



# European Entrepreneurial Region (EER)

Evaluation and stock-taking

2011-2019

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

The European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) scheme is arriving towards the end of its second 5-year extension period. In 2019 the last three regions will be awarded with the EER label for the year 2020. The continuation of the scheme and the organization of a new call for applications for the EER 2021 will require a new decision of the CoR Bureau.

The aim of this note is to **take stock of the past nine editions of the EER and to evaluate its key achievements** as part of the EER review exercise that will lead to the elaboration of a proposal for the Bureau in autumn 2019.

## 2. EER scheme objectives and evaluation criteria

The CoR Bureau decided in 2011 to develop the EER label focusing in particular on the action plan forming part of the revised Small Business Act, the Single Market Act, deployment of the EU 2020 Strategy and lastly, its links with the future cohesion policy.

Taking inspiration from other existing European award schemes (overview in Appendix IV) addressed to a regional and local level, the EER managed to establish its **own inter-institutional position and branding**. The construction of the EER scheme enabled the CoR to build closer ties and synergies with the above-mentioned labels thanks to a reinforced cooperation with the General Directorates managing them<sup>1</sup>.

Based on the objectives set out by the Bureau and as well as the inherent features of the EER label, a **set of criteria and indicators were elaborated for the purpose of the evaluation process**. The criteria proposed demonstrate the relevance of the EER scheme to the CoR as well as to the EU regions. They also demonstrate the impact of the label on the policy making at regional level and on the stimulating the cooperation among the EU regions.

The results of the evaluation process are presented further and are based on:

- Analysis of statistical data of the EER applications since 2011,
- Analysis of data from the CoR opinions, studies, meeting reports, including also EER evaluation reports from the Regions,
- Conclusions of a survey among the EER Regions<sup>2</sup> carried out specifically for the purpose of this evaluation, which achieved over 70% response rate.

	<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Result/impact indicators</b>
1.	<b>Level of participation of the EU regions in the EER scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and structure of applications submitted since the EER launch and level of geographical coverage of the EU</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> The EER has particularly close ties with the EEPA, which includes the membership of a CoR representative in the EEPA jury and relations with the EEPA managing unit in DG GROW.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2 presents detailed conclusions of the EER survey

2.	Level of contribution to the <b>realising of the CoR's political priorities</b> , in particular the priorities of the mandate 2015-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of involvement of the CoR political leadership in the EER activities,</li> <li>• Number of the opinions that benefited in the preparatory phase from the EER network and that refer to the EER,</li> <li>• Quality of the input from the EER regions to the preparatory phase of CoR opinions,</li> </ul>
3.	Level of contribution to the <b>development of modern entrepreneurship policies at regional and local level in the spirit of multi-level governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on the development of effective policies supporting entrepreneurship and SMEs at local and regional level,</li> <li>• Regions' perception of the contribution of the EER scheme to improving of its entrepreneurial environment and related policies</li> </ul>
4.	Ability to <b>strengthen the ties between the EU regions and to improving the cooperation among them</b> , boosting exchange of good practices and peer learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of EER regions actively participating in Interreg Europe projects</li> <li>• Regions' perception of the contribution of the EER scheme to strengthening of the cooperation, networking and exchange of good practices with other European regions</li> </ul>
5.	Impact on <b>raising the CoR's inter-institutional profile</b> in this policy area, enabling to become a strategic partner of the European Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of involvement of the European Commission in the works of the EER jury and EER activities such as events, evaluation missions, etc.</li> <li>• Number of partner organizations actively involved in the EER jury and activities,</li> </ul>

### 3. EER scheme evaluation

#### Level of participation of the EU regions in the EER scheme

Since the EER launch in 2011, a total of **140 applications were received from 23 EU Member States**, including 101 from different regions.

The network of regions and cities awarded with the EER label is currently composed of **30 territories from 16 EU Member States**.

The key statistical data of the EER application in the years 2011-2019 are presented in Appendix 1. Conclusions drawn from this analysis demonstrate that the EER scheme:

- continuously attracts on average **13-14 applicants per year**, with a slight downward trend since 2015 (average of 11.5 applications per year),
- provides a good geographical coverage of the EU, with an observed dominance of bigger countries, such as Spain, Poland, Italy, France - which make more than 50% of all applications,

- tends to attract in particular larger regions at NUTS1/NUTS2 level; nearly 8% of NUTS1 regions and over 17% of NUTS2 regions in the EU have already applied for an EER label at least once;
- tends to attract to some extent also NUTS3 territories but, given the large number of these entities, only 3% of NUTS3 regions in the EU have already applied for an EER label,
- fails to attract cities and municipalities which account for not more than 5% of all received applications,
- attracts to an equal extent applications from more developed territories as well as less developed ones, and this proportion is also true for the awarded territories,
- Manages to attract recurring applications which account for over 25% of all applications received;

### **Contribution to the realising of the CoR's political priorities**

The EER scheme has helped the CoR to pursue its political priorities for 2015-2020: encouraging a bottom-up approach to boosting entrepreneurial spirit in EU's regions and cities, enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs by improving access to finance and cutting red tape.

