naturally, the companies with no previous international experience scored lower in the pre-screening of the readiness than the companies with experience (see Figure 17). This is also the case in the post-screening.

However, it is interesting that the progression in both groups of companies is quite similar. The total readiness score rose by 6.05 units for the not experienced and 5,66 for the experienced. A conclusion is that the project offered value and benefit, both for less and more experienced participants.



Assessment	Entry Score (1-5)	Exit Score (1-5)	Progression (%)
1) Mindset, Competencies, and Training	3,38	4,07	20
2) Market Research and Needs Assessment	2,57	3,47	35
3) Market Entry Strategy	2,38	3,36	41
4) Technology Adoption	3,09	3,66	18
5) Networking and Collaboration	2,56	3,39	32
6) Financial Support and Funding	2,75	3,08	12
7) Risk Management	2,79	3,19	14
8) Regulatory Compliance and Quality Control	2,94	3,27	11
9) Logistics and Supply Chain Management	3,08	3,4	10
10) Sustainability Framework	3,14	3,45	10
<i>Aggregated Readiness</i>	28,68	34,34	

Figure 17. Internationalisation readiness scores for companies with previous experience

4.3.2. The level 2 sessions' impact on the internationalisation readiness

The aim of the level 2 sessions was capacity-building, thus increasing the IR. A concluding analysis, based on the participants' open comments in the feedback questionnaires, the IP was assessed positively and was widely perceived as delivering substantial practical and strategic value. Participants consistently reported that the programme provided them with new knowledge, concrete tools, and fresh perspectives that supported their internationalisation efforts and longer-term strategic work. The overall structure of the programme was described as clear, coherent, and easy to follow, with a well-judged balance between theoretical input and practical application. Several participants emphasised that the workshops logically build on each other, helping them to see how elements such as international mindset, product-market fit, team organisation, and digital tools come together into a single, integrated strategy.

The practical orientation of the programme was highlighted as a major strength. Participants appreciated the focus on "easy to apply" tools, concrete guidelines, and real-life examples, particularly in areas where other programmes are perceived as overly theoretical. The competence and approachability of the content experts were also repeatedly noted, with specific appreciation for how complex concepts were illustrated through practical cases and, in some instances, demonstrations of digital and AI-based tools. Many participants reported increased confidence, improved clarity on how and where to proceed next, and a sense that the programme supported both their skills development and strategic thinking. In addition, networking opportunities and the international perspective of the programme were seen as highly valuable, enabling participants to expand their professional networks and connect with other entrepreneurs from across the BSR.

At the same time, the feedback points to a few challenges that were relevant for consideration. A recurring theme concerned the heterogeneity of participating companies in terms of size, industry, and stage of internationalisation. While some participants valued this diversity, others noted that it made it difficult to position the workshops at an appropriate level for everyone. In particular, companies selling services directly to consumers sometimes perceived

parts of the content as being primarily geared towards businesses offering physical products or applications, even though the underlying tools and ideas were generally seen as transferable. Some participants also suggested that the programme may be more suitable for companies with more established organisational and financial structures. Clearer communication of the programme's main focus and target groups during recruitment and onboarding was therefore identified as a potential area for improvement.

In summary, the participant feedback indicated that the IP was highly relevant, inspiring and useful, offering strong learning outcomes and tangible benefits for companies seeking to develop their international growth strategies. The programme's strengths lied in its practical orientation, coherent structure, strategic perspective and networking opportunities. Addressing differences in participant profiles and clarifying expectations could further enhance the programme's effectiveness and perceived relevance across a broader range of companies.

4.3.3. Peer-to-peer sessions' impact on the internationalisation readiness

The P2P sessions aimed to share knowledge and experiences, as well as to interact and network. The P2P sessions further strengthened the companies' IR. The companies were advised to prepare for the sessions to enhance activity and interaction.

In the ongoing internal evaluation during WP 2, a concern was that the interaction could have been stronger, and that the active companies gained the most from the P2P sessions. However, a concluding analysis of the open comments in the feedback questionnaires was mostly positive.

The analysis of the open comments highlights a high level of satisfaction with the P2P sessions and confirms their added value for the programme. The open discussion format was consistently perceived as particularly beneficial, enabling meaningful exchange of experiences, challenges, and solutions among companies across borders. Participants emphasised that sharing concrete dilemmas and real-life challenges fostered mutual learning, peer support, and the formation of a cross-border B2B network, where companies recognised that they face similar issues related to sales, legal frameworks, and international expansion.

Several comments underlined that the smaller group format enabled deeper discussions and more customised feedback, resulting in clearer next steps and practically applicable recommendations. Participants reported gaining actionable insights on client acquisition, international growth strategies, and business development, as well as increased motivation to work in a more structured manner and dedicate focused time to internationalisation activities.

