

# Partnerships for Regional Innovation: 63 regions, seven cities and four Member States selected for Pilot Action



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Today, the Commission announced the 63 regions, seven cities and four Member States selected in the pilot project for Partnerships for Regional Innovation, an initiative developed together with the Committee of the Regions. Participants in the pilot action are open to share good practices and to co-develop and test tools to mobilise multiple sources of funding and policies, and connect regional and national programmes to EU initiatives for the green and digital transformations. These Partnerships will feed into the new Innovation Agenda for Europe, where innovation drives the transformation for sustainability, connecting local strategies with EU-level initiatives.

The call has attracted a wide representation of the EU innovation ecosystem, ranging from Member States such as Slovakia participating at national level and a broad variety of EU regions, such as Andalusia, Azores, Hauts-de-France, Ostrobothnia, Podkarpackie, North Aegean, Emilia Romagna and many others. The call has also triggered a bottom-up collaboration and networking process, already bringing together many participants as part of multi-region networks. This includes, for example, the Baltic Sea region, the Bioregions facility and an expanded Cities 4.0 Consortium (Leuven, Bologna Turku) involving also Eindhoven (NL), Espoo (FI) and Cluj-Napoca (RO).

Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, said : “Stronger, cleaner economies, and fairer societies can be built only by having innovation at the core of the EU policy agenda. We need innovation in every region and in every country, connecting with each other, if we are to succeed in the green and digital transitions. These Partnerships allow us to build bridges to facilitate synergies of investment and innovative solutions. I am

looking forward to see the innovative ideas and approaches they will shape together.”

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, said: "Cooperation and innovation are essential ingredients for the sustainable and resilient development of EU's regions. All territories have an innovation potential that needs to be tapped, so I was glad to see such high interest for the call. I look forward to the results of the pilot, hoping that it will contribute to bridge the persistent innovation divide between regions that limits the performance of the EU as a whole."

President of the European Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, said: "By fostering innovation, we strengthen local resilience and improve our local communities' capacity to face emergencies, protect citizens and support local economies. In this context, we count on Commissioners Ferreira and Gabriel to work together on the Partnerships for Regional Innovation as a key tool to coordinate all available funds to spread innovation on the ground, focusing on making our regions, cities and villages more energy efficient and sustainable."

The participants in the pilot project will explore the new Partnerships for Regional Innovation based on the 'Partnerships for Regional Innovation Playbook', an initial guidance document published today by the Joint Research Centre. The Playbook proposes a wide range of tools and governance mechanisms to enhance the coordination of regional, national and EU innovation policies to implement Europe's green and digital transitions and to tackle the innovation divide in the EU. A core element of the proposed approach is the introduction of local missions to coordinate actions under a coherent directional logic, enabling the exploration of broad-ranging policy mixes for system-level innovation.

During the Pilot Action, the participants will test these policy tools while co-creating operational guidance. The Playbook and Pilot Action will also promote good practices, facilitate learning through experimentation and support public administrations and the broader ecosystem. The pilot action will not impact the current programming process of the 2021-2027 funds.

The Partnerships are rooted in the upcoming new Innovation Agenda for Europe to help integrate initiatives and investment at EU and

national levels. It is an effort directly targeted to improve Innovation ecosystems as one essential area to boost Europe's innovation performance. The key objective is to strengthen interconnection of regional and local innovation ecosystems and to reinforce European sustainable value chains and deep-tech sectors.

The Partnerships are a complementary approach, which builds on positive experience with Smart Specialisation strategies. Smart Specialisation is a place-based approach emerging from the EU cohesion policy, aiming to identify strategic areas for intervention based both on the analysis of the strengths and potential of the economy and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) with wide stakeholder involvement. Smart specialisation is focused on innovation and has a major role in supporting research and innovation to ensure sustainable and resilient development of all regions in Europe.

The selected territories will participate either on an individual basis or as part of six different networks of EU regions and cities. In total, 23 Member States are represented among the participants in the pilot action. The call for expression of interest was open between March and April 2022.

Maps of participants in the call

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