



## RECORD Project

### Action plan for the region of Tuscany





## Part I – General information

Project: RECORD

Partner organisation concerned: DITECFER Distretto per le Tecnologie Ferroviarie, l'Alta Velocità e la Sicurezza delle Reti S.c.ar.l.

Country: Italy

NUTS2 region: Tuscany (Toscana)

Contact person: (Ms) Veronica Elena Bocci – Coordinator DITECFER

Email address: [coordinatore@ditecfer.eu](mailto:coordinatore@ditecfer.eu)

Phone number: +39 329 8363922

## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instruments addressed: **ROP Toscana ERDF 2014-2020 Thematic Priority TO1 - Research and Innovation; Priority of Investment 1b. Specific focus on Specific Objective RA 1.1” Enhancing innovation activities in enterprises**, and 2 specific actions: **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services** and **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

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

The strategic planning and operational implementation of the ROP Toscana ERDF 2014-2020 made by the Regional Administration is renown to be very successful in terms of performance (outputs) achieved, as proved by the 100% spending reached by the Regional Administration and the award of performance reserve.



The Specific Action 1.1.4 covers the activities of “Technological Districts” (Clusters), therefore it is the one directly concerning the Partner. Because of this, and being the Partner a very active and performant cluster in the European Cluster Community, the continuous benchmark made with other Clusters from many different regions in Europe stimulates the Partner to present possible improvements to the instrument in order to make the “Technological Districts” Policy even more effective in terms of required activities, tools managed, outcomes achieved and KPIs for measuring the impact and value provided to the territory.

The Specific Action 1.1.5 represents, in itself, a good practice to which other RECORD partners have looked at with interest - more specifically for the criterion of “mandatory collaboration with SMEs” for Large Companies -, “discovering” the possibility to use ERDF to stimulate R&D from companies with specific attention to SMEs.

Still, the good practice has room for further improvements, according to what requested by the relevant Stakeholders involved so far in the RECORD project.

### Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

#### **ACTION 1:**

Name of the action: **ERDF Framework projects for industry and research (“SurferLab model”)**

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?)*

**Best practice from Hauts-de-France Region learnt during the RECORD Study Visit in Lille in March 2019.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

The practice concerns the modality developed by Hauts-de-France Region to use the current ERDF rules to leave a kind of flexibility in the creation of projects. This works through:

- reserving in the ROP larger framework of projects, specific funding for research+industry collaboration in a specific sector (here it is for the railway sector) in order to fund new flagship initiatives within it
- use the funding as soon as the industry identifies high research priorities and proposals for investment.

This system entails the smart and effective use of a regional strategic and technological committee as a decision-making place where:

- (a) industries indicate actual and important industrial priorities for R&I and what it would be necessary to achieve the objective (proposed action)



(b) the Regional Administration receives the request and activates the strategic investments to be done under the ERDF.

This model – in fact – has been used to establish “SurferLab”, the joint research laboratory involving one of key railway industries in the HDF Region (Bombardier), one SME technology provider (Prosyst) and one academia (Université Politechnique Hauts-de-France). Not a dedicated research project, but an original *policy* based on a long-term view collaboration funded by ERDF, merging complementary skills to work freely on innovative solutions to push to the market. Activities at SurferLab are led by the pull demand identified by the industrial partners and also targets the creation of spin-off/start-ups.

The committee created by the Region Hauts-de-France for the railway sector is composed by Region’s Decision Makers, key railway industries, academia and the Pôle de Compétitivité (Cluster). The Committee is run under confidentiality rules (NDA signature by participants). The modality is proving to be efficient as the ERDF implementation is constantly made ‘adaptive’ to the challenges addressed by territorial industries under the R&I point of view.

Tuscany Region has created similar Committees for its Technological Districts (Clusters). They are composed by representatives of industries, academia, the cluster. Region’s Officials are *by default* invited to attend as ‘auditors’. No NDA is signed. The discussions made within the Committee are not taken in charge by the Region; no actual impact on the ERDF has place.