At the same time, feedback pointed to clear development potential, particularly regarding the grouping of participants according to similar industries or business models. Sector-based grouping was seen as a way to further strengthen relevance, accountability, and collaboration opportunities among participants.

In conclusion, the feedback indicates that the sessions were highly relevant, motivating, and practically useful, while also providing guidance for further refinement, especially in terms of participant grouping and continued emphasis on interactive, discussion-driven formats.

4.3.4. Matchmaking's impact on the internationalisation readiness

In total, 117 requests for participating in level 4, or the MM, were made. The requests resulted in 62 matches. Of the matches, 58 were unique matches (i.e., one company – one match), while 4 were second matches (one company – second match with another company). The companies' interest in specific markets or companies from those markets to match is illustrated in Figure 18.

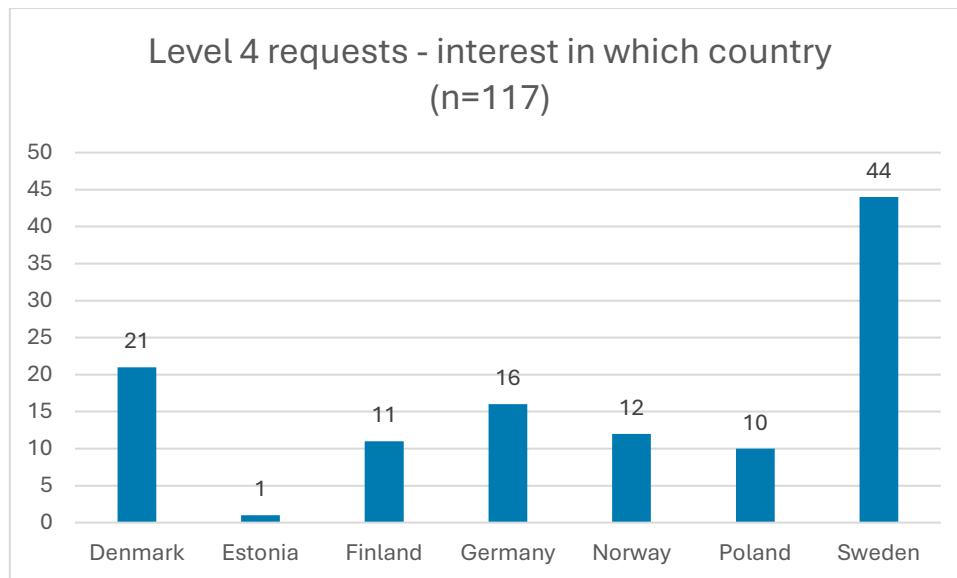


Figure 18. Matchmaking requests per country

Based on the numbers, Sweden was the first-mentioned choice in approximately one-third of the requests. One plausible explanation is that Sweden is in the middle of the BSR region and is therefore a neighbouring or nearby country with all the other countries participating in the project. The companies could also mention other countries of interest in the requests, but they are not included in the figure. However, when taking the second- and third-mentioned choices into account, the spread of interest is more levelled out between all countries.

The MM component of the project resulted in a considerable volume of interactions and follow-up activities, reflecting a high level of engagement between participating companies and counterparts. In 33 matches, a meeting with the companies from the project and the counterparts in the target countries was set up. The outcome of the meetings is still in progress, and it can be assumed that many of them will lead to further activities after the project.

In 29 matches, the progression went further than the initial meeting during the project. Based on an analysis, the MM results spanned a broad range of outcome types:

1. Concrete commercial outcomes, including signed partnership agreements and acquisition of the first paying customers.
2. Advanced negotiations, such as cooperation agreements under legal preparation, onboarding of offers into partner portfolios, and prototype delivery with purchase consideration.

3. Market entry and internationalisation support, including targeted marketing tests, distribution discussions, preparation for market onboarding, and structured feedback from foreign market actors.
4. Strategic and ecosystem-level outcomes, including memberships in chambers of commerce, invitations to international ecosystems, introductions to public authorities, and access to sectoral networks.
5. Knowledge exchange and learning effects, such as market insights, regulatory and customer feedback, and identification of use cases for further collaboration.

The outcomes demonstrate that the MM served not only as a mechanism for immediate deal-making but also as a platform for opportunity-identification, trust-building, and strategic positioning in new markets.

Applying a strict definition of a concrete deal, the analysis identifies three signed agreements, confirmed clients, or enacted commercial transactions:

- A signed partnership agreement, where roles and responsibilities between the partnering companies are clearly defined.
- The signing of the first client in the Finnish market.
- The delivery of a prototype followed by consideration of an order, representing a concrete commercial step beyond exploratory discussion.

Other outcomes, such as agreements in progress, expressions of strong interest, planned onboarding, and ongoing negotiations, are not counted as concrete deals at this stage, but represent a credible and active commercial opportunity. At the time of reporting, it was acknowledged that several deals were still in progress.

