



Interreg Europe action plan

Produced by each region, the **action plan** is a document providing details on **how** the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be implemented in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within that region. The minimum information to be provided per action includes the way the action is linked to the project, the nature of the activities to be implemented, their timeframe, the stakeholders involved, the costs and funding sources. If the same policy instrument is addressed by several partners, only one action plan is required. The action plan should also include actions that may have already been initiated in phase 1.

Action Plan for the region Hauts-de-France



Part I – General information

Project: RECORD

Partner organisation(s) concerned:

- Regional Council of Hauts-de-France
- I-Trans

Country: France

NUTS2 region: Hauts-de-France

Contact person: Amélie ESPEROU

Email address: amelie.esperou@i-trans.org



Phone number: +33 7 85 62 73 37

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed: Operational Programme European Regional Development Funds 2014-2020 region Nord Pas de Calais Axe 1 IP 3d

- The Operational Programme European Regional Development Funds 2014-2020 is going to be abounded
- The new Operational Programme should have started in 2021 but there is generally one year's delay
- Due to the sanitary crisis, the current Operational Programme is extended until 2023 with additional funds

⇒ Regarding these 3 reasons, we will influence the OP 2014-2020 as the end of phase 2 is planned in May 2022.

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:

The objective of the OP ERDF Axis1 is to invest in Nord-Pas-de-Calais in R&I activities related to the RIS3. The aim is to improve the capacity to develop R&I excellence and promote centers of competence by promoting investment in R&I and developing links and synergies between businesses, research and development centres and the higher education sector (see the “triple helix” concept). The IP 3d is focussed on private R&D investments and the companies' capacity to innovate with public research centres. The project's intervention logic is: in NPDC, the main industry is the rail sector. The rail sector is characterized by a few big companies and hundreds of SME which face big challenges due to a fierce international competition. This means that they need to innovate to offer added value products and services to be able to face competitors. The issue is that they have difficulties to invest more and better in R&I. To increase their level of investments, they can use instruments put at their disposal by the regional council or BPI France (the French public bank of investments dedicated to innovation and growth). Also, to increase the quality of their investments, they can get support from clusters (financed partially and supported by the region) that will help them



build joint R&D projects namely with academia. Nevertheless, the SME investments are under expectation. Therefore, the policy instrument should be redesigned to solve this issue.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

Name of the action: FOSTERING RELATIONS BETWEEN SMES AND START-UPS

1. **Relevance to the project** *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

FACTS IN HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

In the Hauts-de-France Region, large groups, SMEs and start-ups have a strong tendency to work on their own and focus on their innovation projects independently.

Large groups manage their projects alone and use ERDF funds directly: they have sufficient internal human resources to manage the projects.

SMEs are supported by BPI funds but rarely directly by Europe as this requires dedicated human resources.

Start-ups, whose main objective is to launch innovative projects, tend to act alone: in the railway sector, their business is mainly carried out by incubators but not often by SMEs or groups.

As the target of our project is SMEs, it is especially on this type of companies that we are going to focus.

INSPIRATION FOR THIS ACTION

During the study visit in Sweden, in the region of Västmanland, we discovered 3 very interesting concepts that can enable us to strengthen exchanges between groups and start-ups in the Hauts-de-France region:

- Things

It is a very inspiring accelerator with a strong animation for start-ups created in 2014. Magnus MELANDER, co-founder, comes from large groups and is an investor. He has a good knowledge of the existing issues on both sides. He has therefore been able to take advantage of his relationships with key accounts to integrate them into the THINGS services. 40 to 50 large companies are thus involved to accompany the 500 start-ups. The interest of the large is their need to understand the digital transition. They pay fees of 20,000€ per year to be part of the THINGS board. There are several solutions for the start-ups: they can be resident, or they



only pay fees to be part of the community. THINGS has the right to choose the start-ups, but beyond 20 employees they are no longer in the target group. THINGS does not take part in start-ups.

