

# Guidelines for applicants

## COTEMACO support programme

Version 1, March 2019

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## 1. In a nutshell

These guidelines explain how food processing SMEs and automotive manufacturing SMEs dealing with flexible assembly and/or agile manufacturing in one of the COTEMACO regions (see [section 2.3](#)) can apply for the COTEMACO support programme. The programme guides SMEs through the process of adopting collaborative robotic (cobot) and shop floor digitalisation technologies, from the exploration of technological opportunities to the detailed definition of a business plan.

The programme consists of 2 phases, offering participants the following:

### 1. Incubation phase: Initial training and coaching

- a. Introduction to technologies: Participants will learn about the technologies in general, about the State of the Art in Europe and what they potentially offer to their business.
- b. With the support of a local COTEMACO partner, participants identify a potential business case for the adoption of these technologies in their business.

### 2. Adoption phase: From potential adoption case to a solid business plan

Participants will receive guided support from a potential adoption case to a well-defined business plan, and for the adoption itself.

Applications can be handed in at any time to the appropriate contact points in [section 2.3](#).

## 2. Background and structure of the support programme

The implementation of new digital and robot technologies requires assessing the feasibility and carefully planning the adoption process, which proves very hard for SMEs. Combining structured education and tailored business advice, the COTEMACO programme enables SMEs to explore the latest technology solutions for their business and thus to be up-to-date with the latest production possibilities while minimising risks.

COTEMACO is a European project that connects 8 partners in 4 countries across Europe. In every COTEMACO region, technology and business organisations join forces to help SMEs (small and medium size enterprises) to accelerate the adoption of novel technologies in the fields of Collaborative Robotics and Shop Floor Digitalisation. The partners will guide and coach SMEs through an awareness, incubation and adoption process which should lead to the implementation of new technologies on the shop floor. For more information, please check the COTEMACO website at [www.nweurope.eu/cotemaco](http://www.nweurope.eu/cotemaco).

**COTEMACO is co-funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) within the INTERREG VB North West Europe programme.**

## 2.1 Definition of technologies supported by the COTEMACO programme

COTEMACO welcomes applications from SMEs that are interested in implementing technologies that relate to ***either Collaborative Robotics or Shop Floor Digitalisation***. Below you will find a definition of these technologies. Please contact your regional COTEMACO partner in case you have any questions (for contact details see 2.3).

Collaborative Robotics (Cobots): Human workers and cobots work together rather than performing their tasks separated from each other. This means that the worker...

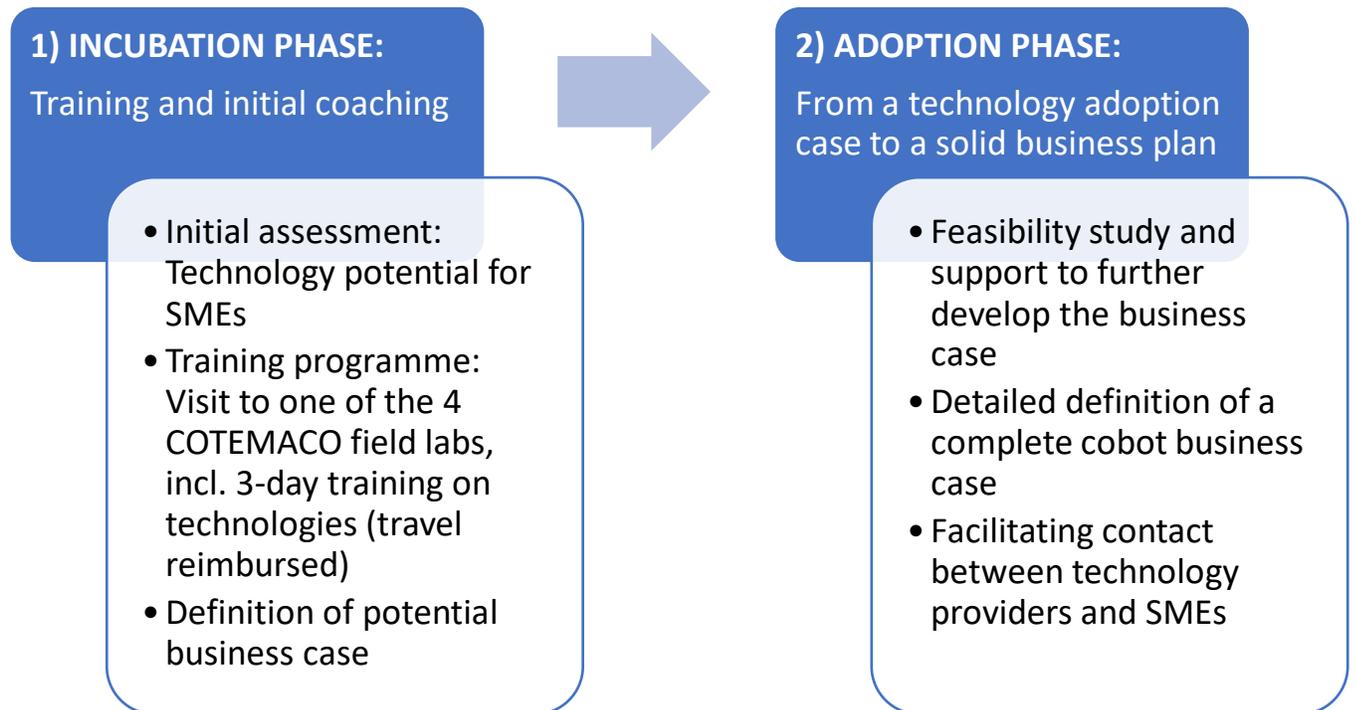
- ... and the robot work in the same space;
- ... is not endangered by the robot, tool or process, or
- ... requires minimal additional training to operate the robot and retains control, or
- ... accepts the technology (feeling of collaboration rather than replacing each other).