Overall, the MM activities can be assessed as effective in generating international contacts, structured follow-ups, and tangible progress toward commercialisation. While the number of immediately confirmed deals remains limited, the documented outcomes show a strong concentration of advanced discussions, legal preparations, pilot pathways, and market-access initiatives, suggesting that several additional outcomes may materialise beyond the project.

It is also worth mentioning that the plan is to continue to support the current participating companies and new ones with MM, as part of a post-project, sustainable solution after project funding has ended. On the project's planned Community Platform, MM will be a feature for new network partners to utilise, if they have local companies that would like to be matched with customers, partners and others within the BSR.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

Besides the evaluation points in the ED, there are a couple of other very important lessons learned among the project partners related to running and testing the IP.

5.1. A trustworthy partnership is crucial for cross-border projects

Before BSR Go-abroad, most project partners did not know each other and had no history of working together. During the development phase (WP 1), the partners hosted several

workshops in each country, where they co-created the IP and developed a shared methodology for supporting micro-SMEs engaging in cross-border activities within the BSR. This joint development process was essential in building a common understanding of objectives, structure, and expected outcomes.

Recognising and investing in the importance of interpersonal relationships early in a cross-border project proved to be a critical success factor. Establishing trust, mutual understanding, and open communication channels among partners required more than formal coordination meetings. Operating in a highly digital environment makes online communication practical and efficient for daily collaboration, but it became evident that face-to-face interaction played a decisive role in strengthening the partnership.

Meeting in person, visiting each other's organisations, and gaining insight into local ecosystems and working environments created a stronger foundation for collaboration. These physical meetings fostered trust, improved cultural understanding, and enabled more effective problem-solving. They also contributed to a shared sense of ownership and commitment to the programme's success.

Therefore, the project highlighted the significant value of in-person interaction between project partners, particularly in transnational initiatives. For future cross-border programmes, it is strongly recommended that funding for mutual partner visits be prioritised in the project budget, especially during the development phase, but also throughout implementation. Investing in relationship-building early on can substantially enhance coordination, alignment, and overall project impact.

5.2. Communication in cross-border partnerships is important

Delivering a cross-border programme with eight partners across multiple countries generated substantial organisational learning for the partnership. Operating across different national contexts, institutional cultures, and business ecosystems underscored that coordination was not merely a supportive function but a central pillar of the programme's success.

Although all partners shared a common objective, they often interpreted processes, timelines, and responsibilities differently. This made it clear that alignment had to be actively built and continuously maintained throughout the implementation period (WP 2). Strong coordination proved essential to ensure coherence between workshops, avoid content overlap, and maintain a clear and consistent "red thread" across the programme. Because multiple external experts and project partners contributed to different levels and thematic areas, there was an inherent risk of fragmentation when collaboration was not sufficiently structured. Without deliberate alignment, participants could have experienced repetition in certain areas and gaps in others. Establishing shared frameworks, common terminology, and a clear learning progression was therefore critical to delivering a seamless and coherent participant experience.

The partnership also learned that consistency in communication, structure, and expectations could not be taken for granted. Differences in working culture, decision-making approaches, and organisational capacity required proactive management. Regular coordination meetings

bi-weekly, systematic collection of documentation, and transparent communication channels became necessary tools to prevent misunderstandings and ensure that all partners operated with a shared understanding of objectives and procedures.

This experience further highlighted the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities. When ownership was unclear, tasks risked being delayed, duplicated, or overlooked. Clarifying responsibilities related to recruitment, workshop coordination, coaching follow-up, MM facilitation, and monitoring strengthened operational efficiency and accountability. At the same time, structured collaboration between external experts was essential to ensure pedagogical alignment and continuity across workshops.

Finally, shared ownership of the outcomes emerged as a decisive factor in the programme's overall performance. In a cross-border project of this scale, success depended not only on individual partner contributions but on collective delivery. Promoting a mindset of joint responsibility, rather than national or organisational silos, strengthened trust within the partnership and enhanced collective problem-solving capacity. Through this process, the consortium developed a deeper understanding of how to manage complexity, navigate regional differences, and operate as a cohesive and unified team despite geographical dispersion.

5.3. The tested internationalisation programme

Based on testing the programme on more than 250 micro-SMEs, several important lessons were identified among the project partners.

5.3.1. Micro-SMEs need a different approach than “regular SMEs”

One key takeaway from the project is that micro-SMEs require a fundamentally different approach than larger SMEs. Companies with fewer than ten employees operate with very limited time, financial resources, and internal capacity. Many of those who participated in the programme had little to no prior experience with internationalisation. As a result, they benefited far more from hands-on practical tools, concrete checklists, and realistic step-by-step guidance than from abstract strategy models. This approach shaped the programme methodology design to prioritise simplicity, clarity, and immediate applicability to create tangible value for the participants.