- *Ignite Sweden*

The idea is to market the projects of Swedish start-ups to large groups. IGNITE is a national instrument with very few staff but with very strong partners' commitment. IGNITE has set up an interesting process to identify the needs of large groups (4-5 years ahead), in order to organise qualified meetings with start-ups (which have been coached for these meetings) that can meet their challenges. These meetings are B to B meetings.

- *Synerleap*

SYNERLEAP is the accelerator of the company ABB group. Their ambition is to significantly increase the relationships between ABB and start-ups.

They are currently implementing a 1,200 m² building (25 start-ups) for this purpose. The concept is easy: the selected start-ups (which may have an interest in ABB's business) pay 600€ for a 6 months-acceleration. During these 6 months, the start-ups can contact anyone from ABB. SYNERLEAP staff accompanies the start-ups in these exchanges. As a result, the behaviour of ABB's counterparties does not seek to cheat the start-ups.

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?*)

To obtain these models in the coming years, the primary objective is to encourage meetings between innovation players (which is our role as facilitators).

To do this, we can rely on events or tools which already exist within the network in order to apply the methods of animation resulting from the good practices mentioned.

- **« Interest clubs » of i-Trans (throughout the year)**

i-Trans has set up 7 "interest clubs" on the following themes:

- Factory 4.0
- Electronic Powertrain
- Capture, transfer and storage of energy
- New materials
- IoT for maintenance
- Autonomous vehicle infrastructure
- Acoustics and Vibration



An “interest club” is an open forum of reflection and sharing experiences for the i-Trans cluster members (large groups, SMEs, start-ups, academics), focused on a strategic innovation theme.

These clubs are exclusively composed of members of the cluster with the desire to develop innovation projects on these themes.

Within his club, each pilot will be responsible for bringing together SMEs and start-ups in order to encourage them to set up collaborative projects.

- **B to B meetings of the AIF, Association of Railway Industries (15th of October 2020 at the Serre Numérique in Valenciennes)**

Organised each year by the Association, a new dimension will be added inspired by THINGS. Specific areas will be dedicated to meetings between large companies, SMEs and start-ups.

- **Rail Industry Meetings organized by i-Trans (9th and 10th of December 2020 at la Cité des Congrès in Valenciennes)**

Organised every 2 years by i-Trans and the company ABE, this event has a double objective.

On one hand, the objective is to organize conferences and workshops dedicated to innovation.

On the other hand, each participating entity has a booth, being thus able to have business meetings with future customers and partners.

In the context of the RECORD project, a specific neutral booth will be available for start-ups.

It will enable SMEs and groups to discover their existence and their innovations. A rapprochement between the two worlds will then be facilitated.

- **During the first semester of 2021, a specific event will be organized and managed by i-Trans. The objective will be to bring together groups, SMEs and start-ups on the theme of innovation, in collaboration with AIF, Transalley, the Hauts-de-France Region (large dissemination through the networks of each partner). The animation methodology will be specific to have an influential role on each company**

This new methodology is inspired by Ignite Sweden and Synerleap. The methodology will be to establish a network of "start-ups" competences (extended to all regional innovation actors and even national ones later), set up according to their skills needs and problems to be solved.



Another aspect to be developed is the involvement of large regional companies in the support of start-ups and innovative SMEs, such as the Swedish company ABB, which has its own incubator.

Indeed, in the Hauts de France region, incubators, and support for companies in the field of innovation are only provided by the public authorities, with a very low involvement of large regional companies in the management or financing of these tools.

3. **Stakeholders involved** *(please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role)*

- AIF
- i-Trans
- Transalley
- Region Hauts-de-France

Roles of all: mobilisation of companies, lobbying, specific meetings within the events. All this ending with the specific meeting in the first half of 2021.

4. **Timeframe** *(please specify the timing envisaged for action 1)*

From September 2020 to June 2021

5. **Costs** *(please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 1)*

Regarding the actions already planned: they are already funded, there is just an additional application of new animation methods.

For the additional meeting: 2,000€

6. **Funding sources** *(please describe how action 1 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

Each stakeholder being concerned by the theme and this action being part of a collective approach, participation of the 4 stakeholders up to 500€.