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

The action proposed consists in the Region following an innovative, more sectorial and strategy-driven approach to the use of ERDF for R&I. Basically, in Tuscany the ERDF for R&I is assigned through open calls for projects, where companies can propose their own ideas on individual basis or as a group (provided they are compliant with the RIS3 general priorities), but with no need to pass through / involve the Technological Committee of the District and no “pre-identification” of major sectorial priorities that can leverage – as in the French example – sets of projects and also the creation of spin-offs/start-ups.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to dedicate at least a part of the ERDF 2021-2027 for R&I to be assigned through this innovative approach;
- The Region to empower the Technological Committees it has created and appoints (a) integrating their composition with Regional decision makers (b) integrating their competence with the actual possibility to indicate to the Region high priorities of investment under ERDF able to act as catalysers for the sector (c) securing the process of identification of high priorities via NDAs to be signed by all members;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the approach.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 1 and explain their role*)



The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 1 are:

- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Presidency* to give the political endorsement and acknowledgement of the usefulness to test the innovative approach to help the territory grow in competitiveness along its sectorial value chains
- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to identify the best policy and technical way to introduce the innovative approach within the ROP 2021-2027
- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing the Clusters Policy to adopt new rules on the functions and functioning of the Technological Committees of the Regional Districts. This should happen through open dialogue (e.g. within a specific Working Group) with the Technological Committees of the Regional Districts so to gather operational suggestions from the field, according to the differences among the several sectors represented by the Regional Districts.
- The managers of the Regional Districts: to be ready to make the most of this opportunity in order to leverage high priority projects within our sector, to give them high visibility once funded and to build around them further opportunities able to multiply their impact.

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

The timeframe necessary to include the innovative approach in the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The innovative approach could start its implementation from 2021.

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

The costs for delivering the innovative approach can be a fraction of the entire ERDF budget dedicated to R&I projects. Such fraction should allow – on the one side – the Region to maintain its open R&I calls policy so to cover all possible sectors and – on the other side – to deliver a meaningful impact on the sectors covered by the Regional Districts.

As the Action should work “on demand” of industries, with immediate following activation of the funding by the Region, an overall dedicated budget to these framework projects could be devoted – per Regional District – for the programming period.

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

As for the current R&I projects funded under ERDF, the intensity of the grant will depend on the characteristics of the partnership promoting the project, with % of co-funding differentiated according to being a SME, a large company and a research organisation.

The remaining funds will be provided as private funds from the partners involved in the project, as for current R&I projects funded under ERDF.



## ACTION 2

Name of the action: **Labelling mechanism by the Cluster for R&I industrial project proposals**

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?*)

**Best practice from Hauts-de-France Region learnt during the RECORD Study Visit in Lille in March 2019.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration** and with positive impact also on **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.**

The Action 2 concerns the adoption of the mechanism in use at the Partner i-Trans through which (a) the industries wishing to apply for R&I public funding undergo a pre-evaluation made by a Cluster committee composed by the most relevant railway professionals (from industry and academia) according to the proposal topic; (b) the analysis entails possible recommendations for review – under a collaborative dialogue – and at the end of the process the Cluster awards a Label to the project proposal. The Regional or National Authority in charge of the funding acknowledges the Label as “proof of excellence” and proof that the topics addressed and the approaches followed by the applicants are really meaningful for the competitiveness of the railway sector – and hence for the company’s competitiveness.

For the execution of the process, the Cluster is paid by the applicant company. The mechanism, hence, is sustainable because – on the one side – the Cluster identifies a source of income based on offer of high technical and strategic knowledge and – on the other side – the Public Authorities benefit from a further specific evaluation by the most competent professionals of the sector and from more strategy-driven projects on its territory.

A similar mechanism would help the Tuscany Region ensure the maximum consistency to sectorial RIS3 Innovation Roadmaps of R&I projects co-funded under ERDF, helping the territorial value chain grow stronger.

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

The action proposed consists in the Region introducing – in the areas where it has established Regional Districts – the opportunity for the companies wishing to apply for ERDF funds for R&I to undergo a sectorial pre-evaluation to be made by a dedicated technical committee to be established on *ad hoc* basis according to the topic of the project. The technical committee would be set up by the managers of the Regional Districts, ensuring the involvement of the most coherent and independent specialists against the project proposal. The pre-evaluation would check the project proposal against the consistency with the sectorial RIS3 Innovation Roadmaps and would allow projects developing



European-level innovations to emerge. This would help the Region to stimulate the Tuscan companies to compete on the markets with higher-value solutions. The role of the technical committee, in fact, would not only be to pre-assess the project proposal rather also to recommend improvements to make it of higher quality and impact on the final market.

The recourse to this opportunity should be cited in the regional calls for projects but could remain not mandatory. However, the positive recourse to this mechanism would issue a “label” that the Region should recognize in terms of ‘evaluation points’, since the Label would ensure the actual compliance of the project proposal to the sectorial innovation roadmaps for RIS3 – and therefore the regional and sectorial interest of having that project co-funded.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to introduce the “Label” mechanism in the regional R&I calls under ERDF 2021-2027;
- The Region to share its expectations on this with the managers of the Regional Districts, so that the mechanism is implemented in a consistent way by each Regional District;
- The Regional Districts to share on a periodic basis - among themselves and with the Region - the lessons learnt during the implementation of the Label mechanism;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the mechanism.