5.3.2. Micro-SMEs need practical tools and execution support

Another important lesson learned was the importance of the BCs within the programme. Each micro-SME was assigned a BC, and it became clear during implementation that training modules alone were not sufficient to move companies meaningfully forward in their internationalisation journey. While the training modules were successful in inspiring participants, providing knowledge, and introducing relevant tools, many micro-SMEs struggled to translate new insights into concrete actions once they returned to their daily operations. With limited time, resources, and strategic capacity, participants needed ongoing guidance to prioritise, adapt, and implement what they had learned.

The inclusion of local BCs as dedicated “go-to” sparring partners throughout the programme therefore proved to be a critical success factor. By attending programme activities themselves, coaches developed a solid understanding of the content, tools, terminology, and expectations introduced during the training modules. This shared reference enabled them to provide targeted, coherent, and context-specific support at the subsequent levels, particularly during the execution and go-to-market phase.

Furthermore, the presence of BCs strengthened continuity across the four programme levels. It created a bridge between collective learning in an international, cross-border setting and individual follow-up at the local level. Companies experienced that the programme was not a series of isolated activities, but rather a structured progression in which each step was built upon the previous one. This continuity increased accountability, maintained momentum, and reduced the risk that companies would lose direction between levels.

The BCs also played an important motivational role. For many micro-SMEs, internationalisation can feel risky and overwhelming. Having a trusted local advisor who understands both the regional business environment and the content of the IP provides reassurance and practical clarity. Coaches have helped companies set realistic goals, adjust ambitions when necessary, and maintain focus.

Ultimately, this support structure made it more likely that the participating micro-SMEs would progress from inspiration to concrete action, and from initial intention to active cross-border engagement. In cases where the local BC was not “present”, it had an immediate effect on the engagement of the participating micro-SME.

5.3.3. Importance of an international mindset

The project partners also recognised that mindset is often a greater barrier to internationalisation than technical knowledge or access to tools. In many cases, the participating micro-SMEs did not primarily lack information about export procedures, legal requirements, or market analysis methods. Rather, they hesitated because internationalisation felt uncertain, risky, or overwhelming. The psychological and strategic readiness to think beyond national borders proved to be a more decisive factor than the availability of technical know-how.

Before companies can meaningfully develop go-to-market strategies, scaling plans, or value chain partnerships, they must adopt a broader and more international outlook. This involves cultivating openness to new cultures, business practices, and ways of communicating. It requires adaptability in responding to unfamiliar market conditions and resilience in the face of setbacks or slower-than-expected progress. It also demands a willingness to test ideas through low-cost, flexible entry strategies rather than waiting for perfect conditions. For many micro-SMEs, this represents a significant shift from operating in a familiar local environment to navigating more complex and uncertain cross-border contexts.

The partners observed that many micro-SMEs needed structured support to build confidence and strengthen long-term strategic thinking. Instead of viewing internationalisation as a high-risk leap, companies needed to see it as a gradual and manageable process. Encouraging

reflection on ambition levels, risk tolerance, and growth motivation helped participants better understand what type of company they aspired to become. This reflective process often reduced fear and clarified priorities, making international steps feel more achievable.

Moreover, mindset development proved essential for ensuring commitment throughout the programme. Without a genuine internal motivation to internationalise, even the best tools and frameworks would not lead to sustained action. By addressing mindset early on, the programme created a foundation upon which later, more technical modules could build.

This insight explains why the “International Mindset” workshop was positioned at the beginning of the programme. It was designed not merely as an introductory session, but as a strategic cornerstone. By focusing first on awareness, motivation, and perspective, the programme aimed to prepare participants mentally and strategically before asking them to engage in more detailed planning and execution activities. In doing so, the partners strengthened the likelihood that subsequent learning would translate into meaningful and lasting international engagement.

5.3.4. Flexibility within the programme structure

One important lesson learned throughout the implementation of the programme was that flexibility within a structured framework significantly increases overall impact. The original linear progression model, moving companies step-by-step from Level 1 to Level 4, did not suit all participants equally. While the structured pathway provided clarity and consistency, it became evident that micro-SMEs progress at different speeds and enter internationalisation with varying levels of maturity and readiness.

Some companies required the full structured journey to build mindset, competencies, and strategic direction. Others, however, were already more advanced and ready to engage directly in go-to-market activities or cross-border MM. For these more mature participants, a rigid progression model risked slowing momentum and reducing motivation. As a result, the introduction of a fast-track option became necessary to accommodate companies capable of moving more quickly through the programme.

