

## **CLUSTERS3 PROJECT**

Leveraging cluster policy for successful implementation of RIS3

**ACTION PLAN  
of Project Partner 4  
Piedmont Region**

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## INTRODUCTION

This action plan intends to improve the regional cluster policy as instrument for a better implementation of RIS3.

For this policy Piedmont Region has a specific instrument included in the ROP – ERDF 2014-2020 called **“Supporting collaborative R&I activities for the development of new sustainable technologies, new products and services”** which is the policy instrument addressed and indicated in the Application form of the project ClusterS3.

Through this policy Piedmont Region supports financially:

- research and development (R&D) cooperative projects among cluster associated members and, recently, also not associated ones, that intend to become members of the clusters
- the establishment of clusters and their management activities.

Participation to the ClusterS3 project and exchanging experiences among partners inspired Piedmont Region to define the content of this Action Plan with the aim of improving Cluster management organisations (CMO) activities and regional cluster policy for a better alignment with RIS3, a stronger cross sectorial cooperation and an efficient monitoring and evaluation system.

The Action plan is based on the following three activities:

1. Improvement of CMOs capacity in identifying associated member needs and CMOs participation to the definition of the contents of the call for proposals financing R&D collaborative projects
2. Launch of a new call for proposal to finance R&D projects with the participation of Universities and Research Centres as high qualified services providers
3. Definition and improvement of the cluster monitoring and evaluation system.

## **PART 1 - General Information**

Project: CLUSTERS3 – Leveraging cluster policies for successful implementation of RIS3

Partner organisation: PIEDMONT REGION – REGIONE PIEMONTE

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): None

Country: ITALY

NUTS2 region: ITC1

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## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact mainly **Investment for Growth and Jobs programme**

**Policy instrument addressed:** “Supporting collaborative R&I activities for the development of new sustainable technologies, new products and services” Action I.1b.1.2 – ROP-ERDF 2014-2020, Axis 1 “Research, technological development and innovation”.

- **Regional cluster policy**

Piedmont Region established in 2009 twelve regional innovation clusters in as many technological domains in order to stimulate innovation activities, encourage interaction, common share of equipments, exchange of knowledge and experiences and technological transfer.

Regional innovation clusters are grouping of enterprises (large and SMEs), start ups and research organisations acting in a particular technological domain, managed by Cluster Management Organisations, identified by the Region through public calls.

For the programming period 2014-20, the Region started in 2015 a revision and relaunching process of the Cluster policy aimed to:

- rationalize the number of the innovation clusters thematic areas and their revision
- redesign and enlarge innovation cluster mission and role of the CMO
- redesign the monitoring and evaluation system and the resource allocation modalities to CMOs (focused on results effectively reached by CMOs)
- project reorientation towards higher scales and RTL (closer to market) in order to increase their impact and faster result transfer.
- widening services for enterprises provided by CMO
- increased synergy with other regional programs (ESF) and with other Research and innovation actions (technological platforms)
- clear identification of single cluster specialisations avoiding thematic overlaps with increased coordination and inter-clusters cooperation
- create a “cluster system” as a homogeneous and coherent interface towards regional administration and economic system.

This process lead to the identification of seven thematic areas in which financing cluster development programs:

- 1) ICT; 2) Smart products and manufacturing; 3) Green Chemistry; 4) Agrifood; 5) Energy and clean technologies; 6) Textile; 7) Life sciences.

- **Lessons learnt – good practices**

During the phase 1 of the project, there have been organized thematic workshops in different thematic areas such as cluster programs implementations, internationalisation, cross sector and cross boarder cooperation, cluster monitoring and evaluation, CMOs capacity building. All of the workshops gave Piedmont Region inspiration for the improvement of the already well settled policy.

Among the good practices, the Basque Country policy concerning “initiatives of technical support for the development of clusters” has been of particular interest for the region.

The challenges of this initiative are:

- Reinforcing constructive dialogue to align public competitiveness support policies with the private sector needs and the Cluster association strategy to mutually inform Government Strategies (RIS3 and others).
- Creating common spaces for mutual learning, sharing experiences and knowledge among Cluster Associations and, at the same time, with the policy officers, in search of more efficient, effective and sustainable cluster support and competitiveness policies and programmes.

