



# Science Meets Regions

call for expression of interest – innovation camps and events

## Guidelines for applicants



# Background: What is Science meets Regions about?

As the European Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) aims to promote and support a culture of evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM), not just in the EU institutional context, but at all levels of governance across Europe, including at the subnational level.

In 2015, JRC started organising, together with the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) of the European Parliament, an annual Science meets Parliaments event, bringing together high-level policymakers and scientists to discuss challenges and perspectives at the science-policy interface. The initiative soon trickled down to the national and regional level, with a number of ad hoc events being organised throughout Europe in 2016 and 2017. In the wake of these events, the European Parliament adopted the Pilot Project "Science meets Parliaments/Science meets Regions" at the end of 2017.

The JRC implemented this project in 2018-2020, in close collaboration with the Committee of the Regions. As concluded in the [final report](#), while the project was overall successful in building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking at national, local and regional level, the need for a more structural and permanent instrument that would allow to strengthen and broaden the capacity building process, still remains.

It is this gap that the Preparatory Action "advancing evidence for policy at local and regional level", adopted by the EP in December 2020, aims to address. It will focus on the subnational level, with regions and cities as main target audience. The action will be implemented under the Science meets Regions brand and will involve the following main work packages:

1. **Innovation camps and participatory events for single regions and cities**, focusing on specific policy topics.
2. **Networking initiatives** for consortia of regions and/or cities on issues of common concern, in order to boost interregional collaboration.
3. As a complement to the initiatives above, a **pairing scheme** for researchers and policymakers and **ad hoc studies** to fill knowledge and data gaps where needed.
4. **Laying the foundations for a Community of Practice** on evidence-informed policymaking, a.o. by providing skills training for policymakers and charting the landscape of EIPM at local and regional level in the EU.

The present call for expression of interest concerns exclusively work packages 1 and 2. The call for the pairing scheme and other initiatives will follow later.

Note that a second call on these same work packages will follow early 2022 (precise timing to be confirmed).

# Who can apply?

## Single regions or cities

Science meets Regions focuses on the subnational level. This means that **only public sector bodies<sup>1</sup> at NUTS2 level or below (including cities and municipalities)** are eligible to apply to this call. An exception may be made for national entities from member states that do not have any territorial subdivision below the national level (NUTS1).

The programme primarily targets policymaking entities, but the connection with the scientific and academic world is also key. **Partnerships with academic / research institutions** are therefore encouraged, but the main partner must always be the public authority that has the competence to enact change in the policy issue addressed by the application.

Applications from **local agencies or other regional entities closely associated with public authorities** (e.g. local or regional development agencies) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. They will need to demonstrate clear commitment from the relevant public authority that is driving the policy concerned.

**Existing associations or networks of cities and regions** are welcome to play a **supporting role** but should not act as applicants in themselves – this role is reserved for regional and municipal authorities in their own capacity.

## Networks of regions and cities

For the **multiregional strand (2)**, one partner will act as the lead partner submitting the application and coordinating the overall process (including liaising with the contractor which is handling logistics and organisational aspects). This lead partner shall be subject to the same eligibility criteria as for the single regions and cities strand (1).

The multiregional networks shall involve **at least 3 partners from at least 2 EU Member States**.

Cities or regions can only apply **as lead partner** once, i.e. either in their own capacity or as the lead partner of a network. Participants in strand 1 (single regions/cities) are however free to apply as an associated partner of a network (strand 2). Applications will be assessed on their merits independently.

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<sup>1</sup> 'public sector body' can be broadly defined as the State, regional or local authorities, bodies governed by public law, or associations formed by one or more such authorities or one or more such bodies governed by public law, if those associations are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;

# What are the priority topics?

While this call is open to any topic related to the six broad priorities of the current European Commission, the following topics will have priority:

- The Green and Digital Transitions
- Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

Irrespective of the topic, the proposal should make the link with **territorial development**. Any complementarity with existing or future smart specialisation strategies should be demonstrated (and will be valued positively in the evaluation process).

Proposals should make explicit the linkage between Grand Societal Challenges identified and tackled by European Commission priorities and the local societal challenges they propose to address, highlighting the potential contribution of the latter to the former.

