

REGIOSTARS 2016

The Awards for innovative projects supported by EU cohesion policy

Guide for applicants

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of RegioStars is to identify good practice in regional development and to highlight original and innovative projects or support schemes that could be an inspiration to other regions and project managers. Eligible projects or support schemes have been co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or for Category 5, by Technical Assistance (TA).

All finalists are invited to the Award Ceremony and will receive a certificate and a medal. They will also be included in a brochure, published by the European Commission as well as in the online database of best practices on the Inforegio website.

One main prize is awarded per category. It consists of a RegioStars trophy and a certificate presented by European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu, and the President of the RegioStars jury on the day of the Award Ceremony in Brussels. For each winner a short video is produced, which will be published online, followed by a promotional campaign.

2. GENERAL RULES

2.1 Award Categories

There are five RegioStars Award categories for 2016:

Cat. 1 Smart Growth: Emerging opportunities in the global economy

Cat. 2 Sustainable Growth: Circular Economy

Cat. 3 Inclusive Growth: Integrated living – building inclusive and non-segregated communities

Cat. 4 CityStar: Innovative solutions for sustainable urban development

Cat. 5 Effective management: Making a difference by managing differently

2.2 Applicants

The 274 NUTS-2 regions¹ in Europe are eligible for European Structural and Investment Funds support from a variety of national, regional or cooperation programmes. Either the Member State or the most relevant structural funds managing authority² for the national or regional programmes – for the period 2007-2013 or 2014-2020 - may submit maximum one entry per category and per region.

¹ NUTS is the "[Nomenclature of Statistical Territorial Units](#)" a single, coherent system for dividing up the European Union's territory in order to produce regional statistics.

² To find your structural funds managing authority check on RegioAtlas: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/index_en.htm In some cases national Managing Authorities delegate responsibility to regional bodies ("Delegated Managing Authorities"). In such cases the delegated Managing Authority may apply.

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2.3 How to submit an application form

Applications must be submitted by the relevant Managing Authority (national or regional) or by the project manager **with the endorsement of the Managing Authority**.

In the case of direct submission by the project manager, an e-mail or a scanned document from the Managing Authority endorsing the project has to be provided.

To help you prepare your application, we provide the application form in Word format. However, as of this year, **applications can no longer be sent in a Word document, but have to be submitted directly via the online form on the RegioStars platform:**

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/

The application form should preferably be completed in English, but can also be submitted in French or German if necessary.

Applications will be examined by an independent jury taking into account the eligibility and award criteria. Only applications which satisfy the first phase of the evaluation (eligibility) will be admitted to the second phase (pre-selection of finalists/award by the jury).

See below for further details.

2.4 Deadline

Applications should be submitted through the online form, no later than **April 15th of 2016**.

2.5 Contact information

All enquiries about the application process should be sent by e-mail to:
regiostars2016@iservice-europa.eu

Please read the Guide for applicants carefully before submitting your application.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- a) The application has been submitted via the RegioStars website no later than **April 15 at midnight**.
- b) The project has been co-financed, after 1 January 2008, by the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). In category 5, also projects that consisted of an operation where a Managing Authority or intermediate body itself was the beneficiary are eligible, including if this goal has been accomplished through the use of Technical Assistance budget exclusively.

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- c) Applications must be submitted or endorsed by an EU structural funds managing authority² for a regional or national programme. Managing authorities are free to use whatever selection process they deem appropriate to choose the candidates for their region.
- d) Applications must be submitted preferably in English - where not possible, in French or German. This will allow the applications to be processed more rapidly.
- e) The project description must be clearly related to the selected category.
- f) The project is finalised or is sufficiently advanced (i.e. it can demonstrate progress in the achievement of the original objectives).
- g) The project has not been proposed for a RegioStars Award before.
- h) In category 5, also projects that consisted of an operation where a Managing Authority or intermediate body itself was the beneficiary are eligible, including if this goal has been accomplished through the use of Technical Assistance budget exclusively.

4. AWARD CRITERIA

- a) **Innovative character of the project**
- b) **Impact (or expected impact) of the project in terms of its initial objectives**
- c) **Expected financial sustainability of the project:** Evidence could include development towards self-financing or demonstration that the project has or will be part of a succession of projects sequentially funded by other EU financial instruments;
- d) **Possibility to extrapolate good practices of the project to other regions. Project's results in enhancing local, regional and interregional partnerships:** Evidence could include demonstration that the project has inspired other regions' projects/programmes or that good practices were shared with other regions.

5. SUPPORTING GUIDANCE ON THE AWARD CATEGORIES

A general description of the categories and an indication of the projects that could be relevant for meeting the award criteria are presented below.

CATEGORY 1: Smart growth

Emerging opportunities in the global economy

Knowledge driven industrial transformation is at the heart of the smart specialisation concept. Over 100 regions and most national governments revamped over the past years their research and innovation strategies in order to identify unique competitive advantages based on new combinations of their industrial and scientific strengths and potential and are concentrating their efforts on such smart specialisation priorities. The implementation of smart specialisation strategies draws on many own resources, includes often synergies with Horizon2020, and uses different ESI Funds.