This experience demonstrated that a “one-size-fits-all” approach can limit the overall effectiveness of an IP. Structure is important, but it must be combined with flexibility. Future programme designs should therefore include both a standard pathway and an accelerated pathway, supported by clear and transparent criteria for transitioning between tracks. This ensures that companies receive support aligned with their maturity level, while maintaining coherence and fairness within the overall methodology.

5.3.5. Monitoring systems are essential for progression

Another important lesson learned during the implementation of the programme was the critical role of structured monitoring in supporting company progression. Without systematic tracking of each company’s development, stagnation can easily go unnoticed. Not all micro-SMEs communicate openly when they struggle, fall behind, or lose momentum. In many cases, challenges only become visible once progression has already slowed significantly.

The partnership observed that early identification of delays or uncertainty made a substantial difference. When intervention happened at an early stage, through additional coaching, clarification of goals, or adjusted timelines, the companies were more likely to regain direction and successfully move to the next programme level. In contrast, when support was delayed, disengagement became harder to reverse.

This experience demonstrated that progression cannot rely solely on participant initiative. A structured monitoring system is necessary to ensure that companies remain on track. Future programmes should therefore implement clear milestone definitions for each level, combined with systematic tracking of company progress, more explicitly than the NSP used in the project. In addition, predefined trigger points for intervention should be established, ensuring that support mechanisms are activated when early signs of stagnation appear. Such an approach strengthens accountability, improves completion rates, and increases the overall impact of the programme.

6. CLOSING WORDS

The BSR Go-abroad project set out to strengthen the resilience of micro-SMEs in the region by supporting their capacity to internationalise through knowledge, tools, networks, and structured guidance. Based on the evaluation results presented in this report, it can be concluded that the project has largely met its objectives and delivered meaningful value both to participating companies and to the partner organisations involved in programme delivery.

The evaluation demonstrates that the IP was successfully developed, piloted, continuously refined, and validated through a systematic and evidence-based ED. The combination of formative and summative evaluation enabled ongoing learning and adjustment, ensuring that the programme evolved in response to participant feedback, observed challenges, and practical experience across multiple cohorts. By the end of the piloting phase (WP 2), the programme had matured into a coherent, methodologically robust, and transferable model supporting internationalisation, as reflected in the finalised blueprint and tested tools.

At company level, the results confirm a clear increase in IR across all assessed dimensions. In particular, substantial progress was observed in areas that are critical barriers for micro-SMEs, including market understanding, market entry strategy, networking and collaboration, and international mindset. The findings indicate that the programme not only improved knowledge and skills, but also reduced uncertainty, strengthened strategic clarity, and activated concrete internationalisation efforts. Importantly, the results show that the programme created value for both companies with limited prior international experience and those already active in international markets.

Beyond firm-level outcomes, the project generated broader and more durable effects at partner level. The participating organisations strengthened their advisory capabilities, developed shared methodologies and tools, and deepened cross-border collaboration within the BSR. These outcomes enhance the long-term capacity of business support ecosystems to deliver coordinated and effective internationalisation support to micro-SMEs beyond the project's lifespan.

The lessons learned underline the importance of designing IPs that are tailored to the specific conditions of micro-SMEs, combining structured learning with flexibility, practical tools, continuous coaching, and strong coordination among partners. The project showed that IR is not built through isolated activities, but through an integrated process that addresses mindset, capability, networks, and action simultaneously.

In conclusion, the project provided a tested and scalable model for supporting micro-SME internationalisation within the BSR. The evaluation confirms both the relevance of the programme and its contribution to strengthening resilience, collaboration, and sustainable cross-border economic activity. The results and insights documented in this report offer a solid foundation for future initiatives, policy development, and continued programme implementation within and beyond the current partnership.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERNATIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT SCALE

Instructions for how to measure the criteria in the Screening Tool

This scale is designed to help you measure each criterion with increasing levels of readiness, from basic awareness and preparation to advanced.

"Prioritizing the criteria for international readiness can vary based on the specific industry, target market, and individual circumstances of the micro-SME.

However, based on general best practices for internationalisation, the following is a suggested prioritisation:"

1) Mindset, competencies, and training:

Screening Criteria

This forms the foundation of international readiness. Without the right mindset, motivation, and skill set, other efforts are likely to be less effective.

- 1: No clear motivation for internationalisation; lack of internal competencies and unclear improvement areas.
- 2: Some motivation but vague; limited competencies and minimal training focused on internationalisation.
- 3: Fair motivation; basic competencies present with identified areas for training and improvement.
- 4: Strong motivation and defined competencies; ongoing targeted training with clear goals for enhancement.
- 5: High motivation, in-depth competencies, and continuous advanced training with a strategic focus on international expansion.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. What motivates your leadership to pursue international markets?
2. How do you assess and enhance the international competencies of your team?
3. Have you participated in any training specifically aimed at international business?
4. Can you describe a situation where your team adapted its approach to meet an international market requirement?
5. What are your long-term goals for international growth?
6. How do you manage language and cultural differences within your team?
7. What internal resources are dedicated to research and development for global markets?
8. How often do you conduct performance reviews focusing on international objectives?
9. What strategies do you have in place for continuous learning and adapting to global trends?
10. How do you incorporate international market feedback into your training programs?

