



#GROWyourREGION

GROW your REGIONⁿ

Boosting Smart
Interregional Collaboration
through Clusters

Valencia, Spain 8-9 November 2017

Background document

the GROW your REGIONⁿ Conference



How to boost strategic interregional collaboration?

One example:

Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation



European
Commission



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Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation

Objective

The Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation is an EU initiative aiming to support EU regions that are committed to work together to develop investment projects in common smart specialisation areas related to industrial modernisation. It follows a bottom-up approach driven by interregional cooperation, cluster participation and industry involvement.

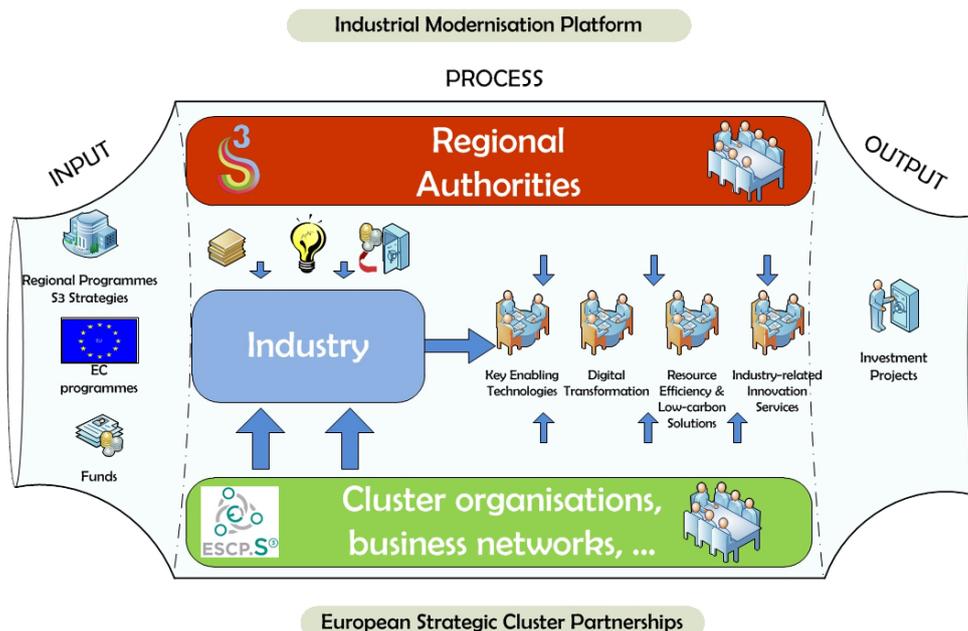
The Platform is co-developed and co-led by European regions themselves and is facilitated by the Commission by mobilising a wide range of support services and on-going actions in different EU Programmes to ensure a continuous and customised support to the interregional partnerships and industry in their efforts to develop concrete investment projects.

Application areas

Interregional partnerships, involving more than 60 EU regions, have so far been already established in the following eleven thematic areas, of which the five first areas below have been established in the framework of the Vanguard Initiative that is closely associated to the work of the Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation.

Advanced manufacturing for energy applications; Innovative use of non-food biomass; Efficient and sustainable manufacturing; High performance computing through 3D Printing; New nano-enabled products; Textile innovation; Medical technologies; Photonics; Industry 4.0; Sport innovation; and Digitalisation and safety in tourism.

A call for proposals for European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for smart specialisation investments will be published still in 2017 to help cluster organisations and technology centres team up along smart specialisation priority areas linked to industrial modernisation.



