

INTERREGIONAL INNOVATION – COVID 19 PILOT CALL

FAQ

(updated version 11.09.2020)

1- What is meant by “interregional innovation”? What is the definition of value chains?

Interregional Innovation means a set of activities intended to improve products, processes, services, technologies or business models, making them available to markets, governments and the society. It can take the form of production, adoption, assimilation, and/or exploitation of value-added investments through commercialisation and scaling up. It is both a process and an outcome. Interregional innovation projects build on smart specialisation with the intention to develop European value chains. Value chains are a combination of activities, actors and strategic networking, interlinked across firms, sectors and borders.

2- How should the partnership be composed? Which organisations can be part of the consortia?

An Expression of Interest can be submitted by a partnership made up of statutory regional authorities responsible for Smart Specialisation and their regional innovation ecosystems. Partnerships should be composed of national/regional authorities from at least four different EU countries and represent, to the extent possible, the whole value chain involving representatives of the “quadruple helix”: research, business, public administration and end-users from different countries.

The consortia are expected to mobilise “regional innovation ecosystems” composed by local authorities, Regional Development Agencies, HEI (including universities), research centers, RTOs, companies and clusters ect.

Public and private entities from the UK are eligible to participate in this call as lead partners and as partners. They will be assimilated to EU countries for eligibility purposes. For example, the participation of 3 regional authorities from 3 different EU countries + 1 regional authority from the UK will fulfil the geographical component of the eligibility criterion mentioned above.

Organisations from associated countries under Horizon are eligible to participate in the partnerships as well as eligible entities from Third Countries¹.

3- Are national and regional authorities only eligible to apply? Can a Local Authority be the lead partner in the application or does it need to be led by the Regional Authority?

The lead partner will be

- a) a national/regional public authority or their affiliated entities²; or

¹ Eligible entities in Third Countries are the same type of entities eligible in EU Member States.

² The notion of affiliation in the public sphere covers:

-The different levels of the administrative structure in case of decentralised administration.

Example: National, regional or local ministries in case of separate legal entities can be considered as affiliated to the State to avoid interference with the various institutional set-ups in the different Member States;

-A public body established by a public authority to serve an administrative purpose and which is supervised by the public authority. This condition is to be verified on the basis of the statutes or other act establishing the public body. It does not necessarily entail that the public body is financed, in full or part, from the public budget.

Example: National schools for the judiciary or for the police are affiliated to the State

- b) Any other no profit organisation belonging to the innovation ecosystem, provided that the responsible S3 authority accepts to participate in the consortium and that a consortium agreement defines the working arrangements. (see Section 1.4 *lead partner or equivalent body nominated to act as coordinator*)

4- Is there any restriction connected to the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Unit for Statistics) levels of the Authority that should be involved?

The NUTS level of the lead partner should corresponds to those of the responsible authority for Smart Specialisation. Other authorities at different NUTS level can be involved in the consortium. They can lead the partnership, provided that the responsible S3 authority is part of the consortium (see question 3).

5- Are intermediate organisations eligible to be part of the consortium?

Any organisation, belonging to the regional innovation ecosystems and involved in the S3, is eligible to be part of the partnership (including RDA, clusters, NGO, foundations, private and for profit organisations).

6- What is the definition of "statutory regional authorities"? Are only administrative regions eligible?

A statutory regional authority is a regional authority defined by national law. For eligibility, please see question 3.

7- What is the definition of "universities" and "research organisations"?

The text of the call understands as "universities" all higher education institutions. As "research institution" we understand an organisation (regardless whether it is public or private) whose activity is to provide research and development, technology and innovation services to enterprises, governments and other clients.

8- Have "Letters of commitment" or "Letters of intention" to be provided in addition to the "Annex I of the Application Form"

The only mandatory document for the application is the "Annex I Application Form"

9- Is it possible to include more stakeholders from the same country?