2) Market research and needs assessment:

Screening Criteria:

Understanding the target market is critical. It drives the development of an appropriate value proposition and informs the strategy.

1. No set KPIs for international markets; no clear international Value Proposition.
2. Few KPIs with limited insight into international needs; vague Value Proposition.
3. Adequate KPIs for basic market understanding; defined Value Proposition for some markets.
4. Comprehensive KPIs with good market insights; clear Value Proposition with differentiation.
5. Advanced KPIs with deep market insights; compelling and tailored international Value Proposition.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you identify and prioritise international markets for entry?
2. What tools and resources do you use for international market research?
3. How do you assess the demand for your product/service in foreign markets?
4. What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) you track for international success?
5. How have you adapted your value proposition for different markets?
6. What data sources have proved most reliable for understanding international trends?
7. How do you track and respond to competitor movements in your target markets?
8. What has been your biggest insight from international market research?
9. How do you validate the need for your product/service in a new market?
10. How do you ensure the accuracy and relevance of your market research?

3) Market Entry Strategy:**Screening Criteria:**

A clearly defined strategy is essential for navigating new markets, setting realistic goals, and establishing a roadmap for international growth.

1. No defined market entry strategy; no consideration of value chain positioning.
2. Basic market entry strategy; limited consideration of value chain positioning.
3. Developed market entry strategy for selected markets; some value chain considerations.
4. Detailed market entry strategy with upstream/downstream value chain positioning.
5. Sophisticated, flexible market entry strategy with comprehensive value chain integration.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. What criteria do you use to select an international market entry mode?
2. How do you customise your market entry strategy for different regions?
3. What partnerships or alliances have you formed to facilitate market entry?
4. How do you balance risk and opportunity when entering a new international market?
5. Can you outline the steps of your typical market entry process?
6. How do you measure the effectiveness of your market entry strategies?
7. What contingency plans do you have if initial entry strategies fail?
8. How do you leverage local expertise in your market entry planning?
9. What regulatory barriers have you encountered in foreign markets, and how have you overcome them?
10. How do you integrate sustainability practices in your market entry strategies?

4) Technology Adoption:**Screening Criteria**

In the digital age, leveraging technology for operational efficiency and market penetration is a driver of success.

1. Minimal use of digital tools; no use of AI for customer management or regulatory aspects.
2. Basic digital tools for productivity; limited use of AI in operations.
3. Good use of digital tools for productivity and communication; some AI integration.
4. Advanced digital tool adoption; robust AI usage for sales, customer management, and compliance.
5. Cutting-edge digital and AI tools fully integrated into international operations.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. What digital tools are integral to your international operations?
2. How has technology improved your operational efficiency on a global scale?
3. What role does AI play in your customer relationship management internationally?
4. How do you stay updated with technological advancements relevant to your industry?
5. What is your approach to cybersecurity in international operations?
6. How has technology impacted your ability to scale globally?
7. What challenges have you faced in integrating technology across multiple markets?
8. How do you ensure that your technology investments align with your international strategy?
9. What training do you provide to your staff on new technologies?
10. How do you evaluate the ROI of your technology investments internationally?

5) Networking and Collaboration:**Screening Criteria:**

Building a strong network and collaborative partnerships can be a major accelerator for international growth and overcoming market entry barriers.

1. Isolated network with no international contacts; no cross-border activity.
2. Limited network with few international contacts; minimal cross-border activity.
3. Moderate network; some established international contacts and initial cross-border collaborations.
4. Expansive network with significant international contacts; active cross-border collaborations.
5. Extensive, influential international network with strategic cross-border collaborations.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you identify potential international partners?
2. What criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of a partnership?
3. How do you manage and maintain international relationships?
4. Can you provide an example of a successful international collaboration?
5. What networking events or platforms have been most beneficial for your international growth?
6. How do you leverage international contacts to gain market insights?
7. What challenges have you encountered in building an international network?
8. How do you ensure mutual benefits in international collaborations?
9. What strategies do you use to increase your visibility in international markets?
10. How do you handle conflicts in international partnerships?

6) Financial Support and Funding:**Screening Criteria**

Adequate funding ensures the SME can sustain its international operations and grow without overstressing its resources.