The EER scheme has benefited from a **stable commitment of the CoR political leadership** throughout the years. The EER President and Vice President participated to the EER activities: jury meetings, thematic events and evaluation missions to EER Regions. In the current mandate, the EER jury meetings as of 2015 were every year chaired by the CoR President and/or Vice-President. Both also attended the EER annual conferences and the external activities of the EER – evaluation missions and numerous events at the initiative of the EER regions.

The EER scheme provided a unique opportunity for the CoR to reach out to the wealth of knowledge and experience of the EER network and use this as a valuable input to the preparation of the **CoR opinions**. This was realized in particular through the involvement of the EER Regions in CoR's thematic events, surveys and studies.

Starting from the launch of the EER in 2011, at least **7 CoR opinions have benefited from the input of the EER scheme** at the preparation phase and/or contain references to the EER in the text:

- The Future of the COSME programme beyond 2020: regional and local perspective (rapporteur: Robert Sorin Negoita (RO/PES), 2018.
- Boosting start-ups and scale-ups in Europe: regional and local perspective (rapporteur: Tadeusz Truskolaski (PL/EA), 2017
- Smart Regulation for SMEs (rapporteur: Christian Buchmann (AT/EPP), 2017
- Green Action Plan for SMEs (rapporteur: Satu Tietari (FI/ALDE)
- The role of local and regional authorities in promoting growth and boosting job creation (rapporteur: Marialuisa Coppola (IT/EPP), 2013
- Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (rapporteur: Pawel Adamowicz (PL/EPP), 2013
- Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) (rapporteur: Witold Krochmal (PL/EA), 2012

The quality of the contribution of the EER scheme to the preparatory phase of the above opinions is difficult to measure. However, in several cases such contribution managed to influence the political messages formulated in the opinion.

Examples:

- In the run-up to the adoption of the **Opinion on Boosting start-ups and scale-ups in Europe: regional and local perspective** (rapporteur: Tadeusz Truskolaski (PL/EA), a thematic seminar was organised, involving several expert-level speakers from the EER regions, aiming to encourage regions and cities to develop proactive strategies aimed at start-up and scale-up support and to explore how local and regional authorities could contribute to the implementation of the Start-up and Scale-up initiative.
- The **Opinion on the The Future of the COSME programme beyond 2020** (rapporteur: Robert Sorin Negoita (RO/PES), has largely benefited from the input provided by the EER annual meeting held in June 2017. The conference bringing together expert-level speakers from the EER regions, EU institutions, CoR members and other stakeholders, helped to identify good practices in implementing COSME-funded actions in regions and cities, highlighted remaining challenges and bottlenecks at regional or local level and generated ideas on how the next edition of COSME or a successor programme could best contribute to strengthening regional and local business environments.

**Contribution to the development of modern entrepreneurship policies at regional and local level in the spirit of multi-level governance**

The results of the survey among the EER regions demonstrate an overall positive assessment of the EER label and its impact on shaping policies at regional level. 78% of respondents found that the EER label contributed towards improving the entrepreneurial environment in their territory, helped to mobilize local and regional stakeholders for implementation of the entrepreneurial strategy and had an impact on the implementation of new initiatives that otherwise would not have been implemented in the territory. In addition, 72% of respondents found that the EER had improved the communication of their work within the region and to the outside world.

The EER provided a discussion platform for policy makers at different levels, notably through its **thematic and horizontal activities** held every year in Brussels and in the EER regions. These activities enabled peer learning, exchange of good practices and policy discussions with the EU institutions on specific aspects of the SME and entrepreneurship policies.

**Appendix 3** contains a list of thematic activities undertaken by the CoR since 2015.

Example

The EER annual conference held in Brussels in January 2018 has gathered policy makers, practitioners from EU regions and researchers to discuss the question of **strengthening the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems** and making them more resilient. The event was followed by a tailored masterclass for local and regional policy makers and moderated by European Commission on how to design entrepreneurial ecosystems, mapping its strengths, weaknesses and identify key elements that impact the ecosystem's future development. The

conclusions of the conference showed that there was a strong case for connecting European entrepreneurial ecosystems to make them more resilient, more flexible and able to respond to the challenges of the future. The topic will be followed-up by the European Commission through a call for tender involving a more in-depth analysis of selected EER regions.

Studies conducted by the CoR between 2012 and 2016 found that that the **EER label had significantly impacted the policy of the EER regions in terms of effectiveness of the policy implementation and putting SME policy at the core of the political agenda of regional decision makers**. The EER also helped to foster a culture of innovation in the regions, facilitated a change in stakeholder behaviour, better collaboration between the research sector and enterprises, clearly enhancing the innovative potential of the regions.

Another study commissioned in 2017 on "How to improve regional and local governance of SME and entrepreneurship policy" found that EER regions and cities have a high degree of ownership regarding SME and entrepreneurship policies and that the EER application process and the setting up of an EER community brought about **lasting changes in relationships with stakeholders and between government levels** in the majority of the investigated EER regions.