Consortia can include any number of stakeholders from the same country (quadruple helix) provided that the 4 countries eligibility criterion is fulfilled.

10- What type of funds are available? How will be the available budget made available to the partnership?

No funds will be transferred to the partnership. Each selected consortia will benefit from the support of an expert. The Commission will select and sign a contract with each expert.

The contract will cover the experts' remuneration, daily allowances, travel costs and accommodation. A maximum budget of 100K will be available for each of the 4 expert contracts.

The consortia should cover any other cost.

11- What interregional activities will be supported?

The expert will support interregional activities to accelerate innovative investments in companies (e.g. development of an interregional business and investment plan, the design of a business model etc.).

Nevertheless, the implementation of identified activities/investments has to be funded by other funding sources. For instance, the design of a platform can be part of a business model or of a planned investment developed by the partnership, but the implementation cannot be supported in the framework of the pilot action. The Commission will offer the partnerships extensive support based on the bottlenecks identified in the application. This may include specialised expertise on legal issues, IPR, business development support, taxation, certification, procedures and protocols, on the combination of different public and private funding instruments (grants, lending, debt, equity, etc.).

12- Where can I find more information on how to participate in the S3 partnership?

We suggest you contact your national/regional authority responsible for smart specialisation .

13- How can I find partners to apply for the call? Is there an online partner search tool available?

On line partners search tools are not available but you can look for partners on the S3 Platform and/or on S3 Thematic Platforms <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>
<https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/thematic-platforms-map>

14- Can interregional innovation be cross border?

Interregional innovation goes beyond the traditional cross border (bilateral) cooperation. It requires a broader cooperation, with a critical mass of countries and interlinked innovation ecosystems. Border regions can however be part of the same consortium.

15- What is the pilot action expected to deliver?

The pilot action is expected to deliver a set of concrete business cases with concrete actions for the commercialisation and scale-up of interregional investments (see session 3.1) as well as potential solutions to financial and legal obstacles to commercialisation and scale-up” (see session 3.2). Regarding to the business cases, the interregional pilot action is should deliver concrete business models/ business and investment plans (including cost and revenue streams) in a specific value chains, as well as an analysis of the funding mix needed to implement the investment.

16- Is it necessary that the stakeholders forming a partnership have previously collaborated? Can an already established partnership, having gone through the phases of Learn and Connect, invite new members to join the partnership?

Yes. As mentioned under point 4.2 of the call, each partnership that submits an application is, in principle, expected to have already gone through the “learn” and “connect” phases and launched actions to start the “demonstrate phase with an in-depth analysis of the technology/solutions proposed for the experimental development. Established partnerships, fulfilling the requirement stated in point 4.2 can invite new members to join the partnership if justified by the reinforcement of the European dimension (see point 1.9) and/or of a given value chain.

17- Is the pilot action focusing only on the more advanced partnerships or can most recent partnerships at an earlier stage apply?

As required by point 4.2. of the call the pilot action will support only more advanced partnerships having already gone through the "Learn "³ and "Connect"⁴ phases of the S3 cooperation methodology⁵.

³ Establishment of sub-thematic areas for investments, mapping of the main actors ,know-how, capacities and infrastructures in the regions involved in the partnership

⁴ Matching complementary specialisations in a given value chain, including an in-depth analysis of concrete innovative solutions at a minimum Technological Readiness Level (TRL>5 /TRL6).

⁵ Methodological Manual : https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC116630/s3p-thematicmanual_-_online.pdf

18- What is the meaning of "end-users"?

End-users are individuals and organisations which make use of the services provided by the new technologies. They may be involved in the validation of innovative solutions.

19- What regions are eligible to participate in the area of "Hydrogen technologies in carbon intensive regions"?

There is no limitation on regions, which can participate. However, the interregional innovation partnership should focus on: (a) the specific challenges of carbon-intensive regions; and/or capitalise on the specific strengths of carbon-intensive regions in the creation of a European value chain for FCH. Carbon intensive regions are regions which are dependent on greenhouse gas intensive industries for employment and output, notably in relation to fossil fuel extraction and energy production, and other energy intensive industries covered by the ETS directive

20- Can projects financed by other EU-instruments apply?

