



European Committee  
of the Regions



# European Entrepreneurial Region Award 2024

*Doing business better in EU regions and cities*

## How to apply?

### What is the EER?

The European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award is an initiative of the Committee of the Regions identifying and rewarding EU regions and cities with outstanding, **future-oriented entrepreneurial strategies**, regardless of their size, wealth or specific competences. The territories with the most credible, visible, forward-looking and promising political strategy are granted the label “European Entrepreneurial Region” (EER) for a specific year.

The aim of this initiative is twofold:

- to contribute to the implementation at a local and regional level of the **policies on entrepreneurship and SMEs**;
- to demonstrate **optimal use of EU and other public funds** oriented towards the development of policies and programmes supporting entrepreneurs and SMEs within the region.

Through the EER initiative, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) contributes to the implementation of the **EU's strategic agenda in relation to the EU policies on industry, SMEs and innovation**<sup>1</sup>. The EER label is an opportunity for local and regional actors to demonstrate the crucial role SMEs and entrepreneurs play in steering the EU economy towards a green and digital transition and strengthening the resilience of the economy in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. By harnessing their potential to innovate and collaborate, the EER label enables EU regions to move further along the path of resilient, sustainable and digital growth.

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<sup>1</sup> SME Strategy (2020), New EU Industrial Strategy (2021), New European Innovation Agenda (2022), Net Zero Industry Act (2023), SME Relief Package (2023), etc.

The EER scheme follows a **multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder** approach by promoting regional EER ecosystems and communities, in which both regional and local actors are represented. The EER label gives policy makers and stakeholders a strong impetus to jointly develop strategies for accelerating the economic recovery.

Thirty nine European territories have been awarded the EER label so far:

- **2011:** Brandenburg (Germany), County Kerry (Ireland) and Murcia Region (Spain);
- **2012:** Catalonia (Spain), Helsinki-Uusimaa (Finland) and Trnava (Slovak Republic);
- **2013:** Nord-Pas de Calais (France), Southern Denmark and Styria (Austria);
- **2014:** Flanders (Belgium), Marche (Italy) and North Brabant (Netherlands);
- **2015:** Lisbon (Portugal), Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) and the Valencian Region (Spain);
- **2016:** Glasgow (United Kingdom), Lombardia (Italy) and Małopolska (Poland);
- **2017:** Extremadura (Spain), Lower Austria (Austria), Western Greece (Greece);
- **2018:** Central Macedonia (Greece), Ile-de-France (France) and Northern and Western Region (Ireland).
- **2019:** Asturias (Spain), Gelderland (Netherlands), Thessaly (Greece)
- **2020:** Gdansk and Pomorskie (Poland), Gothenburg (Sweden), Navarra (Spain)
- **2021/2022:** Castelo Branco (Portugal), Gabrovo (Bulgaria), Helsinki-Uusimaa (Finland), Madrid Region (Spain), Region Sud (France), Silesia (Poland)
- **2023:** Barcelona (Spain), Penela (Portugal), Western Pomerania (Poland)
- **2024:** Famalicao (Portugal), Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), South Moravia & Brno (Czech Republic)

The EER label has been set up by the **European Committee of the Regions** in partnership with the **European Commission** and is supported by the **European Parliament**, the **European Economic and Social Committee** and EU-level stakeholders such as **SME United**, **Eurochambres**, **EURADA** and **Social Economy Europe**.

### **How to apply for the EER label for the year 2025?**

The **EER 2025 call for applications** has been launched on 14 November 2023 at the European Commission's SME Assembly in Bilbao (Spain).

**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 fostering a conducive business environment and reducing burdens on SMEs.

Based on this, the EER jury may award up to three EER labels.

Applications for shall be submitted until **20 March 2024** and shall consist of the following items:

- an **application form**, including a fact sheet on the applicant territory, an outline of its political vision, a description of foreseen governance mechanism to ensure efficient implementation of the EER actions, as well as an action plan and a communication plan;
- a **declaration of political commitment** demonstrating that the territory's EER strategy is endorsed by its political leadership (e.g. the regional assembly, the regional government or other authorised political bodies).

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

[http:// cor.europa.eu/eer.go](http://cor.europa.eu/eer.go)

## Assessment criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria.

### 1) Political vision and commitment

- The application demonstrates a future-oriented political vision for implementing the key priorities of the **EU's strategic agenda in relation to the EU industrial and SME policy..**
- 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.
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- 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 strategy and/or smart specialisation strategy** and are guided by the overarching framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The competent political authorities demonstrate a **strong and credible commitment** to implementing the EER strategy in the territory.

### 2) Multi-level governance, partnership and cooperation

- The EER strategy is prepared and implemented following a **multi-level 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 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** to implement 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**.
- **Indicators** are foreseen against which the progress of the implementation can be measured.
- 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 EU and of the CoR**.

#### **Eligibility**

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. The label remains open both to territories that are already successful and to those that, while currently lagging behind, are committed to implementing the changes necessary to develop their entrepreneurial potential.

Regions are defined in the broadest sense, including communities, autonomous communities, departments, Länder, provinces, counties, metropolitan areas, 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 mainstreaming some or all SBA principles.

#### **Schedule**

- 14 November 2023: Launch of the EER 2025 call for applications.
- 20 March 2024: Deadline for submission of applications.
- 19-20 June 2024 EER 2025 award ceremony.

*Please submit your application for the EER 2025 label, together with a written declaration of political commitment, by email to: [eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu](mailto:eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu)*  
***Deadline for applications: Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at midnight***

**More information:** [www.cor.europa.eu/eer.go](http://www.cor.europa.eu/eer.go)  
[eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu](mailto:eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu)

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