Example:

The application of the Extremadura Region (Spain) for the EER label submitted in 2015 (when it was only shortlisted) and 2016 (when it was awarded with the label for the year 2017) has led to the adoption of fully collaborative and inclusive governance model for entrepreneurship policies in the Region based on the Integral Resource Map for Enterprise and Employment, comprising a wide network of stakeholders and on online platform for entrepreneurs from the Region. While it would be excessive to conclude that the EER triggered the transition process of the Region to become more entrepreneurial, it needs to be noted that **the EER has become a vehicle that enabled the Region to obtain a greater leverage of its actions inside the Region and at European level**. Actions implemented by the Region in the EER year, such as *Foro Emprende* and the *EER closing conference* contributed to a durable improvement of the entrepreneurial environment in the Region.

**Strengthening the ties between the EU regions and improving the cooperation among EU regions**

One of the specific objectives of the EER network after having reached a critical mass of member regions was to strengthen the connections between their entrepreneurial ecosystems. The initiatives undertaken in the recent years by the EER regions are an excellent proof that systematic joint work and exchange of good practices by the EU regions can help to address common challenges.

According to the results of the EER survey, the EER enabled 78% of respondents to launch new cooperation projects with other European regions and to exchange of good practices with other European regions. In addition, for 89% respondents the EER thematic activities provided good networking opportunities with other regions and policy makers at different levels.

Examples

- **iEER project**, which aims to create favourable conditions for young entrepreneurship at regional level, was submitted to the first call of Interreg Europe by a consortium of eight EER and two non-

EER regions led by Helsinki-Uusimaa (EER 2012). The project in 2018 has entered an implementation phase with 10 Regional Action Plans signed by the participating Regions.

- **STOB Regions**, focusing on business transfer and, including four EER and 5 non-EER regions led by Brandenburg (EER 2011), has been successful in the second call of Interreg Europe in 2016. The project is currently in its extensive learning and exchange of experiences phase which will lead to the elaboration of a common action plan.
- The European Commission has in spring 2018 launched a **call for tender aiming at fostering collaboration through interconnecting selected entrepreneurial ecosystems across the EU** in order to enable more innovation driven start-ups and SMEs to scale across Europe and globally. The contract worth of 1.3 mln EUR has been signed in November 2018 will be implemented through mapping, analyzing and interlinking of the EER labelled regions. The project will be implemented over the next 18 months with a possibility for a prolongation for another 12 months. The consortium that has been selected is composed of several consulting companies led by Technopolis Group. The project will include in-depth analysis of 10 former EER regions (Flanders, Lombardy, Marche, North Brabant, Catalonia, Western Greece, Northern and Western region Ireland, Central Macedonia, Ile de France, Lower Austria)

### **Raising the institutional profile of the CoR and cooperation with social partners**

The EER scheme over the last years has vitally contributed to the **raising the visibility to the CoR** in the field of SME and entrepreneurship policy and helped to establish lasting relationships with the EU institutions and other stakeholders.

The CoR has built a **strategic partnership on the EER with the European Commission's DG GROW**, based on the CoR's reciprocal involvement in the jury of the European Enterprise Promotion Award (EEPA) managed by the Commission. This fruitful cooperation is reflected in a consistent participation of DG GROW Director level in EER jury activities and other events and systematic cooperation on the Commissions' policy initiatives in the area of entrepreneurship and SMEs.

The EER scheme received a **direct support** from Elżbieta Bieńkowska, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs<sup>3</sup>.

The Commission's call for tender (see examples above) to be implemented as of 2019 is the most recent sign of the Commission's strong commitment towards the EER.

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<sup>3</sup> Video message from **Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska** for the opening of the conference "Five Years of the European Entrepreneurial Region experience", 22 June 2015: *Promoting an entrepreneurial culture, making public administrations more business-friendly, and simplifying EU funding rules are part of our commitment to boost the development of SMEs. We are convinced that **the European Entrepreneurial Region scheme makes a significant contribution to implementing the principles of the Small Business Act for Europe at regional and local level. This is why the European Commission has supported the EER initiative from the very beginning.** The EER winners have proven that regions can develop and implement cutting-edge entrepreneurial strategies to deliver growth and jobs. They are pioneers of entrepreneurship support at regional and local level. [...] I hope that in the future, we should intensify our dialogue with the EER regions in order to learn from their experience. I believe that **practitioners from the EER network could contribute a valuable bottom-up perspective, for example, to the meetings of the network of SME envoys.***

The EER jury has a genuine inter-institutional representation, given that its members include representatives of the European Parliament (MEP Eva Maydell), the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG GROW) and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Within the framework of the EER scheme, the CoR has also set up an intense working relationship with **associations representing social partners – Eurochambres, Social Economy Europe and UEAPME**, who are all active members of the EER jury and the preparatory task force. The cooperation extends to the organization of joint events and exchange of speakers.

#### **4. Conclusions and options for revision of the EER scheme**

The experience of nearly 10 years of the EER scheme shows clearly that the initiative has to a large extent fulfilled its objectives, generating positive results both for the CoR and for the EU Regions.

The results of the evaluation, supplemented by a constructive feedback obtained from the EER regions, provide a **strong basis for a continuation of the EER scheme** and for its further development.

