

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PREPARATORY ACTION FOR
“INNOVATION FOR PLACE-BASED TRANSFORMATION”**

Contents

1. Subject of the call for Expression of Interest 1

2. Background 1

3. Preparatory Action activities..... 3

4. How to apply 6

5. Indicative timeline of the project..... 7

6. Additional information..... 7

7. Data protection 7

1. Subject of the call for Expression of Interest

The European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) is inviting public authorities¹ from local, regional and national territories all across EU Member States, Candidate Countries for accession to the EU and Horizon Europe Associated Countries to express their interest to participate leading their territorial ecosystems in the EU Preparatory Action on *“Innovation for Place-Based Transformation”* supported by the European Parliament.

2. Background

The European Union is committed to making the twin green and digital transition a success towards a more sustainable and just economy. The priorities of the new European Commission are focused on building a sustainable and competitive Europe by strengthening the internal market, promoting decarbonisation and competitiveness, fostering innovation, increasing security and reducing dependencies. Central to this agenda is the creation of a more circular and resilient economy, with research and innovation driving improvements in competitiveness, quality of life and climate adaptation. In line with this, the Commission intends to enhance the development of Europe’s regions via a reinforced Cohesion policy, aimed at promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion. This involves investments to

¹ Governmental sector such as national and regional ministries, agencies, councils, municipalities, etc.

uplift all regions, addressing disparities, and aligning with wider EU goals for a more connected and equitable Europe².

Europe recognises the need for transformative change in socio-technical systems, emphasising experimentation, participation, and directionality, as it seeks to harness regional strengths and drive innovation across all EU territories. The New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA) highlights the role of innovation in enabling such place-based transformations and bridging the innovation divide³.

In May 2022, the JRC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) launched a pilot initiative known as [Partnerships for Regional Innovation \(PRI\)](#) with 74 European territories participating on a voluntary basis. To support the territories involved in the pilot, the JRC released a Playbook explaining concepts and rationale of a transformative approach to innovation policy and providing 68 evidence-based tools for transformative innovation policies. A [Scientific Committee](#) of leading experts supported the JRC in drawing lessons from transformative innovation policy⁴.

The successful completion of the PRI Pilot initiative in May 2023 highlighted the growing political focus on transformative innovation policies as a driving force for socio-technical system transformation. The lessons learnt from the PRI Pilot initiative led to the creation of the ['Innovation for Place-Based Transformations. ACTIONbook, practices and tools'](#), a practical policy guide co-created with participating territories. The ACTIONbook promotes transformative innovation policies, explains the principles, and provides practical activities, tools and practices.

The approach of the JRC to place-based innovation emphasises the need to increase awareness and preparedness in European territories for implementing transformative innovation policies. Necessary measures involve developing new capacities⁵, fostering greater networking and multi-actor cooperation, strengthening policy toolboxes and governance mechanisms across levels of government and policy silos. The main feedback from pilot participants was their willingness to engage into systemic policy action and experimentation, paving the way to incorporate the concepts of the ACTIONbook into their operational practices and policymaking.

There is now a strong momentum to initiate a European Parliament-backed **EU Preparatory Action**. This initiative will contribute to the groundwork for the future development of systemic and transformative place-based innovation policies.

² Mission letter to Raffaele Fitto – Executive Vice-President-designate for Cohesion and Reforms [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/1bf50cbe-45a4-4dc5-9922-52c6c2d3959f_en?filename=Mission letter - FITTO.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/1bf50cbe-45a4-4dc5-9922-52c6c2d3959f_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20-%20FITTO.pdf)

³ New European Innovation Agenda - 2.3.2 Flagship on accelerating and strengthening innovation in European Innovation Ecosystems across the EU and addressing the innovation divide. [EUR-Lex - 52022DC0332 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ Schwaag Serger, S., Soete, L., Stierna, J. (2023), The Square: putting place-based innovation policy for sustainability at the centre of policymaking, https://place-based-innovation.ec.europa.eu/publications/square-putting-place-based-innovation-policy-sustainability-centre-policymaking_en