Source: © European Commission

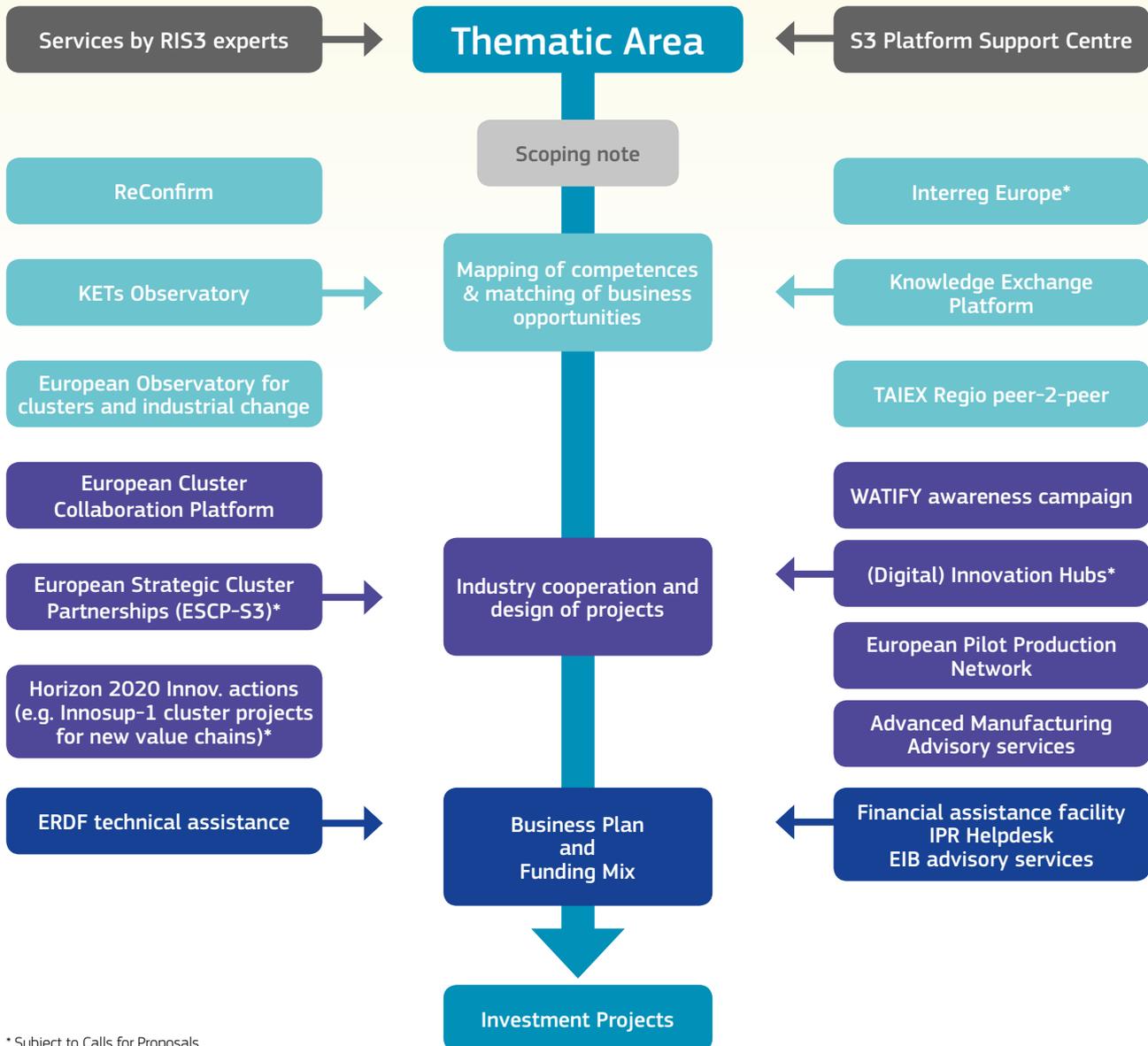
How to join

A region interested to join the Platform can either join an existing interregional partnership in a specific area or propose to set up of a new thematic area. Each new interregional partnership should be composed of at least three regions from three different EU Member States. Further information on how to submit an Expression of Interest as leading region(s) can be found on:

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/industrial-modernisation>

Direct EU support actions

The different regional partnerships established under the Platform will benefit from a number of EU support actions along each of the three phases.



For more information see: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eu-support>

1. Support for preparatory steps for setting up a Thematic Area

S3 Platform Support Centre

The Smart Specialisation (S3) Platform managed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre aims to facilitate an open process for interregional collaboration on business-driven investments, for agreed innovation themes within a number of strategic thematic areas including Industrial Modernisation. The specific role of the S3 Platform is to provide direct assistance to EU regions to initiate interregional partnerships as well as to structure the subsequent process.