Shop Floor Digitalisation: Digital devices make sure that workers are supported in their work and/or receive the right (personalized) information in the right format on time. Examples for devices supported:

- *Non-wearable*, e.g. tablets, smart phones, projected systems;
- *wearable*, e.g. AR/VR glasses;
- *control units*, e.g. sensors, robots with integrated services.

## 2.2 Structure and services of COTEMACO

The COTEMACO programme consists of 2 different phases:

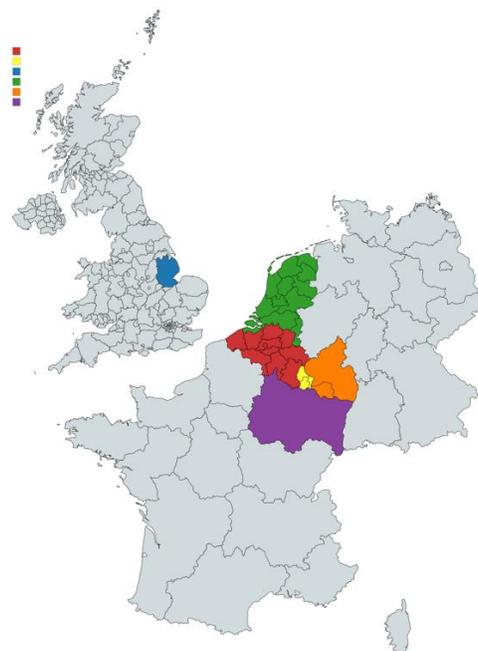


**Depending on their initial situation, SMEs can apply for both phases (normal track) or directly go to adoption (Fast track and Super-Fast track).** For the requirements to directly access the Adoption phase, please go to [section 5.2](#).

## 2.3 COTEMACO regions, partners and contact data

All applicant SMEs must be located in one of the COTEMACO regions. They are:

- Belgium: Whole country
- The Netherlands: Whole country
- Luxemburg: Whole country
- Germany: Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz
- France: Grand Est
- United Kingdom: Greater Lincolnshire



No matter if you need additional information or you plan to apply, please get directly in touch with your local COTEMACO partner.

Region	Partner	Contact person	Contact data
Netherlands	Food Tech Brainport	John de Groot	<a href="mailto:John@FoodTechBrainport.nl">John@FoodTechBrainport.nl</a> Tel.: +31 6 5358 5395
	High Tech NL	Ben van der Zon	<a href="mailto:ben.van.der.zon@hightechnl.nl">ben.van.der.zon@hightechnl.nl</a> Tel.: +31 88 555 43 33
Belgium	Flanders Make	Georges Verpoorten	<a href="mailto:georges.verpoorten@flandersmake.be">georges.verpoorten@flandersmake.be</a> Tel.: +32 11 790 545
		Mark Antonissen	<a href="mailto:mark.antonissen@flandersmake.be">mark.antonissen@flandersmake.be</a> Tel.: +32 476 283 878
	Voka – Kamer van Koophandel Limburg	Veroniek Hermans	<a href="mailto:veroniek.hermans@voka.be">veroniek.hermans@voka.be</a> Tel.: +32 496 86 46 94
DE: Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz FR: Grand Est, Luxemburg	ZeMA – Zentrum für Mechatronik und Automatisierungstechnik gGmbH	Matthias Vette-Steinkamp	<a href="mailto:Matthias.Vette@zema.de">Matthias.Vette@zema.de</a> Tel.: +49 6 81 85 787 531
Greater Lincolnshire (UK)	University of Lincoln	Andrea Paoli	<a href="mailto:APaoli@lincoln.ac.uk">APaoli@lincoln.ac.uk</a> Tel.: +44 1406 493003
	Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Business Lincolnshire)	Simon Murphy	<a href="mailto:enquiries@bizlincolnshire.com">enquiries@bizlincolnshire.com</a> <a href="tel:+441522550603">+44 1522 550 603</a>