SPRI offers to Basque Cluster Organisations, together with Cluster (Financial) Support Programme, a wide range of Technical Assistance Initiatives for Cluster Management development, including:

- Cluster Association Action Plan assessment
- Shared Comparative Scoreboard
- Best Practices Watch (through Intercluster Working Groups, Basque Cluster Day, European Projects CLUSTERS3, TCI Network, ESCA)
- OCI Industrial Observatory
- Evaluation (the “User’s Voice” Survey)
- Working Groups on Common Interest Topics such as Evaluation and Technology Watch & Competitive Intelligence Tools
- Facilitation Support for Exploring Convergence, Fusion, Integration or Alliances of Clusters Associations
- SPRI Liaison Officer in each Cluster Association Board
- SPRI Liaison Officer participating in to the Cluster Association’s Strategy definition process.

## **Part III – Details of the actions envisaged**

### **ACTION 1**

#### **Improvement of CMOs capacity in identifying associated member needs and CMOs participation to the definition of the contents of the call for proposals financing R&D collaborative projects**

##### **1. The background**

The participation to the project allowed regional policy makers and stakeholders to exchange experiences with other partners related to cluster policies and CMOs role and involvement in the definition of the policies. From these discussions emerged the necessity of a more involvement of stakeholders and particularly CMO in policy maker decisions.

Based on these experiences the Region intends to improve CMOs participation to the definition of the regional cluster policy.

##### **2. Action**

Definition of the Guidelines for the submission of CMOs Strategic Agendas in which specify: overall spillovers and impacts of the Agendas, that is cumulative effects achieved by the projects whenever they reach the expected results, giving more information justifying the proposed investments.

Spillovers and impacts shall be described and quantified referring to:

- Enterprises competitiveness: planned investments, estimated turnover, employment and export increase
- Social spillovers and impacts: reducing atmospheric emissions, solid and liquid waste due to the innovation implementation; health and well-being (i.e. in terms of access to care, cost reduction, safety at work, etc.), mobility and transportation

Strategic agendas shall be more coherent to the RIS3 priorities areas and particularly to the Smart and Resource efficiency trajectories.

##### **3. Players involved**

- Regional System Competitiveness Department – University system, Right to study, Research and innovation Unit with definition of the guidelines for the strategic Agendas and their evaluation
- Cluster Management organisations through the submission of the strategic agendas containing associated members needs related to the project proposals they intend to submit for financing.

##### **4. Timeframe**

This action is already started in November 2017 and is expected to end by June 2018. This action will set the basis for the launch of the call of Action 2.

- 5. Costs** - No additional cost needed.

## **ACTION 2**

### **Launch of a new call for proposal to finance R&D projects with the participation of Universities and Research Centres as high qualified services providers**

#### **1. The background**

Piedmont Region provides financial support for the realisation of R&D projects of the associated members as well as of non associated members which intend to be part of the cluster.

During the thematic workshops of the project, and particularly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop in Torino, in which the cluster programs implementation were discussed, project partners shared the idea of the important role of clusters for SMEs and the need to support financially R&D activities to boost competitiveness.

Piedmont has already launched two calls for financing R&D projects, one reserved to associated members and one for non associated members. The innovative aspect of the projects had to be demonstrated by the participation of Research organisations as research services providers (at least 20% of the total cost) or by the participation of innovative enterprises. The result has been that these two alternative choices have both been accepted by participants to the projects as complementary, so that the result was both the increased value of the orders for research services from Research Organisation and the doubled number of innovative SMEs registered in the apposite book.

#### **2. Action**

The new call for proposal to finance R&D projects will have the following new aspects:

- mixed financial incentives as direct contribution (for staff/shareholder costs and overheads up to 75% of the total eligible costs for each beneficiary, and as subsidies loans (for the remaining costs)
- beneficiaries will be: small medium large enterprises, end users (cluster associated and non associated members)
- two different lines will be activated: 1) projects in which partners are committed to hire at least one resource as high training apprenticeship (state aid intensity for this projects will be up to 60%). 2) projects without this commitment (state aid intensity up to 55%)
- score evaluation rewards for the projects in which an associated member of the cluster included in the Research Agenda participates; for projects including the participation of innovative SMEs
- 10% of the total budget of each cluster may be destined to finance projects of small dimension (i.e feasibility studies, acquisition of research services).