⁵ These include the capacity to engage, envision, orchestrate, design, implement and learn from policy experimentation and practice, as described in the “Innovation for Place-Based Transformations ACTIONbook”

3. Preparatory Action activities

Drawing on insights from policy practitioners and experts, this Preparatory Action on Innovation for Place-based Transformation is dedicated to empowering territories – including cities, regions and Member States in the European Union, Candidate Countries and Horizon Europe Associated countries – to support policy practitioners in building capacities, designing and implementing transformative approaches. It promotes partnerships in networks or multi-stakeholder settings to address urgent challenges, as described in New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA)⁶, by tackling them with a place-based approach. The challenge areas are:

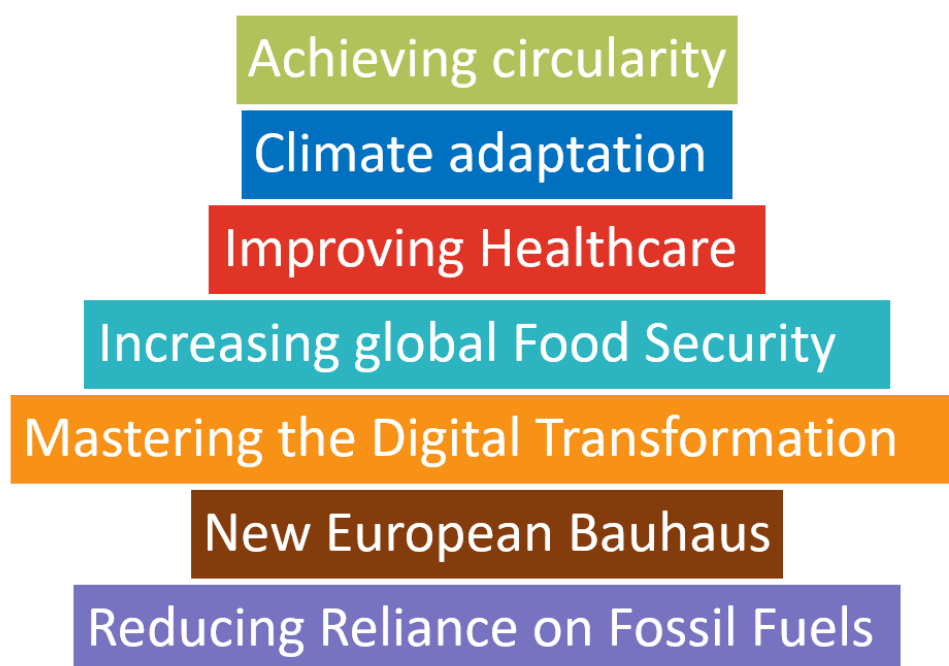


Figure 1 – Challenge areas to be addressed in the EU Preparatory Action

Applicants can select the activities they wish to participate in, choosing one or more activities among awareness raising, capacity building and/or experimentation journeys, based on their level of ambition and capacity for transformative innovation policy.

- a. **Awareness raising** activities aim to showcase evidence of place-based transformative innovation policies and how they address territorial challenges. These activities target a broad audience from all interested territories and use multimedia communication channels, including webinars. Participants interested in these activities will learn about the key concepts and elements of transformative innovation policy theory, as well as real-world examples that demonstrate how theory is applied in different places across Europe and beyond. No prior knowledge is required to join these awareness raising activities, which will offer reading suggestions and self-paced audio-visual content. The anticipated time commitment is approximately 10 hours over 18 months.