## 3. Incubation phase

### 3.1 Purpose and goal of the Incubation phase

During the Incubation phase, participating SMEs learn about the State of the Art of cobot and shop floor digitalisation technologies, receive educational training regarding all aspects relevant to adopt them (usage, regulations, etc.) and experience their way of work in one of the international COTEMACO field labs. Finally, together with their national COTEMACO partner, participants will explore the opportunities these technologies provide for their very own business.

After participating in the Incubation phase, participants will have

- An overview of the technologies currently available on the market;
- The knowledge needed to understand cobot technologies for their business;
- Business case identified for the adoption of technology in their own business.

### 3.2 Structure of the Incubation phase

Participating SMEs will go through the following support programme:

#### 1) Initial assessment

Technology partners support beneficiary SMEs with a basic tailored needs assessment and identify which of the other countries' COTEMACO field labs to visit. The initial assessment will be performed at the premises of the SME.

#### 2) Up to 3 days training programme in one of the 4 COTEMACO field labs

During a 3-day visit in one of the COTEMACO field labs in small groups, SMEs will directly get in touch with the technologies through technical on-site training and receive training.

Travel expenses of up to € 1.500 are covered (details see [section 7.1](#)).

#### 3) Definition of case

Together with their regional COTEMACO partner, participants will identify a high-potential adoption case for the technologies they learned about in steps 1 and 2. Furthermore, they will perform a detailed self-assessment enabling them to decide if they are willing to implement the targeted technology and – if yes – formulate a first version of the business case that should be developed in the Adoption phase.

For the purpose of state aid calculations, the support in this phase has been estimated at a maximum value of €10,000 if the SME goes through all 3 steps. This includes reimbursement of travel costs up to €1,500 to visit a foreign field lab in step 2.

The timespan for the Incubation phase will be of 3 months at most after the approval of the application.

For more information about the available field labs, please visit <http://robot-hub.org>

### 3.3 Final outcome for SMEs and access to Adoption phase

After the successful participation in the Incubation phase, SMEs will have identified a potential technology adoption case that has been evaluated with the COTEMACO coaches. The SMEs will get a Preliminary feasibility study: A document describing the technical and economic aspects, which also represents an agreement to move on to the Adoption phase.

Participants will go to the Adoption phase to develop a detailed and comprehensive business plan if the result of the assessment prove that the technology meets the SMEs requirements.

## 4. Adoption phase

You can participate in the Adoption phase by successfully completing the Incubation phase. In some cases, if you meet the extra requirements of the Fast track or Super-Fast track, you can access directly the Adoption phase (for the extra the requirements, please go to [section 5.2](#)).

### 4.1 Purpose and goal of the Adoption phase

During the Adoption phase, participants will develop further the business case they identified during the Incubation phase. After performing a feasibility study, they will develop a detailed business plan and identify all necessary steps for the final implementation. During the entire phase, they will be guided and supported by their local COTEMACO partners.

After participating in the Adoption phase, participants will have

- A detailed business and investment plan for the implementation of a technology;
- An overview of required activities to implement the technology;
- Contacts to technology providers.

## 4.2 Structure of the Adoption phase

The Adoption phase covers the following elements:

### 1) Objectives definition

Building up on the self-assessment during the Incubation phase, SMEs will define specific objectives for the future automation project tailored to their business, to obtain support from their management.

### 2) Feasibility study

Supported by COTEMACO partners and experts, a feasibility study will be conducted, involving all necessary parties from the SME's side (e.g. management) to develop a detailed analysis defining all resources needed (financial, personnel etc.) for final implementation.

### 3) Business and investment plan

Based on the feasibility study, a sophisticated and comprehensive business and investment plan will be drawn up, enabling the SME's management to take their final decision. Furthermore, the COTEMACO partners will help participants to connect with the technology companies.

