



**European Committee
of the Regions**



European Entrepreneurial Region Award 2021-2022

Entrepreneurship for a sustainable recovery

Deadline for applications – 28 October 2020

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 EU SME Strategy, building on the relevant policy initiatives such as the Small Business Act (SBA), Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, Start-up and Scale-up Initiative and Strengthening Innovation in Europe's regions;
- 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.

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 **UEAPME**, **Eurochambres**, **EURADA** and **Social Economy Europe**.

Through the EER initiative, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) contributes to mainstreaming the SBA principles and related policy initiatives at regional and local level. The EER

label is an opportunity for local and regional actors to demonstrate the crucial role SMEs and entrepreneurs play in strengthening the resilience of the economy in a rapidly changing landscape marked by the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and global megatrends such as digitalisation and sustainability. By harnessing their potential to innovate and collaborate, the EER label enables EU regions to move further along the path of sustainable growth.

Thirty 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)

What happened to the original EER 2021 call for applications?

The **EER 2021 call for applications** has been launched on 26 November 2019 in Helsinki, with an initial deadline for applications until 31 March 2020, subsequently prolonged until 15 April 2020.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis and its unprecedented impact on local and regional economies, the EER jury unanimously decided not to assess the applications received in response to the call, but to re-open the EER 2021 call for applications, merging it into **a special edition of the EER Award covering the years 2021-2022**.

The decision of the jury is motivated by the fact that the Covid-19 crisis has fundamentally changed the economic reality and outlook for European SMEs, imposing a challenging need to re-draft various regional development plans and strategies that were in force prior to the crisis.

What are the main objectives of the EER 2021-2022 call for applications?

The Covid-19 crisis devastating impact on the European economy and society will require a long process of recovery and rebuilding. To reflect this, the lead theme adopted by the jury to accompany the launch of a special EER 2021-2022 call is **Entrepreneurship for a sustainable recovery**.

It will encourage EU regions and cities to develop strategies boosting entrepreneurship and SMEs, taking account of the long-term impact of the Covid-19 crisis in their territories.

Awarded applicants will hold the EER label for two years – 2021 and 2022, starting from the month following the EER award ceremony (expected in the first quarter of 2021). Given that there will be no separate EER 2022 call for applications, awarded applicants will be granted some flexibility with

regard to the timeframe for the implementation of their EER strategy and related communication activities throughout 2021 and 2022. Activities should cover at least 12 months.

Evaluation missions to awarded territories will be organised in the first half of 2023.

How many applications will be awarded as part of the EER 2021-2022 call?

The EER label is usually granted to up to three territories each year. Given the exceptional nature of the EER 2021-2022 call, the number of awarded EER labels may be up to 6 for this special edition, subject to decision of the EER jury.

How to apply for the EER 2021-2022 call for applications?

Applications shall be submitted until **28 October 2020** 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: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/european-entrepreneurial-region.aspx>

Assessment criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria.



Political vision and commitment

- The application demonstrates a future-oriented political vision for **implementing the EU SME Strategy in the territory**, focusing, where appropriate, on the principles of related policy initiatives, such as the Small Business Act (SBA), Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, the Green Action Plan for SMEs, Start-up and Scale-up Initiative and Strengthening Innovation in Europe's regions.
- 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. impact of the Covid-19 crisis, digitalisation, the new industrial revolution, the changing nature of work, demographic changes and the transition to a circular and low carbon economy.
- 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.

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**.

Delivery

- The strategy includes **concrete actions** to implement SME/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.

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 supporting SMEs and entrepreneurship.

Schedule

- 13 May 2020 Launch of the EER 2021-2022 call for applications.
- 28 October 2020 Deadline for submission of applications.
- February 2021 EER award ceremony.

Please submit your application for the EER 2021-2022 label, together with a written declaration of political commitment, by email to: eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu

Deadline for applications: 28 October 2020

More information: [https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/european-entrepreneurial-region.aspx - eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu](https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/european-entrepreneurial-region.aspx-eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu)