# What can you apply for?

## Single regions or cities (1)

Selected participants can get the following types of support:

1. **Financial support** for multi-day participatory event(s) and innovation camps, including logistics, facilitation, communication and outreach. The financing will be done through an existing framework contract of the European Commission. The contractor will see to the organisational needs in close consultation with the JRC and the organising entity. The selected applicants shall submit a budget for their event(s) on the basis of the price list that will be shared with them after the initial selection is done, and taking into account that **the overall financial support per participating entity shall not exceed 30.000 EUR**. This financing mode implies that no funds will be directly paid to the organising entity. The organising entity is allowed to bring in additional funds should it be needed.
2. **Methodological support**. The JRC has ample experience with participatory and co-creative processes (examples include the [Innovation Camp method](#) and the JRC-Climate KIC handbook on policy co-creation), and will have regular “coaching meetings” with the participants in the project on setting

up and implementing the process. Dedicated and experienced facilitators will also assist in preparing the events. Moreover, customised support can be given specifically on citizen engagement, in the form of customised protocols to select and engage citizens in the participatory process.

3. **Scientific support.** Science meets Regions fundamentally revolves around underpinning local and regional policies with the best available scientific evidence, either sourced locally or (inter)nationally. JRC is committed to providing scientific advice and support where the topics of the events are aligned with JRC expertise. Furthermore, should the organisers identify any knowledge gaps ahead of the event(s), these can be addressed through financing of small-scale studies by relevant scientific institutions (if possible locally, if needed in the broader scientific community).

## Networks of regions and cities (2)

The same types of support will also apply to the networks of regions and cities that express their interest for the multiregional strand. It will be tailored to the specific needs that the networks will put forward in the application form. Quadruple helix involvement and citizen engagement are likely to be less prominent here, as these networks will involve multiple “ecosystems”, and the support will focus on the networking and policy coordination aspects between regions and cities in the network. However, involvement/representation of all interested parties in the issue at stake should be pursued, e.g. inviting civil society organisations (CSOs).

**The overall financial support per network shall not exceed 50 000 EUR.**

These networks may require several lighter networking and coordination events to take place.

The envisaged ideal time schedule for the projects is the following:

- Preparatory phase: **0-3 months** after the selection date
- Participatory event or innovation camps: **4-12 months** after the selection date
- Follow-up phase:
  - **1 month after the event**, participants will be expected to submit a report providing an account of the preparatory phase and the immediate outcomes of the event itself
  - **3-6 months after the event**, a more elaborate report is expected in which the participants provide information on how the event outcomes fed into new or ongoing policy processes, i.e. what the medium to long term impact of the activities will look like.

The exact dates of the events are subject to negotiation and will be planned jointly with the JRC, in order to ensure a reasonable spread across the duration of the preparatory action.

# What are the selection criteria?

After an initial eligibility check (see conditions above), the following criteria will be applied:

## For single regions or cities (1):

- Timeliness and relevance of topic – connection to the priority topics listed above
- Degree of involvement and commitment of quadruple helix actors:
  - i. Buy-in of policymakers: to what extent are the “challenge owners” (the policymakers that can bring about change on the issues addressed) on board and committed to take further action?
  - ii. Degree of participation and involvement of (local or international) scientific community
  - iii. Business associations where relevant and applicable
  - iv. Civil Society: both organised civil society and direct targeting of citizens in the co-creative process
- Links with ongoing structural reform processes: it is crucial that the events are not “stand alone”, and participants should be able to demonstrate that the envisaged actions are either connected to an already ongoing process or mechanism (like Smart Specialisation Strategies at local level or broader processes at EU level), or convincingly show that a process will be set up and deliver a plan for preparation and follow-up
- Expected impact of the process and how it will be achieved (i.e. further steps after the events to reach the expected impact)
- Quality and reach of the dissemination plan and the envisaged communication activities

## For networks of regions and cities (2):

The same criteria as for single regions or cities (1) will apply – with slightly more weight given to the networking dimension and exchange of best practices, rather than to quadruple helix involvement.

The JRC reserves the right to make the final selection, in close consultation with the Committee of the Regions. Feedback will be provided on demand only for those applicants intending to reapply to the 2022 call.

# Mandatory guidelines and deliverables

Once selected, the organisers shall:

- Establish the date(s) of the envisaged event(s) in close consultation with JRC
- Submit a budget for their event(s) calculated on the basis of the price list that will be communicated to them
- Make use of the overall visuals and branding of Science Meets Regions at all times when communicating about their activities in this framework
- Draw up a communication plan
- Submit a progress report no later than 3 months before the (first) event
- Submit a final report no later than 2 months after the (last) event

## What is the provisional overall timeline?

- Opening of call: 29 June 2021
- Deadline for submitting an expression of interest: 17 September 2021
- Selection results and start of preparations: 15 October 2021
- Start of participatory events: as of January 2022

## How to apply?

- For single regions and cities (1): [application form](#)
- For networks of regions and cities (2): [application form](#)

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