The S3 Platform offers direct analytical and technical support for the pre-selection of the regions, organises Calls for Expressions of Interest, guides through the development of a work phases and provides dedicated consulting support to each partnership throughout its operation. The support also includes the development of mapping and other intelligence methodologies and tools to be made available to the regions and more general to the community of policy makers. Due to its extensive expertise in the area of transnational and interregional mutual learning, the S3 Platform promotes exchange of information between regional authorities and regional actors (including clusters, businesses, and academia) by helping these develop new value chains through collaboration, matchmaking and joint investment.

Services by RIS3 experts

The provision of service contracts with experts working in a broad range of smart specialisation domains is a flexible instrument to help the regional partnerships under the S3P-Industry to develop their Thematic Area scoping note, and a first action plan that will be sequentially further elaborated and implemented with the support of other EU actions.

Such expert contracts can provide free of charge short-term advisory support services limited to 15-30 days once a regional partnership has submitted their Expression of Interest and all requested criteria are fulfilled. The assignment is based on a list of experts that contains more than 350 pre-selected qualified experts who are selected through an open procedure. Such service contracts are a quick procedure to mobilise quickly expert support especially at the initial phase of a regional partnership.

2. Support for the mapping of competences and matching of business opportunities

ReConfirm

ReConfirm is an initiative managed by the European Commission that is designed specifically to assist European regions and industrial stakeholders working together to develop and implement their action plan under a Thematic Area of the S3P-Industry.

Support actions to be provided through this project include:

- **mapping** of common areas of interest in all regions participating in a Thematic Area on which they would be interested to design joint actions and there is potential to develop industrial investment projects;
- **organisation** of matchmaking events between the regions involved in a Thematic Area to facilitate the elaboration of a joint implementation plan;
- **assistance** to regions launching Calls for expression of interest to mobilise industrial stakeholders interested to work together on common or complementary challenges;
- **support** collaboration between industry, clusters and other stakeholders to foster the development of EU value chains and investment projects;
- **targeted** promotion and communication activities, notably in EU lagging behind regions.

KETs Observatory

During the course of 2017 and 2018, the KETs Observatory will issue 12 analytical reports on promising Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) based products in which Europe has to position itself to become/stay an innovation leader. These analytical reports will be based on value chain analyses and can nurture the S3P-Industry, providing intelligence in innovation areas where regions could team up and invest together.

European Observatory for Clusters and Industrial Change

The European Observatory for Clusters and Industrial Change is a single access point for statistical information, analysis and mapping of clusters, cluster policy and industrial change in Europe: It is targeted foremost at European, national, regional and local policy-makers as well as cluster managers and representatives of SME intermediaries. The Observatory is promoting evidence-based policies for the development of more world-class clusters, facilitating SMEs' access to clusters and internationalisation activities, accelerate industrial modernisation and boost entrepreneurship in emerging industries as well as to promote mutual cluster policy learning and cross-regional collaboration.

In the framework of the Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation, the Observatory will provide advisory support services and analysis to European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for smart specialisation investments.

Interreg Europe

Interreg Europe supports cooperation and learning among policy-makers at national and regional levels to develop joint agendas, prepare and coordinate European Regional Development Fund projects (under national and regional operational programmes), allows to carry out studies, gather information, organise events, etc. in order to improve the performance of regional development policy instruments and implementation.

Knowledge Exchange Platform

The Knowledge Exchange Platform is a co-operation between the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. Its main objective is to present new solutions, innovative products and best practices in response to the numerous societal challenges facing local and regional authorities in Europe today.

Four potential areas of cooperation and knowledge exchange have mutually been identified: Bioeconomy; Key Enabling Technologies; Energy; Public Sector Innovation. The Knowledge Exchange Platform can bring into the platform the Committee of the Regions members that have signalled to be interested in re-industrialisation of their cities and regions.

TAIEX Regio peer-2-peer

TAIEX Regio peer-2-peer is a tool designed to share expertise between bodies that manage funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund. It helps public officials involved in the management of these funds to exchange knowledge, good practice and practical solutions to concrete problems thus improving their administrative capacity and ensuring better results for the EU investments. Only Public institutions involved in the management of the ERDF or Cohesion Fund can request support for expert missions, study visits and single or multi-country workshops.