Given that the last revision of the EER scheme took place in 2015 and in the view of the experiences gathered in recent years, it is recommended to undertake another revision in 2019. The main objective is to maintain the attractiveness of the EER scheme as a single award for future-oriented entrepreneurial strategy at subnational level.

Based on the conclusions from the evaluation and feedback gathered during the process, a revised EER regulation could address the following issues:

- **Rethinking of the current framework for the EER scheme, linking it with the latest policy developments;**

The EER scheme has been based on policy tools that have not been updated for a very long time (e.g. Small Business Act) or that are no longer actual (e.g. Europe 2020 Strategy).

While the SBA principles remain valid, a revision of the EER regulation and application process should also take account of the recent policy developments that offer a broader way of looking at the economic development and growth of European regions and address new emerging policy challenges, such as technological change, digitisation, sustainability and industrial modernisation.

Besides, the existing informal network of EER regions could be exploited better by reinforcing content-specific cooperation between the regions, i.e by setting up thematic groups taking into account new policy areas identified as crucial for boosting the competitiveness of SMEs.

- **Reflecting on the introducing of innovative elements to the EER scheme to increase the attractiveness of the scheme**



The introduction of innovative elements to the EER regulation and application process seems necessary to mitigate the effects of the shrinking pool of applicants and to improve the reach-out to new groups of applicants.

This could be achieved in many different ways, for instance:

- - Addressing cities and municipalities by introducing a special category in the EER and/or developing a specific label for entrepreneurial cities,
- introducing permanent or rotating thematic categories for the EER label allowing to select category winners, etc.
- introducing financial incentives for the EER awarded territories aimed at assisting the awarded regions with the implementation of their EER strategy<sup>4</sup>,

A more in-depth analysis of each of these options needs to be provided.

- **Addressing the ways of further strengthening the cooperation between European regions and cities**

Increasing interregional cooperation is a key element in globalised economies<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, the new generation of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes will be subject to a substantial reshuffle in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework, leading possibly to the creation of new cooperation strands - interregional cooperation on innovation and the incorporation of cooperation with countries other than EU Member States.

A revision of the EER could consider expanding the scheme into becoming a truly pan-European award scheme, encouraging networking and connecting of the European entrepreneurial ecosystems building on their Smart specialisation strategies.

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<sup>4</sup> This option would be budget neutral for the CoR, the funding would have to be provided from other sources, e.g. the European Commission

– <sup>5</sup> European Commissions' communication on *Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth*, COM(2017) 376 final

## 5. Appendices

### I. EER 2011-2019 applications: key statistical data

The data analysis has been carried out with respect to the number of applications per year, per country and per level in the NUTS classification<sup>6</sup>.

The results obtained are very variable according to the countries, which is the proof that factors such as demography, the subdivision of the territory, the level of decentralization, the level of economic development as well as the political context and the priorities of the country are key factors when trying to explain why, or why not, a Region had (or could) apply for the EER.

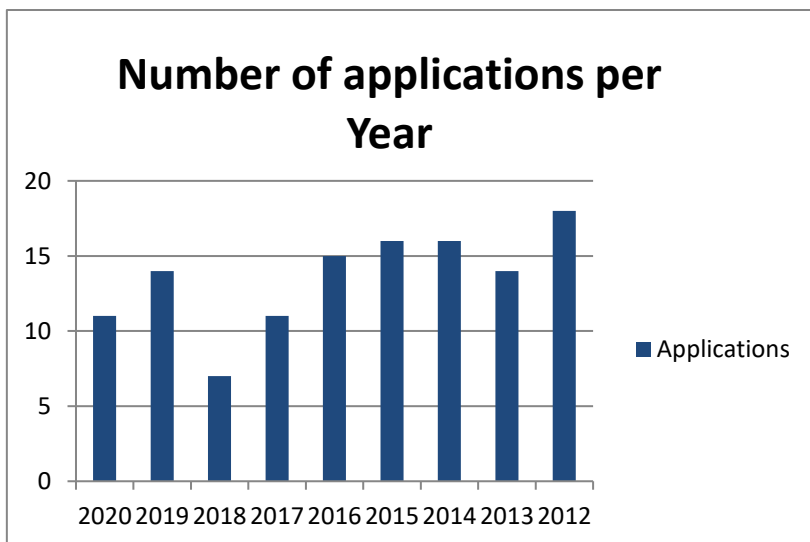
#### **Applications per year, country and NUTS level**

Since 2011 and the first edition of the EER, we have received **140 applications** from 23 EU countries, including 101 from different regions (39 recurrent applications).

**The number of applications decreased since 2015, with an average of 16.4 applications per year until 2015, and 11.5 per year after 2015.** The lowest number of applications is in 2018, with only 7 applications received; however this it is not a permanent decline since in the next years the number of applications rose again.

