

EN

ANNEX

Multiannual work programme for 2021 - 2022 for the Interregional Innovation Investments instrument

1. Introduction

The target group of the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) programme are actors involved in smart specialisation strategies (S3) willing to work together, scale up and bring innovation to the market. I3 intends to support regions and their regional innovation stakeholders, well integrated in regional innovation partnerships that are addressing gaps in value chains related to S3 specific priority areas.

On the basis of the objectives set out in Regulation (EU) 2021/1058, and in particular Article 13 thereof, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for the years 2021 and 2022 as follows:

- a) for grants (implemented under direct management): point 2,
- b) for prizes (implemented under direct management): point 3: N/A,
- c) for procurement (implemented under direct management): point 4: N/A,
- d) for actions implemented under indirect management: point 5: N/A,
- e) for contributions to trust funds: point 6: N/A,
- f) for financial instruments: point 7: N/A,
- g) for contributions to blending facilities: point 8: N/A,
- h) for other actions or expenditure: point 9: N/A.

Legal basis

Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, and in particular Article 13 thereof

Budget line

Budget line 05.020100.08 - Interregional Innovation Investments

Objectives pursued

The bi-annual work programme for the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument aims to provide advisory and financial support to mature joint innovation projects in joint smart specialisation areas organised in value-chain investment portfolios. The instrument aims at supporting interregional innovation investment on the road towards commercialisation and scale-up phases giving them the tools to overcome regulatory and other barriers and bring their project to investment level. The instrument's final beneficiaries are mainly companies, in particular small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

In accordance with the ERDF 2021-2027 Regulation, this work programme covers the following key intervention areas:

(a) Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation areas (Strand 1);

(b) Financial and advisory support (Strand 2a), and capacity building (Strand 2b) for the development of value chains in less developed regions.

Strand 1 targets well-developed ecosystems and focuses on broad EU priority areas where the interregional approach can contribute to further developing European value chains, in particular where weaknesses or market failures are identified and a solution could come from the interregional triple/quadruple helix cooperation (representing regional authorities and cities, business, research and civil society).

Strand 2 targets less developed regions and focuses on reinforcing internally the regional innovation ecosystems, unlocking underutilised capacities which could reinforce EU value chains. This strand also includes capacity-building activities.

The funding will be awarded through open calls with predefined thematic priorities. The linkage to smart specialisation strategies makes sure that a bottom-up approach is present when it comes to identification of needs and that strengths, capabilities, knowledge and innovative solutions available at regional and local level are considered.

This instrument seeks complementarities and synergies with other EU initiatives, including but not limited to Interreg Europe, Horizon Europe, in particular European Innovation Ecosystems, Digital Europe and the Single Market Programme.

The current work programme takes into account the view expressed by the Commission expert group on Interregional innovation investments in accordance with Article 13(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058.

Expected results

It is expected that the financial and advisory assistance contributes to accelerate the commercialisation and scaling up of interregional innovation projects having the potential to encourage the development of European value chains. It will support investments at high technological readiness level and help them address barriers to moving to market. The predefined thematic areas will enable scaling up and take to market innovative solutions that contribute to EU priorities without fragmenting available resources.

The progress in implementing the programme will be measured with indicators in the following dimensions:

- Interregional
- Innovation
- Investment
- Cohesion/territorial
- Value chain

Grants

The global budgetary envelope reserved for grants under this work programme is EUR 153 117 154.

1.1. Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation areas, including in less developed regions (1 and 2a)

Type of applicants targeted by the call for proposals

The calls are targeted at consortia of innovation actors (such as public administration, research and academia, industry and users). These actors can be, amongst others:

- Legal entities established in a Member State including joint ventures;
- Legal entities established in Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom or an overseas country or territory. Legal entities established in third countries shall bear the cost of their own participation and shall not be eligible for funding;
- Legal entities created under Union law;
- International organisations.

Description of the activities to be funded under the calls for proposals

Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation areas and for the development of value chains, notably including in less developed regions (Strand 2). Support is available for both tangible and intangible investments:

Development of portfolios of projects for close-to-market investments along value chains, involving innovative products and services through the deployment of new technologies or processes.

Developing, connecting or making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities to accelerate market uptake and scale up of innovation solutions in shared smart specialisation areas.

The thematic priorities for the duration of the work programme for the calls for both Strands 1 and 2a are (1) digital transition, (2) green transition, including climate neutrality, environmental sustainability and circular economy and (3) smart manufacturing.

The calls are addressed at consortia of independent legal entities covering actors of the quadruple-helix ecosystem. For Strand 1, the consortium should include at least five independent legal entities established in at least three different eligible countries, the coordinator being established in an EU Member State. In addition, one of the entities should come from a less developed region.

For Strand 2a, the consortium should include at least three independent legal entities established in at least two eligible countries, the coordinator being from a less developed region established in an EU Member State. The consortium should represent at least one more developed/high capacity region and one less developed region or include a transition region facing specific challenges.

Implementation

The action will be implemented by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency.

The funding rate for this grant is up to 70% of the eligible costs.

Estimated duration of grants is 36 months.

Indicative timeframe for launching the calls for both Strands 1 and 2a: 5 October 2021 with two cut-off dates for proposals in Q4 2021 and Q3 2022.

1.2. Capacity building for the development of value chains in less developed regions (2b)

Type of applicants targeted by the call for proposals

The calls are targeted at consortia of innovation actors (such as public administration, research and academia, industry and users). These actors can be, amongst others:

- Legal entities established in a Member State including joint ventures;
- Legal entities established in Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom or an overseas country or territory. Legal entities established in third countries shall bear the cost of their own participation and shall not be eligible for funding;
- Legal entities created under Union law;
- International organisations.

Description of the activities to be funded under the calls for proposals

Capacity building for the development of value chains in less developed regions aims at increasing the capacity of regional innovation eco-systems in less developed regions to participate in global value chains as well as the capacity to participate in partnerships with other regions. This activity has a strong cohesion dimension creating linkages between less developed regions with those in lead regions.

The purpose of this activity is to build capacities for a successful participation in Strand 1 and Strand 2a. Proposals should create the preconditions for successful interregional cooperation with a view to identifying and sharing good practices, experimenting new approaches and raising the capacities of the programme applicant.

For Strand 2b, the consortium should include at least two independent legal entities established in at least two eligible countries, the coordinator being from a less developed region and established in an EU Member State. The consortium should represent at least one more developed/high capacity region and one less developed region or include a transition region facing specific challenges.

Implementation

The action will be implemented by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency.

The funding rate for this grant is up to 100% of the eligible costs.

Estimated duration of grants is 24 months.

Indicative timeframe for launching the call: Q4 2022.

2. Prizes

N/A

3. Procurement

N/A

4. Actions implemented in indirect management

N/A

5. Trust funds

N/A

6. Financial instruments implemented in direct or indirect management

N/A

7. Contribution to blending facilities

N/A

8. Other actions or expenditure

N/A