#### **3. Players involved**

- Regional System competitiveness Department (University system, Right to study, Research and innovation Unit)
- Finpiemonte S.p.A. (in house agency) supporting the Region in the implementation of the call, definition and launch of the call and evaluation and financing of the projects
- CMOs, enterprises, Research centres



#### **4. Timeframe**

Launch of the call scheduled first semester 2018 - projects financing end 2018/beginning 2019.

#### **5. Costs**

The budget for this call is 65 M€ that will generate an overall R&D investment of around 100 M€.

#### **6. Funding sources**

ROP-ERDF 2014-2020 – public funding according to the R&D state aid rules

Private resources – beneficiaries for the cost not funded.

## **ACTION 3 - Definition and improvement of the cluster monitoring and evaluation system**

### **1. The background**

The thematic of the 4<sup>th</sup> workshop in Inverness was about the cluster monitoring and evaluation. During the meeting, project partners presented their monitoring and evaluation practices, in addition experts in cluster and evaluation policies as well as TCI working group pointed out the evaluation and cluster policy challenges and the following principles upon which base a sound cluster evaluation and monitoring system:

- Evaluation for change – *Evaluation is about learning, not just audit*
- Different audiences need different outputs – *Understand the audience & tell stories and facts*
- Evaluation needs to reflect real world context – *Understand external environment & interactions with other policies*
  - Capture evidence against Why, What & How – *Regional competitiveness, projects & programmes, collaborative dynamics*
    - Timing of evaluation – *Recognise long time-frame & reflect level of maturity of clusters*
    - Social capital and trust are fundamental – *Find ways to evidence softer issues, and link them to harder 'results'*
    - Causality of challenging so gather basket of evidence – *Mixed methods, baselines*

### **2. Action**

This action aims at improving the regional innovation cluster monitoring and evaluation system through:

- the revision of evaluation criteria for the strategic agenda and for the R&D projects financed in the public calls
- definition of an ex-post evaluation system of the regional cluster activities based on performance indicators and result achievements
- enhancement of CMOs self evaluation system.

Through this action the Region will set up a regional scoreboard in line with the European Strategic Cluster Association' indicators.

The scoreboard will be based on the following five evaluation dimensions and related indicators

- 1) Degree of Cluster development (physical indicators)
  - a. Number of associated member
  - b. Number of associated member/number of Piedmont enterprises of the sector
  - c. Number of associated member per year
  - d. Investment in R&D of associated enterprises funded by the Region
- 2) Research and innovation achievement (performance(result) indicators)
  - a. Number of projects activated

- b. Investment activated
  - c. Public funding
  - d. Number of partner activated
  - e. Number of Research Organization partner activated
  - f. Number of provided services
  - g. Number European projects activated
  - h. Investment in R&D activated by associated enterprises in public call
  - i. Investment in R&D activated by associated enterprises without public funding
- 3) Skills and Training
- a. Number of agreements with Training agencies, Higher Technical Training Foundations, Universities and public and private Research Centres.
  - b. Number of companies that cooperate with Training Agencies Higher Technical Training Foundations, Universities and public and private Research Centres
- 4) Governance (physical indicators)
- a. Participation rate of associated enterprises to the Strategic Agenda (% active enterprises/associated members)
  - b. Level of cooperation among cluster associated members (n. of events, n. of participants, n. of B2B)
  - c. Level of cooperation among associated members of different clusters (n. of intercluster projects, n. of intercluster events)
- 5) Extra-territorial lobby
- a. Number of cluster participations to EU initiatives (Platforms, networks, associations, etc.)
  - b. Number of cluster national and international cooperation

### 3. Players involved

- Regional System Competitiveness Department – University system, Right to study, Research and innovation Unit as responsible for the implementation of the action and definition of the guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation.

The Unit will be supported by:

- the Monitoring, evaluation and controls Unit,

- IRES (Istituto delle Ricerche Economiche e Sociali del Piemonte – Institute of Piedmont Economic and Social Research).

### 4. Timeframe

The activity is in the continuity of the works started at the end of 2016. In 2018-2020 period indicators will be identified for setting up the regional innovation cluster scoreboard.

**5. Costs** No additional funds required; activities will be carried out internally.

Date: 27 JULY 2018

Responsible of the University system, Right to Study, Research and innovation Unit

Mr Vincenzo Zezza

Signature: 