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<sup>6</sup> The NUTS classification (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU. According to Eurostat they can be defined as: NUTS 1: major socio-economic regions, NUTS 2: basic regions for the application of regional policies, NUTS 3: small regions for specific diagnoses

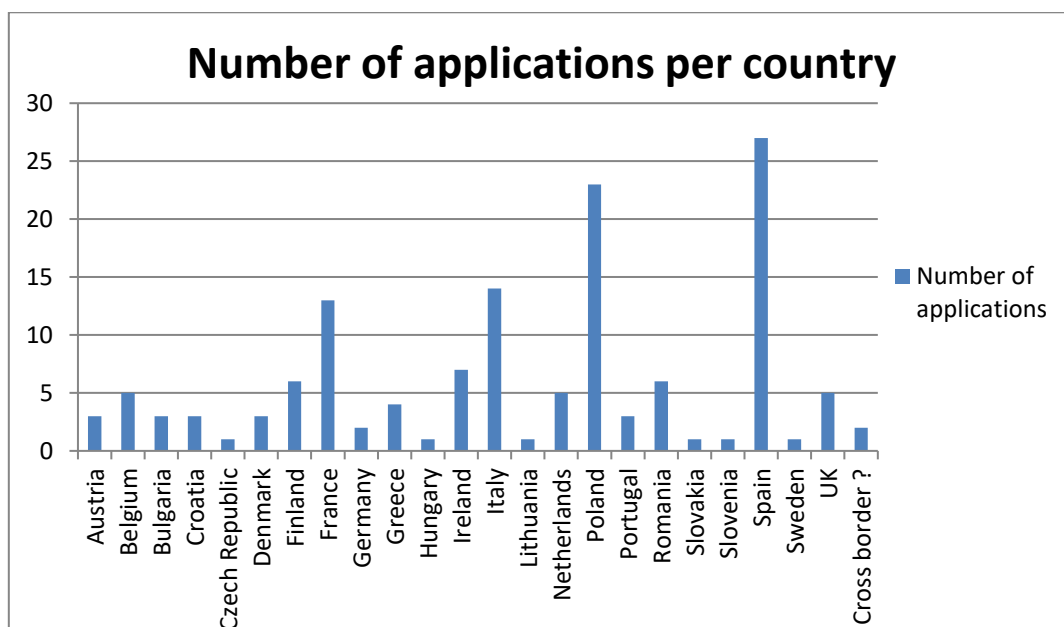


Among the total of 140 applications, we can identify countries which apply the most to the EER:

- **Spain (27 applications),**
- **Poland (23),**
- Italy (14)
- France (13),

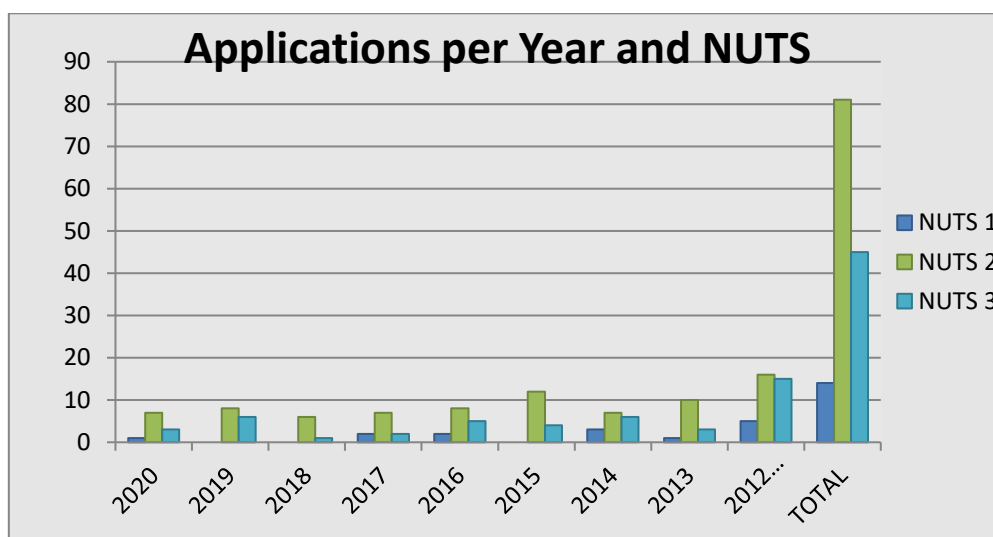
We can also identify countries have applied only once or not applied at all:

- One application: Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden, Slovakia, Slovenia
- No application: Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta



The level in NUTS classification also matters for EER applications. While it is not possible to distinguish a clear trend, it is certain that the NUTS 2 territories are the most represented and always predominant for any year, and that NUTS 3 are subject to the most variability.

	NUTS 1	NUTS 2	NUTS 3	Total
Total number of applications received	14	81	45	140
Average per year	1.4	8.2	4.5	14.1



If we removed the recurrent applications (i.e. multiple applications from the same region over the year), then:

- 8% of all EU NUTS 1 regions have applied for the EER
- 17.5 % of all EU NUTS 2 regions have applied for the EER
- 3% of all EU NUTS 3 regions have applied for the EER

	NUTS 1	NUTS 2	NUTS 3	Total
Total of different applications (all countries) received over the year	8	49	45	102
Total number of NUTS across EU	103	279	1 331	1 713

In proportion, NUTS 2 territories are definitely more represented in the EER, **more than 1 in 6 NUTS2 territories have already applied for the EER in the past**. NUTS 3 territories, even if more numerous than NUTS 1 in absolute numbers, are in proportion the least represented group.

