



# Needs assessment Trade mission support

## RESPONSIBLE OF THE EVALUATION

Evaluation Department  
Deputy Directorate for Sustainability and Evaluation  
ICEX Spain Trade & Investment

## DATE OF PUBLICATION

November 2020

## TYPE OF EVALUATION

Needs

## TIME OF THE EVALUATION

Ex ante

## CODE

MDIR\_2014

## EVALUATION STARTED IN YEAR

2014

## EVALUATION COMPLETED IN YEAR

2018

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# 1 Objective of the evaluation

Ex ante evaluation of support needs for commercial and trade prospecting actions carried out individually by Spanish companies that are internationalised or in the process of internationalisation in order to optimise its effectiveness and relevance for all types of companies.

# 2 What are support services for trade missions?

We understand these to be those forms of support provided to business owners that facilitate the success of their individual commercial actions in any of their phases:

1. Support for the decision to explore a given market and the determination of the best time to explore it.
2. Support for planning the action in order to maximise the chances of success.
3. Support at the destination of the action so that it is carried out in the most effective and efficient manner possible.
4. Follow-up support for the conversion of contacts into commercial relationships after the action has taken place.





## 3 Evaluation phases

### Phase 1

Qualitative (discussion groups). Commissioned in late 2014 to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs of the beneficiaries of the Trade Missions instrument. Completion: February 2015.

### Phase 2

Qualitative (in-depth interviews). Commissioned in May 2015 to investigate the needs of Spanish companies when embarking on trade missions and the type of public support they would require in order to meet those needs. Completion: May 2016.

### Phase 3

Qualitative (discussion groups). Product testing for the products and services identified in the previous phase. Completion: January 2017.

### Phase 4

Quantitative (proprietary methodology). Commissioned in May 2017 to estimate interest in and willingness to pay for the products and services identified in phases 2 and 3. Results: June 2018.



## 4. Evaluation questions

1. What needs do companies have in order to maximise the effectiveness of their individual commercial or trade prospecting activities?
2. What objective barriers do companies face in such actions?
3. What support services could ICEX offer to companies in their individual commercial or trade prospecting activities in order to overcome those objective barriers?
4. What are the companies' level of interest in, and willingness to pay for, the proposals put forward?



# 5 Evaluation fact sheet

## Phase 1

**Universe:** 209 unique clients who have participated in a trade mission.

**Time frame:** 2014.

**Sample:** 12 unique clients.

**Sampling method:** stratified sample by degree of use of the trade missions instrument, macro-sector and autonomous community.

**Fieldwork:** November 2014.

**Methodology:** qualitative methods. Discussion groups.

## Phase 2

**Universe:** 789 unique clients who have been beneficiaries of a trade mission and have participated in a previous evaluation.

**Time frame:** 2011-2014.

**Sample:** 30 unique clients.

**Sampling method:** stratified sample by degree of use of the trade missions instrument, macro-sector and autonomous community.

**Fieldwork:** between January and March 2016.

**Methodology:** qualitative methods. In-depth interviews.





### Phase 3

**Universe:** 789 unique clients who have been beneficiaries of a trade mission and have participated in a previous evaluation.

**Time frame:** 2011-2014.

**Sample:** 12 unique clients.

**Sampling method:** stratified sample by degree of use of the trade missions instrument, macro-sector and autonomous community.

**Fieldwork:** between September and October 2016.

**Methodology:** qualitative methods. Discussion groups.

### Phase 4

**Universe:** 5,811 unique clients who have used one of the following ICEX services: Customized Services, Exhibition, Intermediation or Contact.

**Time frame:** 2016.

**Sample:** 2,264 unique clients.

**Sampling method:** simple random sample.

**Response rate:** 38,96%.

**Fieldwork:** between September 2017 and March 2018.

**Methodology:** product testing. A proprietary quantitative methodology was applied, based on an analysis of the differences between the distribution tails of individual standardised preferences. The analysis was carried out by service proposal and by customer type. This analysis consisted in: customer diagnosis, interest in and willingness to pay for each proposed improvement.



## 6 Customer segmentation

Segmentation technique: hierarchical clustering based on the characterisation variables included in the survey and variables collected from INFORMA D&B.

