

Women Entrepreneurs Readiness and Empowerment in Ukraine

Eligibility and Selection Criteria for Women-led Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises



Implemented by:



ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

WOMEN-LED SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

A Project Benefits

The project aims to strengthen Ukraine's women-led business ecosystem by supporting women-focused Business Support Organizations (WBSOs) and women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in **five export priority sectors** in Ukraine: food processing, textiles and apparel, wood and furniture, ICT, and electrical equipment. The overall objective is to **advance the resilient economic recovery and EU accession in Ukraine** through fostering durable EU-Ukraine linkages, enhancing the inclusion of women in business, and facilitating the adoption of EU standards and procedures.

Please refer to the [Participation Value Proposition](#) for more details.

B Target Group

A total of 30 women-led SMEs will be accepted to join the project according to the criteria defined below and invited to participate in the project's capacity-building component. Admission will be based on individual applications through a public call for applications (15 participants) as well as nominations by the Women Business Support Organizations (WBSOs) participating in the project (15 participants).

Of the 30 participants in the capacity-building component, 15 will have the opportunity to take part in an advanced market immersion component. Participants for this component will be invited in summer 2026 on the basis of objective criteria, which will be announced during the course of the project.

Women-led SMEs that are active across the five priority sectors, have growth-focussed, EU single market-ready enterprises and business models, and are operating in one of the nine target regions are warmly invited to apply.

If you want to apply, please submit the [Application Questionnaire](#) until 22 March 2026.

C Selection Process

- (1) Women-led SMEs that fit into the target group are invited to apply to the project by filling out the online [Application Questionnaire](#). The target date for applications is 22 March 2026. Qualified applications may be considered even after the target date.
- (2) The project team will evaluate these applications against the eligibility and selection criteria (see sections D–E) on a rolling basis and compile a preliminary shortlist of the highest ranking applicants, ensuring sectoral and regional representation.
- (3) Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a 15–20-minute online-based interview between the 22nd of March and mid-April to confirm their fit for the project, as well as their English competencies.
- (4) The highest ranked and most suitable SMEs will undergo a due diligence assessment. At this stage, applicants will be asked to submit some documents to support their application (see section F).
- (5) If there are no due diligence findings, participant agreements will be shared with the selected SMEs until the end of April 2026 to confirm and formalize their participation in the project.

D Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for participation in the project, SMEs must meet *all* of the following criteria on the business level:

- Legally registered in Ukraine and operating in Ukraine for at least five years;
- The business is women-led, which means:
 - the business is an individual entrepreneur who is a woman, or
 - at least 70% of the SME's shareholders are women, or
 - at least 70% of the SME's executive leadership¹ are women;
- The business has 10 or more team members,
- The statutory business objective, that is the business' core product or service, is classified in *one* of the following sectors:
 - Wood and furniture
 - C16 – Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork; manufacture of articles of straw and plaiting material
 - C31 – Manufacture of furniture
 - Food processing
 - C10 – Manufacture of food product
 - C11 – Manufacture of beverages
 - Textile and apparel
 - C13 – Manufacture of textiles
 - C14 – Manufacture of wearing apparel
 - C15 – Manufacture of leather and related products (e.g.: footwear)
 - Information and communication technology (ICT)
 - J61 – Telecommunications
 - J62 – Computer programming, consultancy and related activities
 - J63 – Information service activities
 - Electrical equipment
 - C27 – Manufacture of electrical equipment
 - Other business classifications, if a sufficient connection to the target classifications is proven
- The business has its registered seat, a registered branch office or a different kind of representation/establishment (e.g. a shop) in one of these regions:²
 - Lviv
 - Ivano-Frankivsk
 - Khmelnytskyi
 - Rivne
 - Vinnytsia
 - Odesa
 - Dnipro

¹ Executive leadership is defined as persons who are legally authorized to represent the business.

² Individual entrepreneurs (FOP) that have relocated from other regions of Ukraine to one of these regions and at the time of application did not register the business in the current seat region may provide other forms of proof of operation in the target regions, such as internal displacement certificates or similar.

- Poltava
- Kharkiv
- The business has a track record in working with the EU single market or can present evidence of an export-ready product or service.

For each selected SME, one person will be invited to participate in the project. To be eligible, the prospective participant must fulfil *all* of the following criteria on the personal level:

- The participant is
 - currently employed by the SME and occupies a key position³ within its team, or
 - a legal representative of the SME,
- The participant is a Ukrainian national or holder of a valid residence permit,
- The participant currently resides in Ukraine,
- The participant is over the age of 18 years,
- The participant can prove sufficient English proficiency to participate in English-language training and networking activities, and
- The participant can commit to participate in all project activities for the entire duration of the project.

Both on the business and the personal level, certain restrictions to the eligibility to participate in this program apply. If any of the following conditions apply, you may not be eligible for the program:

- Individuals or organizations who are listed in the currently applicable sanctions regime of the European Union and other pertinent regulatory bodies.
- Individuals residing in areas of Ukraine that are temporarily occupied and not under the effective administrative control of the Government of Ukraine.
- Businesses with active operations in Russia, Belarus or the areas of Ukraine that are temporarily occupied and not under the effective administrative control of the Government of Ukraine, or businesses with shareholders from one of these regions
- Businesses that receive funds from Russia, Belarus or the areas of Ukraine that are temporarily occupied and not under the effective administrative control of the Government of Ukraine.
- Businesses that are currently under investigation for corruption
- Businesses that are no longer active and are currently undergoing liquidation or have declared bankruptcy

Eligible SMEs and prospective participants will then be evaluated against the selection criteria detailed in *section E* below.

³ Key positions in a company are those positions without which the company cannot continue to operate or can only do so by accepting significant losses in revenue or overburdening other positions. While management positions can generally be assumed to qualify as key positions, the classification does not necessarily have to be based on the seniority or management responsibility of the person. It is up to the applicants to conclusively demonstrate their qualifications as key personnel in the context of the individual company.

E Selection Criteria

To ensure an objective evaluation process, all eligible applications will be assessed against four predefined criteria.

(1) Profitability, growth and positive future outlook

The business is successful in terms of revenue and growth. The product/service offered by the business has a market and differentiates itself from competitors.

(2) Potential to scale to and in the EU market

The SME demonstrates convincing potential for growth and scaling to and in the EU market, showing that its product/service is relevant to the EU market and that it has taken initial steps in this direction.

(3) Benefit of the project

The SME has a clear understanding of how the project can contribute to its EU expansion. This is demonstrated by formulating clear goals and needs for its participation in the project that are aligned with what the project can deliver in terms of training and networking/partnerships.

(4) Motivation and commitment

This criterion assesses the motivation and the commitment of the applying SME to join the programme and actively contribute to all its activities. It may also reflect negatively on the rating for this criterion if it is highly apparent that the application has been written entirely through AI assistance tools or Large Language Models (e.g. Chat GPT).

F Data Collection and Review

Following the evaluation of all eligible applications against the selection criteria, the highest-scoring applications will undergo a due diligence screening. To ensure the validity of all statements made during the application process, participants will be asked to provide documents supporting this.

Supporting documents may include:

- Registration certificate of the business
- Proof of residency in Ukraine
- Proof of employment by the business

The validity of these documents will be assessed using the relevant verification tools and online portals, while making sure to clarify potential discrepancies. The selected participants will also be cross-referenced against the relevant sanctions lists maintained by the European Union and other pertinent regulatory bodies. All submitted documents will be handled in line with enpact's [Privacy Policy](#).