



VIDA

value-added innovation
in food chains

VIDA Recommendations for policymakers



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VIDA Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGIONAL OR LOCAL POLICYMAKERS

- 1) The regional/national government should find new tools to support SMEs to **overcome innovation barriers**, by funding **feasibility studies** and **mentoring services for the development of SME's business plan**, making **connections between SMEs and launching customers**, and/or other important **activities necessary** for innovative SMEs to launch on the market their new disruptive/incremental products or services (TRL 7-9). In fact, entering markets for pilot application could represent a challenge, mainly for SMEs.
- 2) The regional/national government should foster and reinforce **cascade funding**¹ opportunities to support SMEs to address regional challenges and develop resource-efficient innovation solutions: **relatively small grants** and **short/medium term projects** (maximum 12 months) are easier for SMEs to manage, especially for startups, which might lack expertise, specific skills and resources to be involved in more onerous projects. The results obtained from **INNOSUP** projects shall prove the efficiency and effectiveness of such funding mechanism.
- 3) The SMEs have been most impacted by the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which shed light on the fragility of SMEs, and by the effects of the consequent economic crisis, that are likely to be perceived both in the short and in the long run. In such context, it is of utmost importance that the regional/national governments support the SMEs through funding facilities (e.g., grants), For instance, the EU Recovery and Resilience Facilities offer regional/national governments the opportunity to support SMEs and **foster innovative solutions** to deliver the **twin climate and digital transition**.
- 4) The regional/national government should recognize the **role of Clusters and Cluster Networks in relation to cascade funding** as the intermediaries who can directly support and encourage SMEs in cross-sectoral and transnational collaboration when staging and developing their innovative solutions.
- 5) The regional/national government should **support the cluster work in their region** considering their important role in supporting innovation and the cooperation among the industry sector, research centers/universities and institutions.

¹ Cascade funding, or Financial Support To Third-Parties (FSTP), is defined as “funding by the beneficiary of (one or more) recipients that are not party to the GA”. Horizon2020 Model Grant Agreement, art. 15.1. https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

- 6) The regional/national government should **simplify the bureaucratic procedures** for the application, evaluation and funding processes and make them beneficiaries-friendly. For instance, by shortening the time from the call for proposal until the start of the projects.
- 7) The regional/national government should **foster cooperation and synergy between industry and research** (i.e., funding collaborative projects) and **facilitate projects for sharing research laboratories** between the various universities or research centers to which companies can access, although making sure that SMEs are in the driver's seat by supplying funding only to SMEs.
- 8) The calls and tenders promoted by the regional/national government should **take into account and incentivize: Green Public Procurement (GPP), certifications CENT and European, national standards**, and the application of the **LCA** (Life Cycle Assessment) and/or **LCSA** (Life Cycle and Sustainability Assessment²) among SMEs.
- 9) The regional/national government should **focus support measures** (e.g., funding) **on cross-sectoral initiatives** relating to the key industries of the region. The aim of this cross-sectoral collaboration should be to increase resource efficiency, which contributes to achieving the Green Deal and fosters the creation of new value chains.
- 10) The regional/national government should **support innovation and collaboration rather than regionalization**: allow cross-region/cross-border consortia if this enhances the innovation capacity of companies. The results of the innovative solution and its benefits will automatically spillover onto the region.
- 11) Create a tool at regional/national level, which works as a **database** where to register industry needs classified by sectors and the existing technological offer (i.e., e-catalogue). It would allow to locate more easily challenges by business sectors in order to find technological solutions encouraging business participation.

² Life cycle sustainability assessment (LCSA) refers to the evaluation of all environmental, social and economic negative impacts and benefits in decision-making processes towards more sustainable products throughout their life cycle.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN POLICYMAKERS

- 1) European policymakers should **endorse and strengthen cascade funding systems**, as already provided for in Horizon 2020 work programme, supporting and incentivizing companies, SMEs especially, to develop their small incremental or disruptive innovation. In fact, short/medium term projects (max 12 months) are easier for SMEs to manage and they yield concrete results in a reasonable short amount of time.
- 2) European policymakers should **recognize the role of clusters and cluster networks** in cascade funding³ and reinforce their involvement in the emission of vouchers (such as **INNOSUP** projects).
- 3) Call and tenders promoted by European authorities should **support projects for SME in cooperation with large companies** (funding for large companies could be limited to 50%). The ratio is twofold: first of all, the SME is more likely to be deeply and effectively integrated in the value chain; moreover, such collaboration is key to an effective innovation along the whole value chain.
- 4) Calls and tenders promoted by European authorities **shall facilitate the development of new value chains** (i.e., the *VIDA NEXUS*: Food, Energy, Water and KET), which stem from cross-fertilization, as they could lead to the development of disruptive innovative solutions at a global level.
- 5) Calls and tenders promoted by European authorities **shall not include an obligation to cross-border partnership at an early stage**: it is important to destinate funds to SMEs without the obligation to build an international partnership, as they might not possess such a strong outreach capacity.
- 6) The SMEs have been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which shed light on their fragility, and by the effects of the consequent economic crisis, that are likely to be perceived both in the short and in the long run. In the context of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facilities, European policymakers should **support the involvement of regional authorities** in the design and implementation phase of the **National Recovery and Resilience Plans** (NRRP) in order to ensure a **bottom-up approach** while increasing the **competitiveness of SMEs** and the potential of regional industrial ecosystem.

³ Cascade funding, or Financial Support To Third-Parties (FSTP), is defined as “funding by the beneficiary of (one or more) recipients that are not party to the GA”. Horizon2020 Model Grant Agreement, art. 15.1. https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

- 7) European policymakers should **simplify the bureaucratic procedures** for the application, evaluation and funding processes and make them more beneficiaries-friendly.
- 8) European policymakers should **envisage services to support follow-up activities** for sustaining the momentum of *ESCPs - European Strategic Cluster Partnerships*⁴ (e.g., connections between SMEs and launching customers; internationalisation follow-up, such as COSME cluster go international; innovation follow-up for increasing TRL levels, such as INNOSUP, etc.).
- 9) European policymakers should **foster and facilitate industrial symbiosis** among companies in order to reduce and reuse waste, water and energy consumption.

⁴ The European Strategic Cluster Partnerships have been launched by the European Commission through financial incentives (under COSME programme) to encourage clusters from Europe to intensify collaboration across regions and sectors. <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/eu-cluster-partnerships>



clúster aragonés de
alimentación



wateralliance

