



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR REGIONAL AUTHORITIES TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A PILOT ACTION ON INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION**

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### ANNEX 1: APPLICATION FORM

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 In recent years the Commission has called on national and regional authorities to develop **smart specialisation strategies** for research and innovation. The aim was to encourage all European regions to identify their specific competitive advantages, as a basis for prioritising research and innovation investment under cohesion policy in 2014-2020.
- 1.2 The recent **Smart Specialisation Communication** by the Commission entitled "Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth"<sup>1</sup> called for intensified reform efforts of regional innovation systems, including through making better use of policy instruments such as clusters or digital innovation hubs to support research and business collaboration.
- 1.3 The Communication announced a **pilot action** involving a limited number of test regions expressing their interest to work on the basis of their respective smart specialisation strategies in order to promote broad-based innovation to address the challenges of the industrial transition. This was further confirmed in the Communication "Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable industry; a renewed EU industrial Policy Strategy"<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4 In this context, the Commission launched a first call for expression of interest on 29<sup>th</sup> September. As a result of the assessment of the applications received, **five test regions were shortlisted in December 2017**. The Commission wishes to launch a second call for expression of interest in order to shortlist five additional test regions on industrial transition in early 2018.
- 1.5 **Globalisation**, automation, decarbonisation, emerging and digital technologies have an impact on jobs, industrial sectors, business models, the economy and the society as a whole. It is indispensable **to help Europeans adapt** to these profound changes and to help the EU economy to become more resilient. In the Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation<sup>3</sup>, the Commission highlighted the opportunities and challenges that Europe's citizens and regions are facing. This means anticipating and managing the modernisation of existing economic and societal structures, bearing in mind that today, more than ever, local issues have gone global and global issues have become local.
- 1.6 **Regions in industrial transition** face specific challenges, notably where this is associated with a lack of an appropriate skills-base, high unit labour costs and deindustrialisation. These regions may be unable to attract sufficient extra-regional investment to encourage innovation through the development of new supply chains, as

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2017) 376 final

<sup>2</sup> COM(2017) 479 final

<sup>3</sup> European Commission's Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation - COM(2017) 240 final.

well as sufficient commercial research structures and firms that could form the basis for broad industrial modernisation. There may be additional weaknesses in the capacity to exploit the funding opportunities offered by the resources available under European research and innovation and industrial competitiveness programmes, while they do not receive the level of support available to less developed regions under cohesion policy.

- 1.7 **Targeted policy measures** can help to address the specific needs of these regions and to successfully implement their smart specialisation strategies in order to promote broad-based innovation to address the challenges of the industrial transition, with a particular focus on mutual learning and sharing of good practices in innovation policy implementation, governance and monitoring.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

- 2.1. Under this Call, DG REGIO seeks **expressions of interest from national or regional authorities**, at the appropriate geographical level and at least at NUTS level 2, willing to work on the basis of their respective smart specialisation strategies in order to promote broad-based innovation to address the challenges of the industrial transition.

- 2.2. The selected **test regions** will benefit from:

- 2.2.1. Technical assistance through dedicated facility to develop/redesign a comprehensive strategy for regional economic transformation

Advisory services will be offered of up to a value 200 000 Euro for each of selected regions from the European Regional Development Fund to support, on the basis of their respective smart specialisation strategies, the development of a comprehensive strategy for regional or, for small member states, national economic transformation.

- 2.2.2. Proactive support from the European Commission services

The test regions will work with a team of experts representing relevant services of the European Commission which will provide analytical support and expertise on the use of various EU instruments for industrial transition.

- 2.2.3. Possible grant support for early implementation

A grant of a maximum value of 300 000 Euro from the European Regional Development Fund may be envisaged, subject to sufficient progress in the development of the comprehensive strategy, to support implementation in 2019 of specific actions.

- 2.3. Interested regions are expected in their expression of interest to demonstrate their political **commitment** and organisational readiness of public administration (dedicated team assigned to work with the European Commission) for accelerating innovation uptake, removing investment barriers and facilitating reskilling and preparing for industrial and societal change, including the transition to a low-carbon energy and circular economy.

The expected result of this Call is a **shortlist** of five pilot regions in industrial transition from the submitted expressions of interest.