There are 8 well-defined customer types:

- Type 1.** Companies of a certain size, with a high self-assessment of their financial, production and commercial abilities, although they believe they have room for improvement in matters of social media communication, continuous training, especially in the commercial sphere, innovation in commercial channels and analytical abilities.
- Type 2.** Small companies with a strong export orientation and experience in exporting, but which suffer from a lack of resources and staff in the commercial area, and show deficiencies in social media communication, continuous training, innovation of commercial channels and analytical abilities.
- Type 3.** Small businesses that are growing or stable, with medium/low export experience, which are not concerned about quality certification. They identify shortcomings in the areas of social media communication, ongoing training, innovation in commercial channels and analytical abilities.
- Type 4.** SMEs that consider their strength to lie in the financial, production and commercial areas, although they believe they should improve in social media communication, continuous training, especially in the commercial sphere, innovation in commercial channels and analytical abilities.



- Type 5.** Small, growing companies with a strong export orientation, whose proactive management enables them to regard as strengths the same areas as larger companies (financial, productive and commercial resources), and which, like them, also identify areas for improvement in social media communication, continuous training, especially in the commercial area, innovation in commercial channels and analytical abilities.
- Type 6.** Micro-enterprises that consider themselves to be in a worse position than larger companies. The training of their staff, especially commercial staff, and their network of contacts are their strengths. They consider that they lack resources in all areas, including the commercial area; they need to improve in social media communication, commercial innovation, as well as in traditional commercial tasks, probably due to a lack of staff and resources.
- Type 7.** Self-employed workers and micro-enterprises with a strong focus on international markets who consider themselves to be in a worse position than larger companies. The training of their staff, especially commercial staff, and their network of contacts are their strengths. They consider that they lack resources in all areas and need to improve on matters relating to social media communication and commercial innovation, as well as in traditional commercial activities, probably due to a lack of staff and resources.
- Type 8.** Micro-enterprises that have carried out most of their international expansion recently and see themselves as being in a worse position than larger companies. The training and talent of their staff, especially commercial staff, and their network of contacts are their strengths. They consider that they lack resources in all areas; they need to improve in social media communication, commercial innovation, as well as in traditional commercial activities, probably due to a lack of staff and resources.



## 7 Perception of ICEX as service provider

The aspect that is most associated with ICEX (in conjunction with exporters' associations and the regional export promotion agencies) is specialised knowledge of the company's sector in the destination country, as well as being a provider of databases, which enables us to carry out specialised networking activities and to draw up high-quality business agendas.

In general, companies that use ICEX services do not show a clear willingness to pay when contracting these services. However, this perception changes for certain companies that have used certain types of service involving personalisation (customised services) or immediate commercial contact as a result of ICEX's activity and its overseas network (intermediation services).

## 8 Conclusions and recommendations by company type

- Type 1. These clients require specialised advisory and information services delivered by specialist profiles that complement the support for their individual international promotion strategy, and they show a clear willingness to pay for these services.
- Type 2. These clients require specialised information services delivered by specialised staff profiles and discounted access to primary information sources, and they show a clear willingness to pay for such services.





- Type 3. These clients require specialised advisory and information services delivered by specialist profiles and would be active users of an online platform for the exchange of experiences.
- Type 4. These clients require specialised advisory and information services provided by specialised professionals that complement support for their individual international promotion strategy, and they would be active users of an online networking platform.
- Type 5. These clients require specialised advisory and information services provided by specialised professionals that complement support for their individual international promotion strategy, and they would be active users of an online networking platform.
- Type 6. These clients require specialised advisory and information services, as well as support in following up on their international promotion actions, although they show a lower willingness to pay.
- Type 7. These clients require specialised advisory services, commercial diplomacy, ad hoc support services during and after their prospecting actions, and support for establishment, and they show a clear willingness to pay.
- Type 8. These clients require ad hoc support services during and after their prospecting activities, trade diplomacy and support for establishment, although their willingness to pay is lower.



## 9 Compliance with the recommendations

The recommendations set out in this evaluation have been accepted as necessary and feasible by both the organization and those responsible for providing the support services for the companies' commercial prospecting activities. The implementation of these recommendations has made it possible to introduce improvements in the delivery of the services, bearing in mind that the improvement process is ongoing, thanks to other evaluations that are either already underway or will be launched if necessary.

## 10 Procuring information

For the implementation of the qualitative phases of this work, a competitive public tender procedure was launched. From the tenders submitted, the contract was awarded to ANÁLISIS E INVESTIGACIÓN, S.L.

The fieldwork and descriptive analysis of the quantitative phase were carried out by means of a below-threshold contract awarded to the company WEBTOOLS, S.L.