⁶ [The New European Innovation Agenda - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-116326.attachments)

- b. A comprehensive **capacity building** programme will be offered to interested applicants, preferably coming in teams of 3-4 persons per applicant territory, including from different public organisations (e.g. regional authority, regional development agency). It will feature a combination of online and in-person training modules, consisting of 8 foundational and 3 advanced modules. Applicants wishing to enrol in the capacity building programme will acquire an in-depth and actionable understanding of place-based and systemic transformative innovation policymaking, delving into real-world case studies and will benefit from exchanges with their peers. The learner-driven programme will be tailored to equip participants with the tools necessary to reach a level of proficiency enabling them to act as agents of transformative innovation and foster collaborative learning. To apply, a territory has to identify a challenge they would like to work on and provide a letter of commitment signed by the relevant administrative level supporting the applicant(s) participation in the programme. Participants are expected to allocate time to follow the modules and for self-directed work. Each module will require 7-8 hours of individual work.
- c. The Preparatory Action **Experimentation journeys** are designed to generate new evidence for transformative innovation policy practice of common European interest. They will facilitate the creation of a shared space for policy learning where participants can advance on their transformative objectives with the help of peers and experts. The evidence of what works is harvested, and new knowledge is synthesised for future reference. Territories willing and able to experiment with transformative innovation policy approaches, that are already addressing a specific challenge in the areas indicated in Figure 1, will engage into collaboration with peer territories for policy experimentation and operationalisation of transformative innovation tools.

The aim is to stimulate the design and implementation transformative innovation policy action by leveraging JRC in-house expertise, securing the support of experts specialised in various relevant areas. Seven Experimentation Journeys will be implemented, one per challenge as per Figure 1. Each experimentation journey will be crafted among 4-6 selected territories, based on their expression of interest and the advancements of their work with the challenge.

Successful applicants participating in the Experimentation Journeys will be provided with:

- Guidance and facilitation to implement their policy initiative from selected facilitators and subject matter experts;
- Support from JRC staff, ensuring expertise is shared across relevant fields;
- A series of online and hybrid workshops and policy-labs, designed to support territories and facilitate inter-territorial collaboration.

There are pre-requisites to take part in an experimentation journey, namely:

- A clear focus on a territorial challenge;
- Ability to illustrate already existing transformative practice;
- Existence of vertical and horizontal coordination of policies;
- A map of stakeholders that can contribute to address such challenge.

- A letter of political support signed by the competent authority

Participants are expected to work on their challenge and commit to a concrete policy output (e.g. a mission, new policy instrument, a transformative innovation monitoring dashboard and etc.). There is an expectation that the experimentation journey is blended with the daily work of the participants, requiring an average weekly commitment of 1-2 hours.

Important! Please note that **we expect that applicants to the Preparatory Action experimentation journeys are already addressing the selected challenges** and the participation in this project will help with the solutions and implementation.

Table 1 – Summary of Preparatory Action Participation Tracks

Track	Eligibility criteria	Commitment for participation	Expected outcomes
Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone can subscribe to take part in the awareness raising track. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected time dedication: approximately 10 hours throughout a period of 18 months. 	Subscribers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get access to online resources such as of podcasts, audio-visual material and webinars; • Gain insights into transformative innovation policies and their application, including examples from various territories • Learn from the results of the Preparatory Action on innovation for Place-based transformation.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Territories from all European Union, Candidate Countries to the EU and Horizon Europe Associated Countries are eligible to participate provided that applicants; ○ Have identified and can describe their territorial challenge; ○ Have a mandate to participate. 	Participants are expected to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in circa 60 hours of training (online and in person), comprising of classes, workshop, exercises and participatory activities, structured in 11 modules across 18 months; • Each module will require 7-8 hours of individual work. 	Participants will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in capacity building modules consisting of 8 foundational and 3 advanced modules; • Develop further knowledge, skills, and experience to initiate and sustain transformative innovation policies in their local setting; • Exchange with peers, and take part in practical assignments and in collaborative, challenge-based tasks.
Experimentation	Territories from all European Union, Candidate countries to the EU and Horizon Europe Associated Countries are eligible to participate provided that applicants:	Participants are expected to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be committed to work on selected territorial challenge in an inter-territorial set-up; • Be available to participate in peer-reviews; 	Participants will gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for their experimentation journey by a dedicated facilitator and a thematic expert, to deliver a concrete policy action;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already working on a transformative policy implementation addressing the selected territorial challenge; • Have sufficient knowledge, capacities and experience in policy experimentation (self-assessment during the application phase); • Provide a letter of political support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in at least 6 online events, 1 onsite event, together with other experimentation journey participants; • Dedicate about 1-2 hour weekly for 18 months in addition to ongoing challenge related activities in their territory (May vary depending on setup of each Experimentation Journey). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from JRC offering in-house knowledge and activating policy interest by European Commission services; • Opportunity to work together with other participating territories, exploring and experimenting with potential solutions for the similar challenges.
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4. How to apply