### 3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

3.1. By the end of 2018, each test region should have defined a set of actions in the form of a comprehensive strategy building on their smart specialisation strategy, clusters and digitisation of industry plans to foster comprehensive regional economic transformation, identifying where possible collaboration and funding opportunities at European, national and regional level. This includes also linking with other regions in regional and cluster partnerships.



3.2. There will be a capitalisation and evaluation exercise in the first half of 2019 to synthesise the lessons learnt on addressing the challenges of industrial transition for other regions as well as for the development of European policies. A particular focus shall be placed on drawing conclusions concerning how to better support the implementation of smart specialisation post 2020 to address industrial transition to a low-carbon energy and circular economy for example through cluster partnerships and to improved collaboration between the European Commission and the regions.

### 4. WHO CAN APPLY UNDER THIS CALL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

4.1. The expression of interest shall be submitted by statutory regional authorities or by a national authority on behalf of a region in an EU Member State or in the case of small<sup>4</sup> Member States, at national level. The regional authority or region shall be constituted at, at least, NUTS2 level. The focus of this call shall be more developed and transition categories of regions.

4.2. To be considered eligible, the expression of interest will have to meet **all** the following **eligibility criteria**:

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA		REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM
1. A	A strong political commitment and appointment of a dedicated institutional interlocutor that demonstrates willingness to establish a broad partnership for industrial	Section 2

<sup>4</sup> Composed of a single NUTS 2 region.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA		REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM
	transition with regional actors (research, business, social partners and civil society), the Member State and the European Commission and to strengthen the design and implementation of their smart specialisation strategy, cluster policy and digitisation of industry plans. This includes openness to peer review, finding partners from other regions and countries, and a strong interest in mutual policy learning.	
<b>1.B</b>	The region has identified and clearly presents <b>a range of challenges</b> related to industrial transition, including investment barriers.	Section 1.4 and section 5
<b>1.C</b>	Description of the progress in <b>implementation of the smart specialisation strategy</b> .	Section 4

## 5. CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

5.1. The eligible expressions of interest will be assessed against the following **assessment criteria**:

CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST		REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM
<b>(1)</b>	The level of <b>political commitment</b> and <b>dedicated administrative resources</b> to work closely with the European Commission.	Section 2
<b>(2)</b>	<b>Relevance</b> – extent to which region is faced with the challenges of globalisation as highlighted in the "Reflection paper on harnessing globalisation".	Section 1.4 and Section 3
<b>(3)</b>	<b>Linkage with smart specialisation strategy</b> – the extent to which services offered by technical assistance can be used to make smart specialisation work better in industrial transition of your region.	Section 4
<b>(4)</b>	<b>Identification of investment barriers</b> – the extent to which barriers to investment have been identified.	Section 5

## 6. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

6.1. Expressions of Interest will be assessed against the eligibility criteria and shortlisted based on the criteria listed in the paragraph 5.1. of this Call.

- 6.2. The assessment will be carried out by a selection panel consisting of representatives of the European Commission. The final decision on a shortlist will be taken by the European Commission.
- 6.3. Each applicant will be informed about the decision taken.
- 6.4. At this stage of the Call, the shortlisting of an expression of interest does not constitute a binding commitment – either implicit or explicit – on the part of the European Commission to provide support to a partnership.

## **7. PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

- 7.1. Regional authorities willing to submit the expression of interest to participate in a pilot on industrial transition are requested to complete the application form provided in the Annex 1 of this Call to a maximum of five pages length.
- 7.2. The application form is to be filled-in in English, French or German.
- 7.3. The expression of interest should be submitted electronically to the following email address: REGIO-SMART-GROWTH@ec.europa.eu

## **8. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

- 8.1. The deadline for submitting an expression of interest is Friday, the **19<sup>th</sup> January 2018**
- 8.2. Expressions of interest submitted after the date indicated in paragraph 8.1. of this Call will not be considered.

## **9. CONTACT**

- 9.1. In case of any questions, please contact REGIO-SMART-GROWTH@ec.europa.eu
- 9.2. All information related to this Call will be published online at [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/funding-opportunities/calls-for-expressions-of-interest/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/funding-opportunities/calls-for-expressions-of-interest/) and further information is also available at [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster/observatory/cluster-policy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster/observatory/cluster-policy_en).