3. Support for industry cooperation and design of projects

European Cluster Collaboration Platform

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform is the European hub facilitating cluster cooperation within and beyond the EU. The Platform provides networking support for over 500 cluster organisations and their members aiming to increase their competitiveness through the stimulation of trans-national and international cooperation. It offers unique services to map and profile themselves, exchange experience and search for potential partners across Europe and increasingly worldwide – either by sectors, emerging industries, technologies or smart specialisation (S3) priority areas.

The Platform promotes international cooperation through updated information on the cluster landscape in strategic third countries and organise international cluster matchmaking events bringing delegations of European clusters to meet peers from third countries and initiate cooperation for the benefit of their SMEs in the context of major international trade fairs.

European Strategic Cluster Partnerships

This action will pilot the implementation of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships for smart specialisation investments (ESCP-S3) in the context of the S3P-Industry. A call for proposals with a budget of EUR 2.8 million will be published in the second half of 2017 to support at least eight Partnerships.

It aims to boost the collaboration of enterprises, notably SMEs, across regions towards generating joint actions and investment projects in common thematic priority areas linked to industrial modernisation and help to improve their business environment. A call for expression of interest has already been published under the European Cluster Collaboration Platform to facilitate the partnering of cluster organisations and shape such Partnerships.

Horizon 2020 innovation actions (e.g. INNOSUP-1 cluster projects for new value chains)

A total of EUR 130 million is foreseen under Horizon2020 until 2020 for cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains (INNOSUP-1). This innovation action supports cross-regional and cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation projects of SMEs with the aim of boosting value chain innovation. These demonstration projects are contributing to the implementation of smart specialisation strategies by capitalising upon complementary competences and further leverage investments from, for instance, European Structural Investment Funds with a clear EU value added. The coordination and facilitation is led by cluster organisations and other intermediary organisations that facilitate the partnering and channeling of innovation support services to SMEs. They follow a systemic approach that combines different resources, tools and instruments such as innovation vouchers.

For each INNOSUP-1 funded project, at least 75% of the total proposed budget are to be allocated to support innovation in SMEs directly. At the first stage of the two-stage application process only a 10-page concept note is required in order to encourage new applicants for this topic. Usually, projects have around 10 partners and a budget of around EUR 4.5 million. The 9 projects launched so far, with a budget of EUR 41 million, have brought together 99 partners from 21 countries and are supporting at least 722 SMEs.

WATIFY awareness campaign

Watify is an awareness raising campaign for the modernisation of Europe's Industry (2016-2018) that supports the digital transformation of Industry and enterprises and their uptake of Key Enabling Technologies. The campaign specifically targets SMEs in manufacturing, healthcare, finance and creative industries as well as mechanical engineering, construction, tourism, retail and agro-food that can drive economic and/or social value by creating and using novel digital and advanced technologies.

40 matchmaking events will be organised that bring together public and private stakeholders from different regions to explore how they can translate their national and regional policies and priorities for smart specialisation and technological transformation into joint high-quality projects and smart investments in industrial modernisation and new value chains. WATIFY is also co-organising some 240 awareness raising events with European, national, and regional partners with a specific focus on those areas that are lagging behind in the uptake of new technological solutions.

The campaign is being promoted and supported through a dedicated website (watify.eu) and through extensive use of social media, notably WATIFY Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

(Digital) Innovation Hubs

The Digitising European Industry Strategy aims to ensure that any business in Europe should have access to a Digital Innovation Hub at 'a working distance' (i.e. within a form and location convenient for their day-to-day business). Digital Innovation Hubs can be instrumental for industrial modernisation. If they already exist within a region, they can be seen as a support service for the S3P-Industry. However, if they do not exist they could be the intended outcome of the investment project.

A Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) helps companies become more competitive by improving their business/production processes as well as products (and services) by means of digital technology. DIHs achieve this by offering services to the companies based on the expertise and facilities related to certain technologies (e.g. robotics, photonics, High Performance Computing, Data analysis, Simulation, Internet of Things, Cyber Physical Systems, Cybersecurity, 5G...) or a combination thereof and offer companies possibilities to test and experiment with these technologies, or to manufacture innovative products, also exploiting leading edge scientific and technological advances. They act as broker between user companies with certain needs and technology suppliers that can address these needs, respecting the intellectual property of the participating companies in the innovation experiments. Apart from a focus on technologies, a DIH may be focusing as well on certain sectors, for instance on agriculture, textile, construction, etc. A catalogue of Digital Innovation Hubs is being established.

I4MS (ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs) is an initiative in the context of the Factories of the Future H2020 programme. Through a call for proposals several Digital Innovation Hubs have been set up. These hubs are launching smaller call for innovation experiments where a value chain of SMEs can work together to master test out new digital technologies for improving their production processes or business processes. Call for experiments may be found on <http://www.i4ms.eu>

In addition, an online **map of EU technology centres** sharing their equipment and expertise in key enabling technologies with companies is publicly available and can be used by (1) Public authorities and national or regional innovation support services to SMEs and clusters, to get an overview of the technology centres and expertise available to SMEs, (2) SMEs, to find the right contact person for getting technology services and expertise anywhere in Europe and (3) Technology centres, to promote their expertise and service offer and explore opportunities to collaborate with other centres.

European Pilot Production Network

The European Pilot Production Network (EPPN) is being established as coordination platform in the area of nanotechnology and advanced materials upscaling and pilot actions. EPPN will help exploiting on the synergies and maximising the impact of the various investments into innovation from H2020, starting with the 'Pilot project' investments of the NMBP programme, but with the aim to reach further.

The aim of the European Pilot Production Network (EPPN) is to provide infrastructure and advisory services to industry, with access for SME's and start-ups under favourable (subsidised) conditions, hereby boosting investments, maximising the impact of the ongoing upscaling activities and facilitating market access.

EPPN activities are planned to include mapping current pilot line projects, identifying specific needs and coordinating joint actions in a number of areas addressing finance, market, training, technical collaboration, dissemination and Policy. The EPPN activities will provide practical examples of relevance for implementing the S3 philosophy. EPPN will especially help on the creation of regional Innovation Hubs and their value-chain and cross-border networking.

Advanced Manufacturing Advisory services

The aim of this action is to establish a virtual European advanced manufacturing support centre which will:

- provide to manufacturing SMEs practical information, advice and support on how to transform their company towards a smart factory having a more competitive and sustainable manufacturing production process;
- set up learning networks of next-generation of 'factories of the future' to become the inspiring examples for other manufacturing companies.

The support centre will be established at the end of 2017 and work closely with clusters and regions that are active under any relevant Thematic Area of the S3P-Industry.

4. Support for business plan development and funding mix

ERDF technical assistance

Technical assistance budgets are available to help stakeholders implement ERDF-funded programmes and projects.

Each ERDF Managing Authority has such technical assistance budgets to pay for preparation, management, evaluation, monitoring, audit and control of ERDF projects. Further information can be obtained by contacting the relevant ERDF Managing Authority, see:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/

Financial assistance facility

A Financial assistance facility will be set up in 2018 for 3 years in order to provide technical and financial assistance to cross-regional networks of businesses to overcome obstacles on the path to investment readiness.

IPR Helpdesk

The European IPR Helpdesk is a project funded by the European Commission under the current Horizon 2020 programme that supports cross-border SME and research activities to manage, disseminate and valorise technologies and other Intellectual Property (IP) Rights and IP assets at an EU level.

Offering a broad range of informative material, a Helpline service for direct IP support and on-site and online training, the European IPR Helpdesk's main goal is to support IP capacity building along the full scale of IP practices: from awareness to strategic use and successful exploitation. This strengthening of IP competencies focuses on EU SMEs, participants and candidates in EU-funded projects, and EU innovation stakeholders for an increased translation of IP into the EU innovation ecosystem.

EIB advisory services

The European Investment Advisory Hub is Europe's gateway to investment support! A joint initiative by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank under the Investment Plan for Europe, the Hub offers a single access point to a 360 degree offer of advisory and technical assistance services with the aim of strengthening Europe's investment and business environment.

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