3. **Stakeholders involved** *(please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 2 and explain their role)*

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 2 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the new mechanism and its usefulness to better select projects funded under ERDF and compliant both with the RIS3 general priorities but also with the RIS3 sectorial Innovation Roadmaps identified – and reviewed periodically – by the Regional Districts on behalf of the Region;
- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing the Clusters Policy and the R&I calls to include the Label mechanism in such calls and acknowledge it through a specific and meaningful (in quantity) voice of scoring;
- The managers of the Regional Districts: to ensure the Region – through a transparent process – the independency, strategy-driven, and quality of the work done by the technical *ad hoc* committees issuing (or not) the Label to the applicants.

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

The timeframe necessary to include the new mechanism in the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new mechanism could start its implementation with the first open calls for R&I projects the Region will launch.

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

No extra costs for the Region and the ERDF budget will derive from the introduction of this mechanism.



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

The cost for recurring to the new mechanism will be paid by the applicant, hence by private funds.

### **ACTION 3**

Name of the action: **Large company-pull for companies' acceleration ("SynerLeap model")**

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?)

**Best practice from Vastmanland Region learnt during the RECORD Study Visit in Vasterås in November 2019.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

The Action 3 consists in using the pull capacity of larger industry companies acting as "accelerator" for dynamic SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups and through this being able not only to intercept and integrate the new ideas in the large companies' solutions but also to drive the visibility of the territorial ecosystem on the world scale as "hub to look at" for certain types of technologies and applications.

The model consists in the large industry company supporting financially first pilot projects from SMEs matching the sectorial criteria and objectives it set. The mechanism is interesting for the SMEs not just for the financial aspect rather for the opportunity they gain to be in contact and work with the large company and its sister companies. For the SMEs it turns to be a very effective way to build own trust and to start initial businesses. By expanding the mindset of the larger and also the SME, you can also start thinking about promoting further innovative projects, business collaboration, etc..

2. **Nature of the action** (please describe precisely the content of action 3. What are the specific activities to be implemented)

The action proposed consists in introducing an innovative, pilot mechanism to help Tuscan SMEs developing innovations to find on the territory a way to scale-up their innovations and increase the probabilities to actually bring such innovations to the market.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to study with the Regional Districts and other key stakeholders the best way to launch acceleration mechanisms for the relevant sectors;
- The Regional Districts to mobilise the key industrial stakeholder among their members and beyond (this opening up the opportunity of attracting investments in Tuscany – this activity could be also supported by "Invest in Tuscany") to gather interest toward acceleration mechanisms to be





implemented in the regional territory in order to help SMEs scale-up their innovative ideas within the target large industries;

- The Region to dedicate a part of ERDF for collaborative R&I from consortia of SMEs and Large companies to launch the pilot initiatives;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the pilot mechanism.

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

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 3 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the new mechanism and its usefulness to identify new ways to help Tuscan SMEs “bridge the innovation death valley” too often following R&I projects also funded by the ERDF; to start a policy dialogue with the Regional Districts and with their key large companies;
- The Tuscany Region – Government: *Invest in Tuscany* to support the identification of large companies from other territories operating in the Tuscan key sectors, interested to co-invest in the acceleration mechanism against the opportunity offered to them to identify, among the Tuscan SMEs, those having developed innovative ideas that can be leveraged / integrated into the large companies' solutions;
- The managers of the Regional Districts: to support the Region to develop the new mechanism thanks to their specific knowledge of typical problems encountered by their SMEs when coming to market uptake of innovations; to mobilise their large companies towards the new mechanism.

**4. Timeframe** *(please specify the timing envisaged for action 3)*

The timeframe necessary to include the new mechanism in the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new mechanism could start its implementation once the new model has been defined and a meaningful group of large companies – covering different regional sectors - have confirmed their interest in being at the core of the new mechanism.

**5. Costs** *(please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 3)*

No extra costs for the Region and the ERDF budget will derive from the introduction of this mechanism, as it will represent a use, under a different type of action, of ERDF budget devoted for collaborative R&I among SMEs and Large companies.

**6. Funding sources** *(please describe how action 3 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

ERDF 2021-2027 – new 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration for the public funding part and private funds from the participating companies (SMEs and large); it can also planned a partial funding participation of the new 1.1.4 Support to collaborative



R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services in case a support role should be directly provided by the Regional Districts.

#### **ACTION 4**

Name of the action: **Leveraging R&I funding through targeted areas**

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?)*

**Best practice from Slovakia learnt during the RECORD Study Visit in Poprad in January 2020** and matching with **recommendations coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meeting (Cluster Managers) in May 2020**. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration** and with positive impact also on **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services**.

