

European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award 2025

Call for applications

The Secretary-General of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) invites EU territories to submit their applications for the 2025 edition of the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award.

In accordance with decision 2518/2019 of the CoR Bureau, the EER label is open to all EU territories below the level of the Member State that are endowed with competences at a political level and able to implement an overall entrepreneurial vision, regardless of their size, wealth or specific competences. It does not matter whether a territory has legislative competences or not. Each applicant's budget, specific structural or territorial challenges and economic starting point are taken into account by the EER jury.

Regions are defined in the broadest sense, including communities, autonomous communities, departments, Länder, provinces, counties, metropolitan areas, large cities, as well as cross-border territories with legal personality such as EGTCs and Euroregions. In order to be eligible, the applicant must have the necessary political competence to implement a comprehensive policy strategy aimed at SMEs and the industry.

The theme of the EER 2025 campaign is *Doing business better in EU regions and cities*, stressing the role of local and regional actors in providing a conducive business environment to unlock the growth and competitiveness of SMEs.

Applications will be evaluated according to the criteria set out in Bureau decision 2518/2019.

1) Political vision and commitment

- The application demonstrates a future-oriented, entrepreneurial political vision, taking account of the key priorities of the **EU's strategic agenda in relation to the EU industrial and SME policy**¹.
- The application demonstrates the commitment of the territory to implement its political vision taking account of the **rapidly changing economic landscape and key megatrends**, e.g. the Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine, global supply chains, industrial transition, digitalization, sustainability, social and demographic trends
- The application is based on a realistic assessment of the territory's strengths and weaknesses (**SWOT analysis**) and its direct competences with respect to the ten SBA principles. The context and **unique starting point** of each applicant are taken into account by the members of the jury.
- The political vision demonstrates a **clear added value of the EER award for the territory**, including for its own policy-making.
- The territorial EER objectives are embedded in a **regional development and/or S3 smart specialisation strategy** and are guided by the overarching framework of the Sustainable Development Goals;

¹ SME Strategy (2020), New EU Industrial Strategy (2021), Net Zero Industry Act (2023), SME Relief Package (2023)

- The competent political authorities demonstrate a **strong and credible commitment** to implementing the EER strategy in the territory.
- 2) Multilevel governance, partnership and cooperation
- The EER strategy is prepared and implemented following a **multilevel governance** approach involving both the lower levels (municipalities etc.) and, where possible, the national level.
 - A broad range of **relevant actors** is involved in the design and implementation of the EER strategy, including economic and social partners, learning and research institutions, and civil society.
 - There is a **demonstrated capacity and will** to exchange good practices with other regions and to develop specific cooperation initiatives with other EER regions.
- 3) Delivery
- The strategy includes **concrete actions** that contribute to the implementation of entrepreneurship policies that fall within the territory's competences through the EER scheme and does not merely synthesise existing policies.
 - The implementation of EER actions follows the principles of **good governance** and includes effective **mechanisms for monitoring and follow-up**.
 - The use of relevant **indicators**, which will follow the progress of the implementation.
 - The application includes measures to ensure **optimal use of European Structural and Investment Funds** and other public funding.
 - The application demonstrates how the EER actions will be **sustainable beyond the EER year**.
 - The projected actions take the **social, environmental, innovative and durable growth** enhancing dimensions of SME policy into account whenever possible.
- 4) Communication
- The application includes an ambitious and convincing **communication plan** with specific actions at the **highest level** that are directed at all key target groups (including SMEs and other relevant actors).
 - The EER label will be used to publicise the territory's policy both within the territory and at EU level.
 - The planned communication actions will enhance the **visibility of the CoR and of the EU**.

The application form can be downloaded from the EER web page:

www.cor.europa.eu/eer.go

The deadline to submit applications is set at **20 March 2024**. Applications not received within this deadline are deemed not eligible.