Yes, provided that the application comes from a partnership as outlined above and that the latter addresses one of the four topics identified in the call.

21- Can an expression of interest, covering several different thematic areas, be considered? Some of the bottlenecks might be common to different partnerships. Would the Commission welcome "common applications" submitted by more than one partnership and focusing on specific common bottlenecks?

The partnership should correspond to one of the four thematic areas of cooperation defined in the call. Common applications will not be eligible. As foreseen in the call, the pilot action will support only one partnership of regions in each specific thematic area (4 partnerships in total, one partnership per thematic area).

22- Will the budget be redistributed among partners?

No budget will be made available to the partnership. The support will be provided in form of technical assistance (expertise or service appointed to help partnerships overcoming investment obstacles).

23- What types of services will the Commission offer as "Technical Assistance" support under ERDF?

The Commission will offer partnerships extensive support based on the bottlenecks identified in the application. This may include specialised expertise on legal issues, IPR, business development support, taxation, certification procedures and protocols, on the combination of different public and private funding instruments (grants, lending, debt, equity, etc.).

24- Within the technical assistance provided to the selected partnerships, will "coordination costs" be covered? Or will technical assistance be provided for the coordination of the activities?

Coordination activities may, where appropriate, be part of the services provided to the partnership.

25- What resources should the partnership use in order to produce the expected outcomes (listed in section 3 of the call) ?

The call does not require the applicants to specify the resources or funding which they intend to use.

26- Once the partnership is selected what will the procedure be?

The evaluation for the selection of the consortia will take place in early Autumn in order to be able to activate the expert support as quickly as possible.

The support from the European Commission will take form of technical assistance providing services the partnership. The Selection committee will announce the list of the selected partnerships as soon as the evaluation will be finalised. Launch events are expected to take place in December. The Commission will work together with partnerships to identify specific services required.

27- By who will the European Commission “regional support groups be composed”?

Representatives of different European Commission services will compose the regional support groups.

28- One of the topic of the COVID 19 pilot call focuses on accelerating innovation and rapid deployment of new technologies and solutions to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Could you clarify what you mean for “development of the medical value chain (e.g. medical products, devices to tackle COVID-19)”?

Priority 1 focuses on addressing the COVID-19 pandemics by focusing on the health sector. We are seeking for ideas to develop and deploy technologies and solutions to help with the prevention of the COVID-19 virus, patient care and outcomes (for instance with the detection of (new) clusters/outbreaks and the acceleration of R&I in all these areas). In terms of development of the medical value chain for this specific topic (tackling the virus and the pandemic), solutions could range from R&I, production of medical products and/or devices and distribution of such items.

29- Can a cluster organisation (for instance, participating in a partnership under a Thematic Smart Specialisation Platform) be the lead partner applying for the COVID 19 pilot call?

Please refer to FAQ (updated version 28.08.2020) number 3.

30- Who will be the applicant(s): regional S3 authorities only or regional innovation ecosystems described as quadruple helix including the S3 authority?

Please refer to FAQ (updated version 28.08.2020) number 2.

31- Shall the partners need to sign/approve a document, or only sending the Application Form via email is enough?

As laid out under paragraph 7 of the call, the expression of interest shall be submitted electronically to the specified email address. No signature is requested at this stage.

32- Who is responsible for S3 in my country?

It is responsibility of the potential applicant to identify the competent S3 authority, one of the key actors of the triple/quadruple helix innovation ecosystem.

33- Do all the members of the consortium have to be a regional authority meeting the eligibility criteria set out under point 4.3.(4) of the call?

Only the lead partner which submits the application must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the call under point 4.3 (4) and clarified in FAQ (updated version 28.08.2020) number 3.