1. No funding secured; lacks understanding of capital needs and funding channels.
2. Limited funding options explored; basic understanding of capital needs.
3. Some funding secured; fair understanding of capital needs and funding plan in development.
4. Funding secured with diverse channels; good understanding of capital needs with a detailed funding plan.
5. Comprehensive funding secured; expert understanding of capital needs with strategic funding channels.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you assess your financial needs for international expansion?
2. What types of funding sources have you explored or secured for your international activities?
3. Can you describe your experience with international financial regulations and their impact on your funding strategies?
4. How do you manage currency risk and other financial uncertainties in international markets?
5. What financial metrics do you monitor most closely when operating internationally?
6. How do you project cash flow and funding needs for new market entries?
7. Have you ever adjusted your business model based on financial insights gained from international operations?
8. What financial partnerships have you established to support global expansion?
9. How do you ensure financial compliance in each of the markets you enter?
10. What lessons have you learned about securing and managing funding for international growth?

7) Risk Management:**Screening Criteria:**

Identifying and mitigating risks is crucial to protecting the company from potential business uncertainties.

1. Undefined risks; no formal risk management practices.
2. Some risks identified; basic risk management responses.
3. Clear identification of major risks; structured management and contingency planning.
4. Detailed risk analysis; robust management strategies and proactive mitigation measures.
5. Comprehensive risk management framework; sophisticated internal and external risk strategies.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. What process do you use to identify and assess risks in international markets?
2. Can you provide an example of a significant risk you encountered abroad and how you managed it?
3. How do you incorporate local market risk factors into your overall risk management strategy?
4. What tools or technologies do you use to monitor risks associated with international trade?
5. How do you train your team to handle potential risks in foreign markets?
6. What measures do you have in place to protect intellectual property across borders?
7. How do you ensure compliance with international laws and regulations?
8. How do you handle political or economic instability in your target markets?
9. What is your strategy for supply chain disruption?
10. How do you assess the effectiveness of your risk management practices?

8) Regulatory Compliance and Quality Control:**Screening Criteria**

Ensuring compliance with international standards and local regulations is necessary to operate legally and build trust with global customers.

1. Unaware of industry standards and local legal requirements; no strategy for local representation.
2. Limited understanding of basic compliance requirements; minimal planning for local representation.
3. Adequate knowledge of key regulations; some plans for ensuring compliance and local presence.
4. Strong compliance systems in place; strategic planning for local representation and quality control.
5. Expert-level compliance and quality control; sophisticated strategies for exceeding industry standards.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you stay updated on regulatory changes in the markets you operate?
2. What strategies do you use to ensure product compliance across different jurisdictions?
3. Who is responsible for regulatory compliance within your organisation?
4. How do you manage the challenges of varying quality standards internationally?
5. What systems do you have in place to monitor and control quality globally?
6. Can you describe a challenge you faced with compliance and how you resolved it?
7. How do you handle the logistics of product certification in foreign markets?
8. What role does compliance play in your strategic planning for international markets?
9. How do you educate your team about international regulations?
10. What partnerships have you formed to assist with compliance and quality control?

9) Logistics and Supply Chain Management**Screening Criteria:**

A well-managed supply chain is vital for delivering products and services effectively in new markets.

1. No supply chain mapping; risks and opportunities not understood.
2. Basic mapping of supply chain; limited understanding of risks.
3. Fair mapping with some risk assessment; opportunities identified.
4. Comprehensive supply chain mapping; risks well-managed, opportunities leveraged.
5. Advanced supply chain integration; risks strategically minimised, opportunities fully exploited.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you optimise your supply chain for international operations?
2. What challenges have you faced with logistics in international markets, and how have you overcome them?
3. How do you evaluate potential logistics partners in new markets?
4. What technologies do you use to manage your international supply chain?
5. How do you deal with customs and import/export regulations?
6. What contingency plans do you have for supply chain disruptions?
7. How do you ensure the timely delivery of goods to international customers?
8. What metrics do you use to assess supply chain efficiency?
9. How do you integrate sustainability into your international supply chain management?
10. How do you handle reverse logistics and returns in foreign markets?

10) Sustainability Framework:**Screening Criteria:**

As expectations for corporate responsibility increase globally, sustainability can become a competitive advantage and is often necessary to do business with large corporations.

1. Minimal understanding of sustainability standards; no competitive advantage identified.
2. Basic awareness of sustainability standards; some consideration of its role in partnerships.
3. Moderate implementation of sustainability standards; recognised as a factor for partnerships.
4. Advanced sustainability framework integrated; seen as a competitive advantage in market entry.
5. Leading sustainability practices; critical to strategic partnerships and market positioning.

Questions for assessment/discussion

Questions to support dialogue between the company and the Business Coach. They help identify strengths and areas for improvement in aligning with global operational standards and practices.