For the purpose of state aid calculations, the support in this phase has been estimated at a maximum value of €10,000 if the SME goes through all 3 steps.

The timespan for the Adoption phase will be of 3 months at most after the approval of the application.

## 4.3 Final outcome for SMEs

After the successful participation in the Adoption phase, SMEs will have a detailed business and investment plan, ready to purchase and implement the novel technology to their company. Furthermore, they established a relationship with potential technology suppliers. The SME will have a clear view of potential further support available (e.g. government grants, research projects).

## 5. Eligibility criteria and selection criteria

This section explains how to apply for both support programmes the COTEMACO programme offers:

- Regular track: Participation in incubation and Adoption phase
- Fast track or Super-Fast track: Participation only in (parts of) the Adoption phase

The Regular track is directed to SMEs that have no or only basic experience with the COTEMACO technologies and it is the usual procedure.

The Fast track/Super-Fast tracks offer support to SMEs that are already more advanced in the adoption process of supported technologies. These SMEs have the possibility to skip the Incubation phase and directly receive adoption support:

- Fast track: Applicants already have a concrete technology adoption case defined. They will go through the entire Adoption phase.
- Super-Fast track: Applicants already have a concrete use case defined and are able to handle the required technology. They will only receive implementation support.

### 5.1 Eligibility criteria – all applications

To apply for the COTEMACO support programme, the applicant must comply with the following criteria:

- a. **The applicant is an SME, complying with the European SME definition:** less than 250 employees and an annual turn-over less than € 50 million, or less than 250 employees and an annual balance less than € 43 million.

Full definition here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en)

(the European Commission website has an SME self-assessment questionnaire which can check SME compliance).

- b. **The SME must not have received State aid above the “de minimis” ceiling** and must be at a level allowing it to participate in the support programme (see [section 9](#)). The SME **must not be in receivership or under liquidation** at the time of receiving COTEMACO support.

- c. **The SME's core business focuses on the automotive or agro-food sector (including flexible assembly).**
- d. **The SME is located in one of the COTEMACO regions** listed in the table in [section 2.3](#).
- e. **The SME must have an idea of a potential business case** that can be developed through the support programme. If applicants need help with this, they are welcome to get in touch with their regional partner.

### **What we further expect from our participants:**

Successful applicants can receive personalised support and training completely free of charge, and thus get the unique opportunity to adopt a brand-new cobot or digitalisation technology without taking risky investments. In turn, we expect the following commitment:

**1) Dedication and time – be seriously willing to adopt a new technology!**

By participating in the COTEMACO programme, you declare that you will find sufficient time to go through the training programme and develop a business plan together with our COTEMACO experts. Please only apply if you are seriously interested in the adoption of a new technology.

**2) Participants must be willing to travel to one of the COTEMACO field labs in a partner country if necessary** and if the most suitable training is provided there (note that travel expenses can be reimbursed up to €1.500 and only if the participant attends the training in another country's field lab).

**3) Public relations I – allow us to communicate the COTEMACO results to the world!**

This refers to communication material from COTEMACO events (photos, videos, interview etc.) and summary reports of project activities and results, both needed for promoting COTEMACO and reporting to the Interreg NWE funding programme. Naturally, no technical content or confidential information will ever be shared externally (see also confidentiality statement in section 9).

**4) Public Relations II – Inform your network about your participation in COTEMACO!**

Please use your own means of communication (website, newsletters etc.), too.

**5) Worker involvement – the employees' perspective must be part of the programme.**

Implementing novel technologies on the shop floor is – in many cases – necessary to improve the competitive position of the SME. The involvement and engagement of the employees is key to successful implementation. If a works council exists, it has to be involved in the project. If not, the project will provide support to find the best way of representing the employees' interests throughout the support programme.

## 6) Reporting duties – help us with your personal insights!

The funding programme asks us to regularly report on project progress, success and impacts. We will come back to you to tell us more about your case or ask for feedback.

**The overall number of successful applications will depend on the capacities and the needs of accepted participants.** The program foresees to accept approx. 60 SMEs for the Incubation phase.

## 5.2 Eligibility criteria - Fast track and Super-Fast track (only Adoption phase)

Applicants for the Fast track/Super-Fast track must fulfil the basic eligibility criteria listed under [section 5.1](#), except criterion “e” (which is only relevant for the Incubation phase).

**Furthermore, to be eligible for the Fast track**, participants must:

- a. **Demonstrate a minimum level of knowledge and experience** regarding the technology. This will be assessed through an interview with the regional COTEMACO contact person.
- b. **Have a clearly defined technology adoption case available** to be further developed in the Adoption phase.