ACTION 2

Name of the action: PROMOTING EUROPEAN R&D PROJECTS

1. **Relevance to the project** *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

FACTS IN HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

In the Hauts-de-France Region, the number of SMEs in the railway sector participating to European calls is too low. Indeed, too few of them are aware of funding opportunities, especially Shift2Rail.

INSPIRATION FOR THIS ACTION

During the study visit in Slovakia, in the region of Kosice, we were able to discover a bogie which was financed by a Shift2Rail project. Similarly, through the majority of the study visits, the exchanges with the different stakeholders of the project confirmed us that the knowledge and use of European funds was much more increased than in our Region (and this, being a start-up, a SME or an academic).

In the Hauts-de-France Region, we are well-structured to provide good support in setting up European projects (notably with the "RERI" of HDFID, the increasingly involvement of centres of excellence and competitiveness clusters) but we don't have enough positive results or success stories unlike the other regions of the visited countries.

Indeed, we felt the companies much more involved in European projects: each region can evoke success stories, but it was not enough the case for us.

2. **Nature of the action** *(please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented)*

There is a real need to enhance and promote the existing funding opportunities in Europe.

We have to encourage our companies to think Europe and to have a Europe reflex.

In this context, several actions will be implemented:

- **i-Trans will launch a specific campaign on Europe, which will include a series of information webinars, dissemination of technical papers and workshops, in order to raise awareness on the topic**

The objective of this campaign is to increase the use of European funds in our network, especially among the companies which are members of the cluster.



The objective also includes making companies aware of the usefulness of Europe.

Targets:

- i-Trans members (companies, Research institutes, universities, etc.)
- i-Trans non-members (prospects). It will thus cover the rest of the railway companies in the railway industry
- i-Trans team

Organization:

- Regularly scheduled publications of new contents about Europe (webinars, factsheets, feedbacks, etc.)
- Creation of new Europe-specific communications (types of "flash Europe" like in the i-Trans letters, a Europe tab on the website, etc.).
- Individual meetings with interested and interesting companies to sound out their European potential
- Structuring our collaboration with relevant organisations which accompany companies towards Europe (RERI/HDFID, PC programmes, thematic networks, ...)
- Involvement of the i-Trans team in order to help them to think Europe too and to better detect potential opportunities

Content of external actions:

➤ **Publications**

To create the dynamic of the campaign, it is proposed to publish regular and announced publications of new content (webinars, practical information sheets, feedback, etc.).

These publications will take place between the end of September and the end of January on a weekly basis.

To graphically mark the specific publications related to this campaign, the communication service proposes to adapt a specific logo "i-Trans Europe" on the model of "i-Trans International" with a specific picture and a specific the logo, as well as specific icons explaining the services, with a small explanatory text.

➤ **Specific communications**

At the same time, new European communication materials will be launched.

The option of a specific Europe letter seems too complicated to implement because there is a risk of being of a lower quality than other existing Europe letters (in particular RERI).

A specific letter "launching the Europe campaign" will be sent to members at the end of September.

The i-Trans monthly monitoring newsletter will add content on Europe from the October edition. In addition, a contact will be initiated with the RERI managers to study the possibilities of a EU research dedicated to i-Trans themes and which could then be relayed by the monitoring service.

The i-Trans monthly newsletter will continue its current model, i.e. provide information on the cluster's current actions, including those related to Europe.

In addition, the RERI has realized a "Guide accompagnement HDF projets européens" which we will use with our contact details on the last page as well as on our website & communications.



➤ **Individual meetings**

The latest proposal is the organisation of individual interviews with companies to sound out their European potential.

To improve the targets, we will use answers to annual survey of the cluster as there are questions about Europe.

At the end of the information webinars about Europe, we will send out a questionnaire to quickly identify interested companies.

In this objective, an interview guide will be prepared internally.