Among NUTS 3 territories, a special mention should be done for cities. Since 2011, we received **only 8 applications from cities/municipalities**: Oulu (FI), Lisbon (PT), Paris (FR), Glasgow (UK), Cork (IR) Gabrovo (BG), Barcelona (ES), Bilbao (ES) and Gothenburg (SV) which represent less than 5% of all applications.

In most countries, the predominance of one type of NUTS in the applications is observed:

- NUTS 1: Belgium, Germany
- NUTS 2: Austria, Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain,
- NUTS 3: Bulgarian, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal (Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia)
- 2 types of NUTS : Ireland (NUTS 2 and 3), The Netherlands (NUTS 1 and 2), UK (NUTS 1 and 3)

## II. Results of a survey among the EER Regions

### RESPONSE RATE – 71% (17 answers of 24)

Glasgow City (UK)  
Western Greece (EL)  
Styria (AT)  
Noord Brabant (NL)  
Małopolska (PL)  
Central Macedonia (EL)  
Marche Region (IT)  
Catalonia (ES)  
Murcia Region (ES)  
Northern and Western Region  
(IE)  
Extremadura (ES)  
Helsinki-Uusimaa (FI)  
Flanders (BE)  
Lisbon (PT)  
South Denmark (DK)  
Northern Ireland (UK)  
Brandenburg (DE)

#### 1. To what extent did the EER label and membership in the EER network contribute to improving the entrepreneurial environment in your region/city?

- Promoting the entrepreneurial spirit in your region/city

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	5	27,8%
Yes, to some extent	9	50,0%
No, not very much	2	11,1%
I don't know	2	11,1%

78% of respondents found that the EER label and membership in the EER network contributed positively towards improving the entrepreneurial environment in their territory.

- Mobilising regional and local stakeholders for implementation of the entrepreneurial strategy in your region/city

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	6	33,3%
Yes, to some extent	8	44,4%
No, not very much	3	16,7%
I don't know	1	5,6%

78% of respondents found that it helped to some extent to mobilize local and regional stakeholders for implementation of the entrepreneurial strategy in their territory.

- Launching new projects and initiatives that otherwise would not have been implemented in your region/city

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	3	16,7%
Yes, to some extent	11	61,1%
No, not very much	3	16,7%
I don't know	1	5,6%

78% of respondents found that the EER label had an impact on the implementation of new initiatives that otherwise would not have been implemented in the territory.

- Better communicating about your work inside the region/city and to the outside world

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	6	33,3%
Yes, to some extent	7	38,9%
No, not very much	4	22,2%
I don't know	1	5,6%

72% of respondents found that the EER had an impact on improving the communication within the region and to the outside world.

## **2. To what extent did the EER label and membership of the EER network contribute to building bridges between your region/city and other European regions?**

- Launching new cooperation projects and joint initiatives with other European regions

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	7	38,9%
Yes, to some extent	7	38,9%
No, not very much	3	16,7%
I don't know		

The EER enabled 78% of respondents to launch new cooperation projects with other European regions.

- Networking at the thematic activities organised by the CoR

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	7	38,9%
Yes, to some extent	9	50,0%

No, not very much	2	11,1%
I don't know		0,0%

89% respondents found that the EER provided a good networking opportunities.

- Peer learning and exchange of good practices with other European regions

	Nr	%
Yes, very much	7	38,9%
Yes, to some extent	7	38,9%
No, not very much	3	16,7%
I don't know	1	5,6%

The EER enabled 78% of respondents to exchange of good practices with other European regions.

### 3. Would your region/city have ideas on how to improve the EER scheme in general and how to stimulate cooperation between the network members?

\*The Committee of the Regions should... ... (please check max. 2 actions that you mostly agree/do not agree with)

- Modernise the guiding framework of the EER to adapt it to the new challenges for SME policies, such as global value chains and digitalisation, etc.

Yes	12	66,7%
No	1	

- Link the EER award with a financial incentive aimed at assisting the awarded regions with the implementation of their EER strategy

Yes	11	61,1%
No	3	

- Consider introducing permanent thematic categories for the EER label allowing to select category winners

Yes	7	38,9%
No	3	16,7%

- Consider introducing a single special award in addition to three standard awards, for efforts to address a specific thematic challenge agreed each year (e.g. "Regions leading in the digital transformation of industry")



Yes	5	27,8%
No	4	22,2%

- Invest more efforts into networking of the EER regions and stimulating the cooperation between them.