Already in the past innovation / industrial / cluster strategies benefitted from ERDF support to implement a policy mix that can set an example for the now starting implementation of the new smart specialisation strategies, for instance via investments in:

- the international opening and transnational, inter-regional and cross-border cooperation as opportunity,
- economic transformation towards related varieties,
- emerging industries thanks to a new combination of existing sectors / technologies with new technologies and cross-sector cooperation,
- the evolution of clusters and their trans-national partnerships,
- avoid duplication of R&I efforts by technology absorption and in-sourcing

CATEGORY 2: Sustainable growth

Circular Economy

The transition towards a circular economy is about preserving and maintaining the value of products and resources in the economy for as long as possible, while minimising waste and use of non-renewable resources. This transition aims to boost the EU's economy and competitiveness with new business opportunities and innovative, more efficient ways of producing and consuming. It can create local low and high-skilled jobs and opportunities for social integration and cohesion. Action on the circular economy ties in closely with a number of other EU priorities, including jobs and growth, the investment agenda, climate and energy, the social agenda and industrial innovation.

The Commission adopted its Circular Economy Package on 2 December 2015, containing a legislative proposal for new recycling targets and an action plan targeting the full cycle of resources.

Cohesion policy investments in the circular economy have been significant over the last two decades and will continue to be important in 2014-2020 and will also make a significant contribution in the future.

The award category aims to showcase good examples for national and regional projects and initiatives that successfully supported the transition towards a circular economy and could include investments in:

- waste management in respect of the "waste hierarchy" which aims mainly at the prevention of waste and if that cannot be achieved, its reuse and recycling, as opposed to basic waste

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management infrastructure (closing of landfills, limited incineration, basic recycling infrastructure),

- bio-economy as an essential alternative to the dangers and limitations of our current fossil-based economy,
- eco-design or product conception,
- stimulate industrial symbiosis, turning one industry's by-product into another industry's raw material and engaging diverse organizations in a network to foster eco-innovation and long-term culture change, new business models, including for energy and resource efficiency.

CATEGORY 3: Inclusive growth

Integrated living – building inclusive and non-segregated communities

As described in the Europe 2020 strategy, inclusive growth aims to provide Europe's citizens with more and better jobs, reduce the rates of early school leaving below 10%, and decrease the number of people in poverty (or at risk of poverty) by at least 20 million people. However these objectives cannot be achieved without a particular effort to reduce the educational and spatial segregation of the groups at risk of social exclusion.

The complexity and interdependence of the social exclusion challenges call for sustainable responses which tackle the multidimensional aspects of social exclusion through an integrated approach which combines efforts across different areas, including: education, employment, housing, health and social services. With a view to ensuring effectiveness and sustainability, it is essential that these investments do not contribute to further segregation and are implemented as part of an integrated approach. Spatial and education segregation is a complex and critical issue with which the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are confronted. The integrated use of ESIF is particularly important in addressing the territorial dimension of poverty, and reducing spatial and education segregation.

The Inclusive Growth category of RegioStars 2016 will focus on showcasing examples of how Member States use the European Structural and Investment Funds for building inclusive and non-segregated communities. Under this category, projects may focus on the following areas:

- Integrated social inclusion projects addressing the specific needs of:
 - Geographical areas most affected by poverty;
 - Target groups at highest risk of discrimination or exclusion.
- Integrated urban development projects focusing on social housing measures, accompanied by interventions in education, employment, health and social services;
- Ensuring access to inclusive and non-segregated education;
- Improving access/extending the capacities of health/social services to ensure equal access to marginalised groups;
- Supporting the transition from institutional to community-based services (de-institutionalisation);
- Integrating refugees/migrants and integrating them in the local community and economy.

CATEGORY 4: CITYSTAR

Innovative solutions for sustainable urban development

Future evolutions will put the current organisation of cities to the test. Aging and more diverse population, changing relationship with citizens, effects of climate change, an economy that needs other skills, persistent pockets of deprivation, challenge to pay for public services, integration of migrants etc. Cities will need to adapt to tackle these challenges and make the most of new opportunities.

One thing is clear: cities will need to come up with innovative solutions and tackle these complex challenges in an integrated way. The 2014-2020 programming period recognises this and puts special emphasis on integrated sustainable urban development and a stronger role for cities themselves.

Projects that have already prepared cities for these challenges could include activities that involved

- Innovative approach that coupled resource efficiency with the promotion of social equity;
- New governance models that engaged citizens by using new technologies;
- Initiatives that have transformed cities into circular economies (resource efficiency).
- Innovative solutions that support integration of migrants in cities
- New ways of improving skills which lead to better job opportunities

CATEGORY 5: Simplification & efficient management

Making a difference by managing differently

Administrative capacity to manage funds and policies in our ever more complex global economy is of crucial importance to deliver the administrative, physical, legal and financial environment in which businesses can flourish. The old models of public administration need an overhaul in order to benefit from the new digital opportunities and deliver faster and simpler services to citizens and businesses and also to ensure more efficiency and effectiveness of ESI Funds management. The modernisation of administrations can take various forms, including:

- Innovative methods in the management the Funds, e.g. e-procurement, e-government solutions
- participatory governance approaches, or open data, transparency
- new delivery mechanisms, e.g. demand side innovation support via innovation procurement,
- innovative project selection methods, e.g. via funneling applicants through a multi-step procedure starting from advice to small lump-sums, to more substantial grants / financial instrument support

In category 5, also projects that consisted of an operation where a Managing Authority or intermediate body itself was the beneficiary are eligible, including if this goal has been accomplished through the use of Technical Assistance budget exclusively.