➤ **List of publications**

WEBINAR: Basics of European projects

TECHNICAL PAPER: The different programmes and fundings from Europe

WEBINAR: Green Deal – New fundings in sustainable development

WEBINAR: New opportunities for R&I projects, particularly with the launch of Horizon Europe

WEBINAR: i-Trans topics in European programmes

TECHNICAL PAPER: Freight issues in European policies, programmes & projects

TECHNICAL PAPER: Railway issues in European policies, programmes & projects

TECHNICAL PAPER: Automotive issues in European policies, programmes & projects

FEEDBACK FROM EXPERIENCE: Participation in the FENIX project of a family SME -Transport Bogaert

FEEDBACK FROM EXPERIENCE: Member Multitel speaking about its European projects



FEEDBACK FROM EXPERIENCE: i-Trans & i-Fret in their projects

PLAYFUL GAME: Quizz about Europe

Content of internal actions:

➤ **Structuring our partnerships**

The main partnership is with the RERI, ("Réseau Européen Recherche & Innovation"), based in the Hauts-de-France region, which is managed by the Regional Council and operated by HDFID.

A scoping meeting took place on the 20th of August. We can already make these elements possible:

- Partnerships on 2 webinars dealing with European fundings (29th of September and 15th of October)
- Availability of the brochure "Guide to HDF support for European projects" with i-Trans' contact details
- Systematic participation in RERI meetings. A physical common meeting may even be organised on the i-Trans and Transalley site
- Use of searches for competences, partners and projects thanks to the EEN tool
- Co-organisation of a European event for our members with the RERI
- Cooperation on European monitoring (specifically transport monitoring) and EEN monitoring with our monitoring service
- Assistance in writing partners' research to be published on the EEN platform

➤ **Involvement of the i-Trans team**

To durably increase the part of European funding in our indicators, it is necessary to mobilise the whole i-Trans team on these funds & operations in order to improve the detection of projects or skills for European projects.

The set-ups are complex and require speaking English and knowing well the arguments of European programmes; it is therefore logical to have specialists in the team.

For i-Trans in particular, it is important to improve the detection of projects that are eligible for funding or skills that can be searched.

Thus, the team is invited to read specific publications as well as to participate in our webinars.

Similarly, a regular Europe topic point will be added in the team's meetings.

- **[A conference about the Shift2Rail projects and the future of Shift2Rail within Horizon Europe will be organised on the Rail Industry Meetings event \(9th and 10th of December at "La Cité des Congrès" in Valenciennes\)](#)**

In order to inform the participants about the future of the projects that will be financed in the railway sector on a European scale, the Director of the JU Shift2Rail, Carlo BORGHINI, will speak during a specific conference in front of the regional railway ecosystem.



Particularly, he will draw up an assessment of Shift2Rail under Horizon 2020 and will present the main lines of "Transforming Europe's Rail System" to come under Horizon Europe.

- **"Immediate boarding for Horizon Europe", during the Innovation Week, on the 1st of December in Lille**

The Europe i-Trans team will assist the whole day and will present the results of the RECORD project as well as the actions implemented within the framework of phase 2.

3. **Stakeholders involved** *(please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role)*

- i-Trans: pilot of the campaign on Europe and organiser of the Shift2Rail conference on Rail Industry Meetings
- HDFID: management of the event on the 1st of December with the RERI network and actions in the framework of the innovation week

4. **Timeframe** *(please specify the timing envisaged for action 2)*

From September 2020 to January 2021

5. **Costs** *(please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 2)*

Time spent by the i-Trans team:

- in the framework of the implementation of the Europe campaign
- in the organisation of the conference on Rail Industry Meetings
- Preparation and participation in the Horizon Europe day

Logistical costs of the events (5 000€)

6. **Funding sources** *(please describe how action 2 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

Each stakeholder on the funds provided for the events.



ACTION 3

Name of the action: CREATING A DECENTRALISED INNOVATION PLATFORM FOR SMEs IN THE RAILWAY SECTOR ON THE SITE OF TRANSALLEY

1. **Relevance to the project** *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

FACTS IN HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

In the Hauts-de-France Region, the relationship between the academic world and SMEs remains insufficiently developed. There is a need to strengthen the link and encourage SMEs to work more with laboratories.

INSPIRATION FOR THIS ACTION

During the study visit in Spain, in the region of Aragon, we discovered an innovation ecosystem where companies and universities together create innovative products and services on the same site. It was thanks to ITAINNOVA.