Yes	17	94,4%
No	0	

#### 4. Do you have other suggestions on how to improve the EER scheme?

##### List of ideas / suggestions:

- *We consider that it would be very useful to strengthen awareness, exchange of best practices and cooperation between the network members in those fields considered to be new key factors for boosting the competitiveness of SMEs: digital transformation, circular economy, etc. And it is also necessary to find the most efficient ways to incorporate these thematic initiatives into SMEs. (Catalonia, EER 2012)*
- *In our opinion CoR- in collaboration with EU Commission- should be responsible for allocation of grants/call for proposals reserved to EER network members on entrepreneurial issues and with the conditions of involving not EER members -as observing partners- to exploit the EER message.  
CoR should also adopt the scheme developed within INTERREG-EUROPE iEER project for boosting the entrepreneurial spirit of ecosystems in favour of young entrepreneurship.(Marché, EER 2014)*
- *More practical cooperation between EER regions. The CoR (EER Secretary) could consider launching thematic groups (eg. innovative entrepreneurship, business transfer etc.) and EER regions could choose some areas that are good at and/or want to develop in their regions. It could help to manage the cooperation and make it more efficient. (Malopolska, EER 2016)*
- *Joint calendar of important international events organised in/by the EER regions, moderated by the CoR (Malopolska, EER 2016)*
- *The awarding with the EER Label had in Styria in particular the following effects:*
  1. *Regional economic and innovation strategies were able to be communicated much broader - inward and outward.*
  2. *The EER label continued and increased serving the good inter-regional cooperation, delivered a clear feedback and showed confirmation of the content and targeted orientation of the regional economic policy efforts in Styria.*
  3. *The establishment of relationships and the transfer of knowhow with - or to other European regions has been strongly promoted.***(Styria, EER 2013)**
- *...it would also be desirable for the common and future EER work, to break down - in a reinforced form - regional specific and economic policy relevant topics on a bilateral or multilateral level. This means that region-specific and content-related economic topics (eg cluster policy themes, competence centers, fostering regional entrepreneurship, innovative*

*start-up initiatives, regional innovation policy issues or other issues), should be treated and processed intensively bilaterally or multilaterally in order to achieve a sustainable output or outcome that can be of use to all involved or concerned EER regions. This is the reason and the chance that additional financing should be donated and used financing annual working plans or specific content-related debates. In any case, the current form of the (more or less generally held) ex - ante or ex - post visits could be revised in terms of content and it would be necessary to focus more on the content and topic-specific cooperations within and between the European entrepreneurial regions.*

**(Styria, EER 2013)**

- *Establishment of continuous cooperation in more focused way. Annual program of actions and events. Thematic seminars organized in different regions. Bilateral cooperation between EER regions( pairings) for 1-2 years or multilateral cooperation groups between EER regions for 2 years in more specific policy matters, not addressed by Interreg programs. As an output could be specific policy recommendations or common guidance in some pilot actions.*

**(Western Greece, EER 2017)**

- *The award was also a tremendous networking opportunity opening up doors across Europe. Two areas could be improved:*
  1. *Much of the formal networking seems to concentrate around ieer. Can this be renewed or reinvigorated with new members*
  2. *I would suggest not diluting the EER award by having thematic awards but invest more time and resources (political & marketing) in promoting the prestigious EER and what it means. This could be done with member states* **(Northern and Western Region, Ireland, EER 2018)**
- *In general terms in our opinion efforts should be put in interlinking the EER regions. For example there could be an annual meeting (celebrated each year in a different region) to show good practices on SME policies and projects. An online tool could be developed to help these relationships (catalogue of good practices, who is who, search for partners for EU funded projects, etc.). A specific funding programme could also be dedicated to EER regions for exchanging practices (similar to the COSME programme launched this year). Old EER regions could give tutorship to new EER regions in order to help them in the implementation of their workplan. An EER assembly or permanent EER committee could be created and some old EER regions could also participate in the selection of new EER. We also believe that it is interesting that the CoR takes part in some activities that are developing EER regions during their awarded year* **(Extremadura, Spain, EER 2017)**
- *The label enabled the Uusimaa region to coordinate the activities and promote entrepreneurship while implementing our EER year in 2012. After the EER year, the most visible benefit of the EER label is for the communication and promotion of the region internationally* **(Helsinki-Uusimaa, EER 2012)**
- *There is great knowledge and experience in the EER regions that could be capitalised and shared with all European regions. It will be great if EER secretariat will be able to acquire resource and build a network of EER expert platform. This could be done by combing its work with other existing EU forces, such as ERRIN, Interreg Europe Policy Learning platform and so on or working with the OECD and the EC to build a regional entrepreneurial self-assessment indicator. (eg. Heinnovate (<https://heinnovate.eu/en>) or Better policy instrument for social economy (<http://www.betterentrepreneurship.eu/>)) Such an idea has been one of the issues that iEER regions would like to push forward from the experience learned in the past 2 and half years* **(Helsinki-Uusimaa, EER 2012)**

