



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE INTERREGIONAL INNOVATION INVESTMENT (I3) INSTRUMENT

Insights for Action Groups, Policymakers, and EUSALP stakeholders



What is the I3 Instrument ?

The I3 Instrument is part of DG Regio's support measures to facilitate cohesion policy through an innovative mix of policy linkages (via Smart Specialisation Strategies), value chains implementation (multi sectors linked to key EU strategic priorities – Clean Industrial Deal) investment support (notably to SMEs) and support to a wide range of stakeholders (policy makers, clusters, technology platforms etc).

Details on the web page provided by EISMEA. [Check out here.](#)

1. Purpose – Two strands

The current call focuses on two Strands

- **Strand 1** - Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared or complementary smart specialisation areas - inclusive partnerships with less developed regions (I3-2025-INV1)
- **Strand 2a** - Financial and advisory support for investments in interregional innovation projects in shared or complementary smart specialisation areas, including in less developed regions (I3-2025-INV2a)

Deadline for submissions **the 13th of November 2025.**

2. Funding model

The I3 Instrument reimburses partners 70% of their project costs, whilst the SME FSTP (financial support to third parties) or cascade funding element is reimbursed at 100%. **At least 70%** of the total direct eligible costs must be allocated to investments in companies, with a focus on SMEs. Furthermore at least 50% of the overall budget must be spent in Regions classified as less developed regions – [check out](#)

The project must bring together a consortium with a:

- minimum **3- 5 partners from different Member States** and regional ecosystems – varies between strands.
- **provide a portfolio of close to market** projects (TRL 6-9)
- Up to **10M€ per proposal.**

3. Key value chains

The 2025 Call seeks applications in support of three strategic European value chains :

- **Green transition** : decarbonation of energy intensive industry, circularity, smart transport, smart cities ...
- **Digital transition** : support digital transition of SMEs, take-up of latest AI technologies, digital up skilling and also support **digital transition of public authorities and E-Government** ...
- **Smart manufacturing** : technologies reducing waste and energy use, deployment of AI, HPC, 3D printing and robotic technology solutions

Proposals must clearly describe the progress from innovation towards commercialisation and upscaling.

4. Opportunity for strategic territorial positioning

The I3 Instrument focus on cohesion priorities and the need to allocate at least 50% of the funding to less developed regions can help territories within EUSALP pursue new cooperation actions and help them connect with other Regions.

5. Some inspiration : Previous project examples

Over 50 projects already funded since the I3 Instrument has been launched. Examples include:

- [Biomedical focus](#) led by partners from Austria;
- [Hydrogen Valley](#) led by partners from Slovenia and another [Hydrogen](#) project led by partners is Italy;
- [Nature Based/Carbon Farming](#) and [MicroMobility](#) both led by partners from Italy
- [Battery Valley](#) led by partners from Italy
- [Artificial Intelligence](#) and Rare Materials led by partners from Germany

Final insight:

An innovative policy instrument designed to foster interregional cooperation, tackle territorial development challenges, strengthen key EUSALP value chains, and support SME investment.

To explore the instrument further and connect with potential partners, DG REGIO has launched the [I3 Support Facility](#).

The EUSALP Secretariat, its Policy Advisors are available to provide further support to stakeholders who are interested in learning more about the I3 Instrument.

*In the meantime, register or listen to the recording of the **I3 Instrument Info Day** - 11th of June 2025. [Register Here](#)*