ITAINNOVA, “Instituto Tecnológico de Aragón” is a non-profit Technology Centre created in 1984 whose main objective is to promote competitiveness in the industrial sector and to support the growth of business sectors by means of the development, acquisition, adaptation, transfer and diffusion of innovative technologies in a multi-agent collaborative framework.

The specific objectives are the following ones:

- Provide industry with research and technological development services, technological consultancy and technical services (Labs)
 - Identify and meet the innovation needs of both developed and emerging sectors
 - Upgrade the technical skills of workers as well as their specialization in new technologies
 - Cooperate with other agents of the Innovation System
 - Promote the participation of SMEs in both national and international programmes of technological innovation
- ⇒ To summarize, they guide and help companies, institutions, and people to take a step towards excellence through innovation and technology development, especially in Aragon, Spain and Europe.



2. Nature of the action (*please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action will consist of creating a specific platform on the Transalley site for SMEs to give their innovation projects to academics.

Transalley is a key tool in the ecosystem that will enable SMEs to have access to design offices.

A SME that wants to invest in R&D projects will be able to incubate on the site to host their R&D department led by the academic ecosystem.

Then, the team that will have worked on the project will be able to integrate the SME (and allow other SMEs to do the same) or stay on site (to work for other SMEs or for the SME which allowed it to work on its first innovation projects).

This model is similar to what already exists in the Region of Paris or in the Region Hauts-de-France (CREPIM, C3T, CRITT M2A) but it does not exist yet for the railway sector.

This action fits perfectly within the framework of the "Industry of the Future" and is unavoidable in the region Hauts-de-France.

The principle is to host 10 selected companies in the Region, wishing to increase their skills by creating an "R&D/Open innovation" unit. This cell only can exist if it is at the heart of a strategic actor ecosystem, i.e. in an Innovation Park.

The company provides a company employee or a new recruit (e.g. engineer, experienced technician with potential, young researcher). Other resources may be used to reinforce this unit (internship, apprentice, PhD student). With this unit, the aim for the company is to have the capacity to work with all the systems and players (laboratory, start-ups, technical centres, etc.). The platform is run by a full-time specialist to lead and support 10 units.

The programme can last from 1 to 3 years per company.

At the end of the programme, there are 3 possibilities:

- The company is convinced, the system is operational, the company can integrate this unit in the main site of the company (off-site).
- The company is convinced, the system is operational, the company wishes to maintain or expand its unit in the innovation park. Migration to another real estate reception facility in the park



-The company is not convinced; it stops the scheme. The person returns to the company. Nevertheless, the company has become more competent and can work on innovation projects and make use of the ecosystem.

⇒ In all three cases, 10 companies have developed innovation and R&D capacity.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role)

- i-Trans: project coordination
- HDF Region: project support (project structuring + financial package)
- Transalley: operational implementation of the platform

4. **Timeframe** (please specify the timing envisaged for action 2)

From September 2020 to May 2022

5. **Costs** (please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 2)

- Investment and operation (office, one employee, communication, intervention of experts, management costs): 250,000€ without taxes per year for 10 companies in the railway sector.
- For 20 companies, the budget doubles, for 30 companies, the budget triples, etc. (although there will be some economies of scale)
- The company can contribute to one employee (own expense it looks at some possible subsidies).

6. **Funding sources** (please describe how action 2 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):

There are different types of funding available in the Region Hauts-de-France which are possible:

- « Fonds FEDER »
- « Allocations de recherche (ALCR2.0) »
- « Dispositif STIMuLE – volet partenarial »
- « Dispositif STIMuLE – volet Recherche Exploratoire »
- « SACRe – Soutien à l’animation de collectifs de recherche (SACR) »
- « STaRS – Chaire d’excellence »
- « ValoRIS »

⇒ We choose the ERDF PO NPDC Axis 1 OT1B fund (project structuring centres of excellence and competitiveness).



Date: 25th of September 2020

Name of the organisation(s): Region Hauts-de-France and i-Trans

Signatures of the relevant organisation(s):

Frédéric SINGER
Région Hauts-de-France

Amélie ESPEROU
i-Trans