1. How do you define sustainability within your organisation?
2. What sustainability certifications or standards do you adhere to internationally?
3. How do you measure the environmental impact of your international operations?
4. Can you provide examples of sustainable practices you've implemented in foreign markets?
5. How does sustainability influence your decision-making in international business?
6. What are the challenges of maintaining sustainability standards globally?
7. How do you engage with local communities on sustainability issues?
8. What role does sustainability play in your international marketing?
9. How do you balance economic, environmental, and social factors in your international strategy?
10. What future initiatives do you have planned to enhance your sustainability framework globally?

This prioritisation assumes that the SME is starting from a position where it is considering internationalisation but has not yet taken substantial steps in that direction. For businesses at different stages or with specific strategic goals, the prioritisation could shift. For example, if a company already has a strong digital infrastructure, "Technology Adoption" might be less of a priority compared to "Networking and Collaboration" or "Market Research and Needs Assessment". Each SME should adapt this prioritisation to its strategic goals, industry norms, and the particular challenges of the markets it aims to enter.

APPENDIX 2: FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEVEL 2

The final questionnaire for level 2 was designed and executed in MS Forms.

Dear participant in the BSR Go-abroad project!

We hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire. Your insights are invaluable and will help us develop the content of the workshops and the programme.

The programme is administered by Business Hub Zealand (Erhvervshus Sjælland) on behalf of the partner consortium.

When you send in information, we process your data. Business Hub Zealand is the data controller for the programs, and the processing of your personal data takes place in compliance with applicable legislation. Read the description of our data processing here: <https://ehsj.dk/content/ydelser/privacy-policy/239c10c4-1edd-4cd3-96ab-cad88376f70d/>

Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire

Background information

Which option best describes your company's international activities?

- We are considering starting exports or other international activities
- Our exports or international activities are in a concrete planning- or starting phase
- Our exports or international activities are in a development- and growth phase
- Our exports or international activities are well-established

General feedback

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the workshop.

- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Workshop content

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

2. The content was relevant, well-organized and easy to follow.

- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

3. The materials (e.g., presentation, text material, handouts, online resources) were helpful and relevant.

- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

4. The workshop provided a good balance between theory and practical application.

- Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Instructor Performance

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

5. The instructor was knowledgeable about the subject matter.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

6. The instructor communicated ideas and concepts clearly.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Practicalities

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

7. The technical set-up (e.g., sound, picture, online platform, multimedia) was effective, user-friendly and suited for the purpose.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

8. The workshop timetable and length were reasonable.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Participant outcomes

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

9. I feel that I have gained a solid understanding of the content of the workshop.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

10. I am confident that I can apply the content of the workshop to my company's situation.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Additional suggestions and comments

11. Do you have any suggestions for improving the workshop?

12. Do you have any other comments regarding the workshop or the BSR Go-abroad programme?

The following questions were added to the questionnaire after the last workshop (4th).

13. The four workshops met my expectations

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Please elaborate on your answer

14. There has been a good coherence and common thread between all four workshops

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Please elaborate on your answer

15. What was the most important thing you learned in the four workshops, and how can you use it in your business? (add your e-mail if you will allow us to refer to you, if we use your comment for marketing purposes)

16. Other comments?

APPENDIX 3: FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEVEL 3

The final questionnaire for level 3 was designed and executed in MS Forms.

Dear participant in the BSR Go-abroad project!

We hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire. Your insights are invaluable and will help us develop the content of the workshops and the programme.

The programme is administered by Business Hub Zealand (Erhvervshus Sjælland) on behalf of the partner consortium.

When you send in information, we process your data. Business Hub Zealand is the data controller for the programs, and the processing of your personal data takes place in compliance with applicable legislation. Read the description of our data processing here: <https://ehsj.dk/content/ydelsler/privacy-policy/239c10c4-1edd-4cd3-96ab-cad88376f70d/>

P2P Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire

Background information

Which option best describes your company's international activities?

- We are considering starting exports or other international activities
- Our exports or international activities are in a concrete planning or starting phase
- Our exports or international activities are in a development and growth phase
- Our exports or international activities are well-established

Feedback

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement

1. I feel that the preparation for the workshop was valuable to me

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

2. The recap of the content was important to set the stage for the workshop

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

3. The interaction or discussion with the instructor gave me new insights

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

4. The interaction or discussion with my peers (other companies) gave me new insights

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

5. The setup of the workshop was relevant, well-organized, and easy to follow

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

6. I got an answer to the questions I had prepared for the workshop

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

7. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the workshop

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Additional suggestions and comments

8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the workshop?

9. Do you have any other comments regarding the workshop or the BSR Go-abroad programme?

The following questions were added to the questionnaire after the last peer-to-peer (4th).

10. The four workshops met my expectations

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

11. Please elaborate on your answer

12. There has been a good coherence and common thread between all four workshops

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

13. Please elaborate on your answer

14. What was the most important thing you learned in the four workshops, and how can you use it in your business? (add your e-mail if you will allow us to refer to you, if we use your comment for marketing purposes)

15. Other comments?