The Action 3 consists in adopting the Shift2Rail (or Horizon 2020) approach of “Topics” to push the local companies, universities and research centers to join together to give answer through collaboration to sectorial edge topics – whose “top-down” selection is really able to leverage companies' competitiveness on the European and international markets.

The visit to Tatravagonka industry made this absolutely clear, showing in an evidence-based way how beneficial and impacting can be a similar approach towards the achievement of concrete R&I results that help companies reach better and faster the final market with high-value / edge solutions.

The identification of Topics should be done under Clusters' proposal to the Region, in compliance with the RIS3 Clusters'/sectors' specific Innovation Roadmaps drafted for the Region itself (eventually updated to better meet emerging R&I needs) and not considered by the Region in any ERDF action so far (e.g. for R&I calls).

The mechanism could be launched as pilot and involve not the entire amount of ERDF devoted to R&I, so to leave 'free topics' for those regional companies operating in sectors not covered by regional Clusters.

This will allow – on the one side – to capitalise on the strong effort made by the Regional Districts and their actors (companies, academia, research organisations, etc.) to identify the long-term RIS3 Roadmaps, and – on the other side – to offer R&I specific calls to untap the main growth drivers for the key sectorial value chains present in Tuscany (and on which the Region has decided to invest through establishment of its Regional Districts), and lately to help the sectorial value chains emerge and organise themselves as competitive ecosystem (and not just as competitive single players).



2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 4. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed consists in the Region introducing in the R&I calls specific R&I sectorial edge-topics upon which competitive consortia of companies and research organisations can develop their project proposal. The topics should be identified with the technical support of the Regional Districts, that should prove to the Region how the topic (a) matches the RIS3 Innovation Roadmaps (b) is actually a challenging topic where the EU level is also looking for solutions. This would represent a great booster for the Tuscan ecosystem:

- companies should be stimulated to develop solutions for whom the market is ready to pay an added value (and this is key, since competition in our field and in our Western territories cannot be based on low prices)
- companies could finally develop this type of solutions in partnership with the local value chain, with the effect to strengthen it (in fact the challenge to provide own answers to similar topics through European calls forcefully passes through (i) European partnerships that don't allow to capitalise the "local value chain effect" (ii) the hope of being 'selected' by big European players that 'monopolise' certain fields);
- research organisations should be challenged to work on high-level topics, with the result that also their competences should give their best and would make also them more competitive with peers in Europe.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- before launching the R&I calls, the Region to require to the Technical Committees of the Regional Districts to propose (a) a set of edge-level topics to be introduced in the regional calls (b) the expected impact (c) the amount that would allow the specific challenge to be addressed appropriately;
- The Region to include these topics in its R&I calls;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the mechanism.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 4 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 4 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the new mechanism and its usefulness to stimulate - through ERDF – tuscan companies – in collaboration with research organisations – to develop European-level edge-solutions compliant both with the RIS3 general priorities and with the RIS3 sectorial Innovation Roadmaps identified by the Regional Districts on behalf of the Region, so to actually challenge the international markets;
- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing the Clusters Policy and the R&I calls to include the above described process of topics identification in the preparation of R&I calls;



- The Technical Committees of the Regional Districts: to identify the topics to be proposed to the Region, on the base of (a) European-level challenges defined by the Railway community mainly within the JU Shift2Rail 2021-2027 and its Master Plan (b) the RIS3 Innovation Roadmaps, as continuously revised so ensure a quick inclusion of new emerging key trends (c) the RIS3 regional general priorities.

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

The timeframe necessary to include the new mechanism in the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new mechanism could start its implementation with the first open calls for R&I projects the Region will launch. This would be well possible since the Technical Committees of the Regional Districts will be renewed soon after the regional elections of September 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>.

**5. Costs** *(please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 4)*

The costs for delivering the innovative approach can be a fraction of the entire ERDF budget dedicated to R&I projects. Such fraction should allow – on the one side – the Region to maintain its open R&I calls policy so to cover all possible sectors and maintain a bottom-up approach from companies, and – on the other side – to invest in specific edge-solutions that can allow the Tuscan ecosystem to emerge in a more strategic way, with impact also on the overall attractiveness for FDI-Foreign Direct Investments.

Such fraction could be identified – in terms of ERDF planning - through open dialogue with the Technical Committees of the Regional Districts.

**6. Funding sources** *(please describe how action 4 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

Since the edge-topics would be particularly challenging and the companies would be pushed “out of their comfort zone”, an increased % of co-funding from ERDF would be appropriate.