- *The EER award should be complemented with a financial incentive aimed at a specific project promoted by the municipality in partnership with the local stakeholders, as indicated in the initial application - list of activities. In the efforts into networking of the EER regions and stimulating the cooperation between them, we think that should be organized an annual event hosted by one of the EER Cities with the support of the CoR (Lisbon, EER 2015)*
- *To establish a permanent platform, such as the iEER Handbook and growth grid, using the findings of the iEER project to set up a platform/ database in which the descriptions of the regional initiatives can be shared and a benchmarking tool be integrated. In this way, regions will be able to see their weaknesses or opportunities in order to focus their efforts in future initiatives (South Denmark, EER 2014)*
- *Mentorship initiatives between regions in specific themes, funded by the EU. Opportunity for an EER conference to be hosted by the region, jointly funded with EU and the region (Northern Ireland, EER 2016)*
- *Membership in EER Network improved the internationalisation of the entrepreneurial environment and in particular of the start-up and innovation eco-system. Thanks to EER Membership, Brandenburg participates in the Interreg Europe Projects "iEER" and "Smart-up BSR". Brandenburg suggests to improve the support to develop projects within the programs Interreg Europe and Interreg B and to add access to the program Horizon 2020. In addition to the EER Regions' Meeting during the EWCR in fall, Brandenburg suggests to install an additional regions' meeting in spring (altering the hosting region). Brandenburg offers to host one in spring 2019. (Brandenburg, EER 2011)*

### III. List of EER key thematic events 2015-2019

2015:

- Workshop "Cutting red tape for enterprises. Regional good practices in administrative simplification" co-organised by the CoR and the Region of Umbria on 2 March 2015;
- Conference "Boosting the entrepreneurial spirit: pioneering regions and cities in Europe" in Brussels on 9 February 2015;
- Seminar on "Better Regulation for SMEs" held at the CoR on 22 April 2015.
- Conference "Five years of the European Entrepreneurial Region experience" on 22 June 2015
- Open Days workshop "European Entrepreneurial Regions (EER) promoting inclusive entrepreneurship" on 15 October 2015.
- Seminar "Putting SME internationalisation into practice – what tools are available to regions and cities?" co-organised by the CoR and Eurochambres on 9 December 2015;

2016:

- Seminar on "Better Regulation for SMEs" in Brussels on 21 April 2016
- Conference "Local government supporting entrepreneurship" co-organised by the CoR, the European Commission and the City of Lisbon on 2 May 2016 in Lisbon
- Annual conference of the EER regions in Brussels on 29 June 2016
- Open Days workshop "Promoting young entrepreneurship at regional and local level", in Brussels on 12 October 2016

2017:

- Seminar on "Boosting start-ups and scale-ups in Europe's regions and cities" in Brussels on 28 February 2017,
- Workshop on "The Future of Industry in Europe" in Brussels on 2 May 2017
- Annual conference of the EER on the "Future of the COSME programme", in Brussels on 29 June 2017
- EWRC workshop "Supporting business transfers in Europe's regions and cities" in Brussels on 10 October 2017
- International conference on "Entrepreneurship and Development in Western Greece" on 13-15 December 2017,

2018:

- Annual conference of the EER "Building the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the future" in Brussels on 24 January 2018
- EWRC workshop "Improving access to markets for SMEs", in Brussels on 11 October 2018

2019 (1<sup>st</sup> half):

- Annual conference of the EER "Are EU SME policies fit for new challenges" in Brussels on 26 March 2019
- International EER conference "Empowering Sustainability" in the Province of Gelderland, Netherlands, 22-23 May 2019

#### List of surveys

- Survey on "Selected measures of the ABRplus initiative" (April 2014);
- Survey on "Making life easier for SMEs" (April 2016).

#### List of studies

- Study on "Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA) and entrepreneurship policies at local and regional level" completed in 2012
- Study on "Fostering innovation at regional level: lessons from the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) experience" completed in 2015
- Study "How to improve regional and local governance of SME and entrepreneurship policy" completed in 2017
- Study "The future of SME policies in the EU" completed in 2019

#### IV. EU-level award schemes addressing local/regional level

Name	Institution in charge	Description	Established	Award ceremony
EEPA (European Enterprise Promotion Awards)	DG GROW	The European Enterprise Promotion Awards reward projects that promote entrepreneurship and small business at the national, regional and local level	2006	<u>SME Assembly</u> , which is part of <u>European SME Week</u> .
Regio Stars	DG REGIO	RegioStars are Europe's awards for the most innovative, regional projects. Every year, the European Commission awards those EU-funded projects, which demonstrate excellence and new approaches in regional development in five thematic categories (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, urban development and a topic of the year)	2008	European Week of Regions and Cities
StartUP Europe Awards	DG CONNECT	StartUp Europe Awards, is an open innovation initiative of the European Commission's Startup Europe initiative and the Finnova Foundation. It is an award scheme for startups at local, regional, national and European level that fosters the open innovation and the collaboration between the different actors of the European ecosystem.	2017	StartUp Europe Summit

#### Other recently established EU-level award schemes:

- **European Capital for Innovation (iCapital)** award established in 2014 to award European cities that are best able to demonstrate its ability to harness innovation to improve the lives of its citizens.
- **European Digital Skills Awards** established in 2016 to put the spotlight on projects which contribute to the development of digital skills in Europe,
- **European Capitals of Smart Tourism** established in 2018 to recognize outstanding achievements by European cities as tourism destinations in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation and cultural heritage and creativity
- **European Sustainability Award**, established in 2018 to champion inspiring initiatives and cases aiming to achieve and implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- **European Transformative Action Award**, established in 2017 to reward ongoing or concluded Transformative Actions to achieve the socio-cultural, socio-economic and technological transformation of societies.