Apart from the specific eligibility criteria listed in the table above, lead applicants must be public sector authorities⁷ from EU Member States, Candidate Countries for accession to the EU and Horizon Europe Associated Countries, must submit their application via this [link](#). Provided that the lead applicant is a public sector authority, applications can comprise different public and private entities.

Applications to Capacity Building must be supported by a letter of commitment signed by the relevant administrative level that supports the applicant(s) participation in the programme (i.e. Director-General/Director/Head of Service or Office, etc.).

Applications to Experimentation Journeys must be submitted with letter of political support signed by the competent authority (i.e. Secretary of State, Regional Minister, Mayor, etc.). In the case that the applicant(s) would like to be part of both capacity building and experimentation activities, only the letter of political support it's required.

The above-mentioned letters shall be completed in English. A template for both types of letters is available in the application page.

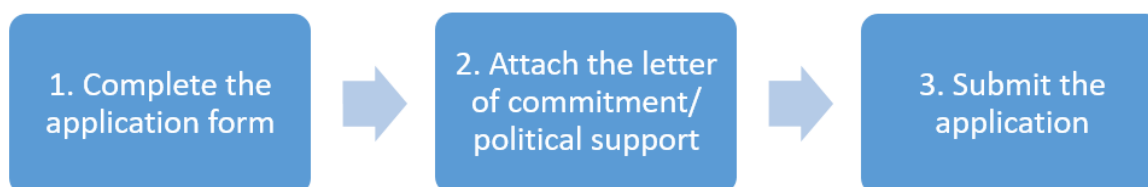
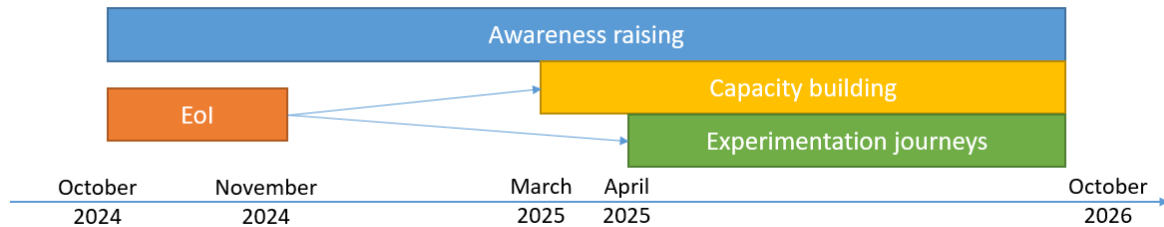


Figure 2 – Application flow chart

⁷ By public sector it is meant: public administration from all levels of government, including public companies controlled or with a State guarantee.

The same territory - represented in any form within the same political authority - can only participate in one experimentation journey. We therefore encourage territories applying to the experimentation journeys to ensure that a single coordinated application is submitted.

5. Indicative timeline of the project



- 8 October 2024: Call for Expression of Interest opens
- 8 October 2024: Awareness raising events start
- 22 October 2024: Online Info Session supporting the application phase. After the Info Session Q&A document will be published
- 22 November 2024: Call for expression of interest closes
- March 2025: Start of Capacity building activities
- April 2025: Start of Experimentation journeys
- October 2026: End of activities

6. Additional information

- The announcement of the successful applicants is expected in January 2025.
- Applicants are encouraged to indicate if they would be willing to host Preparatory Action events in their territory.

7. Data protection

Any personal data under the Preparatory Action will be processed under the responsibility of the data controller of the Joint Research Centre for the purpose of managing the present Preparatory Action, subject to [Regulation 2018/1725](#).

By accepting participation in any of the forms of the Preparatory Action (i.e. awareness raising, capacity building and experimentation journeys), all participants agree with this [privacy statement](#).