**Additionally, to be eligible for the Super-Fast track, SMEs must already own the required technology** but need guidance to adjust it to the new use case.

Applicants who are interested in the Fast track/Super-Fast track will be able to express it in the application form. If the application passes the eligibility check, the COTEMACO partners will get in touch with the applicant to check if the additional requirement of the Fast track/Super-Fast track are met. If not, the applicant might be suggested to go through the Regular track.

## 5.3 Selection Criteria

Based on the answers that the SME provides in the application form, the regional COTEMACO partners will evaluate and rate the application following standardised selection criteria:

Criterion	Maximum points
Contribution of the technology to the competitiveness and growth of the SME	40
Strength of the commitment to invest	30
Sufficient resources of the SME to manage the project	15
Readiness level of the automation	10

Awareness of the SME about digitalisation options	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

The minimum score for an SME to be accepted in the COTEMACO support programme is 50.

The regional COTEMACO partners might get in contact with the applicant SMEs to clarify questions in the selection process.

## 6. How and when to apply

SMEs may apply for the COTEMACO support programme at any time. Applications will be evaluated and answered in 20 working days.

**Before applying, it is strongly recommended that the SME gets in touch with its regional COTEMACO partner** (see table in [section 2.3](#)).

To apply, the SME must fill in the [online application form](#) **AND** send the [De Minimis self-declaration form](#) to its local COTEMACO partner (see table in [section 2.3](#)).

Forms shall be completed in English. Please contact your regional COTEMACO partner if you have problems with this requirement.

**The complete application comprises the following documents:**

- [Application form](#)
- [De Minimis self-declaration form.](#)

## 7. Value of COTEMACO support services

The support received through COTEMACO project will be deemed as state aid relevant. To comply with state aid regulation, the support will be given under a De Minimis scheme (see [section 9](#)).

The value of the support received will be calculated on the base of the following rates:

**Incubation phase:** The support has been estimated at a maximum value of €10,000 if the SME goes through all 3 steps. This includes up to €1,500 as a reimbursement of the travel costs incurred for travelling to a field lab located in a country different of the SME's.

**Adoption phase:** The support has been estimated at a maximum value of €10,000 if the SME goes through all 3 steps.

Therefore, a single SME will receive a maximum of €20,000 in support if it goes through all phases of the support programme with maximum intensity. The final value of the support will be indicated in the De Minimis notification that the SME will get at the end of the programme.

### 7.1 Note for reimbursement of travel expenses

#### Categories of eligible costs:

- Public transport fares (plane, train, buses) in economy class or equivalent
- Car:
  - Car rental (including fuel);
  - Kilometrage/mileage: only if expenses are reimbursed to the car owner by his/her employer and at the employer's rate (and upon evidence of reimbursement by the employer).
  - Parking costs
- Accommodation costs: hotel (incl. breakfast), other accommodation upon regular invoice.

As the COTEMACO programme is funded with public money, expenses need to be reasonable.

**Not eligible:** Subsistence/Food and drink (except when it is included in an accommodation invoice).

Reimbursement will be done only after submission of complete evidence of travel and associated costs. **This means that the person who travels must keep all evidence documents, such as tickets/boarding passes, hotel invoices, etc.**

Costs without supporting evidence cannot be reimbursed. Advance payments cannot be made.

## 8. Reporting

After the completion of the support programme, participants will have to fill in a reporting form that shall be filled in and completed not later than 1 month after receipt. The reporting form is a necessary tool to get feedback and improve the services offered and report project results to the funding programme.

## 9. State Aid

The value of the support provided to the SME complies with the State Aid rules under the De Minimis exemption detailed in EC Regulation 1407/2013.

Under the De Minimis exemption scheme, an SME can receive up to €200,000 of State Aid per member state in a rolling three-year period (the current financial year and the two previous financial years). At the time of applying, the SME must provide a De Minimis self-declaration to its regional COTEMACO partner ([template available here](#)).

This self-declaration must be manually signed by a duly authorized person from the SME and sent by e-mail together with the application to the regional COTEMACO partner.

## 10. Confidentiality

In accordance with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), the privacy policy of the COTEMACO project is available on the [COTEMACO website](#).

In addition, all information given by the applicant SME to COTEMACO partners is deemed confidential and will not be disseminated without prior consent of the SME. For communication purposes, the COTEMACO partners may write and disseminate publicity articles related to the actions funded by vouchers. These articles will not contain any confidential information.