The remaining funds will be provided as private funds from the partners involved in the project, as for current R&I projects funded under ERDF.

**ACTION 5**

Name of the action: **Reporting platform, biannual reporting and INTERREG EUROPE compulsory “FLC Model”**

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?)*



**Best practice learnt from RECORD project implementation.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration** (where a similar tool is already being used but can be further improved) and **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.**

The Action 5 consists in best practices learnt from EU programmes: from smart reporting and smart web platforms to the use of mandatory FLC-First Level Controller like in INTERREG EUROPE to control all administrative, legal, economic and financial aspects during the biannual project reporting, that concludes the reporting and its validation in a short time frame, avoiding to the Beneficiary any other 'waste of time' for later requests of integrations, explanations, etc. from the Regional Authority. The mechanism is very smart: the FLC, in fact, is not only a controller but also a 'consultant' to the Beneficiary, helping it to clearly prepare all necessary documents and to learn from this, so that the reporting process becomes each time smoother. Also, the cost for the FLC is an eligible cost of the project. Another interesting aspect of the INTERREG EUROPE model is the biannually reporting, that helps the beneficiaries – on the one side - to “keep memory” of the previous reporting for all the necessary documents to prepare, etc. and – on the other side – avoids huge reporting processes that become the only business 'manageable' in that period of the year when the Beneficiary is a small organization.

The Tuscany Region has already started to include in its ERDF calls the possibility for the beneficiaries to make recourse to external controllers – and this is much appreciated by Tuscan Stakeholders; still, it could be advisable to make it as *mandatory* so to devote the time of “Sviluppo Toscana” only for technical reporting. Making mandatory the recourse to FLC should be seen by the Tuscany Region as a “process optimisation cost”, because the overall cost for the Tuscan ecosystem (including the *external costs* of effort the ERDF beneficiaries have to use for reporting instead of for working, this impacting on the Tuscan GDP) would be certainly reduced.

INTERREG EUROPE is also a best practice in terms of the web platform for reporting – iOLF -, that is very smart and allows a serious but quick process, like – indeed – “ECAS”, used by the EU for preparation, management and reporting of projects funded under programmes such as Horizon 2020, COSME, etc..

Therefore, an overall re-thinking and smart simplification of the reporting process of projects funded by the Tuscany Region under ERDF would be advisable. During the RECORD project implementation, in fact, we recorded many elements suggesting this:

- During the Survey in November 2018, Tuscan Stakeholders members of the Railway District from SMEs, large companies and research organisations identified the following critical aspects and requests:
  - o “*Reporting process to be made easier, also improving (better: renovating) the current web platform*”
  - o “*Too much red-tape, absorbing important energies that could (should) be devoted to R&D*”



- During the Survey in April-May 2019, Tuscan Stakeholders from SMEs (85%) and large companies (15%) performing R&I activities on a continuous basis highlighted the following:
  - o “You have to upload many documents: the EU portal is easier”
  - o “Portal too complex and confused: it requires double data”
  - o “it’s too complicated, we have to use external consultants to deal with it”.

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

The action proposed is of mainly organisational nature, as it consists in introducing modifications to the current (a) reporting process (b) web platform for reporting projects used by the Tuscany Region.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to introduce the mandatory use of the FLC model in the regional calls under ERDF 2021-2027;
- The Region to assign “Sviluppo Toscana” only the check on technical reporting;
- The Region to consider recourse to by-annual reporting;
- The Region to modify/re-develop the web platform in order to make smoother as the EU platforms are (ECAS or iOLF).
- To test, measure and fine-tune the organisation.

**3. Stakeholders involved** *(please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 5 and explain their role)*

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 5 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

**4. Timeframe** *(please specify the timing envisaged for action 5)*

The timeframe necessary to introduce the new mechanism in the ROP 2021-2027 is parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP.

For the (re)development of the web platform longer time could be necessary, but making direct reference to the EU projects platforms such as ECAS and iOLF could make the *logical design* phase much shorter.

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

The direct costs to implement the action are represented by:

- (re)development of the web platform

as for the rest: (a) the FLC costs will be part of the project budget, hence included in the maximum budgets that can be granted per each project by the Region through its calls (b) the recourse to FLC



for all projects will create savings on the budget devoted to “Sviluppo Toscana” to perform the overall reporting.

6. **Funding sources** (*please describe how action 5 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

The cost for creating the new web platform could be funded through remaining funds under ERDF 2014-2020 (to deliver earlier) or through ERDF 2021-2027.

## **ACTION 6**

Name of the action: **“INNOSUP model” deployed on the regional scale**

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?*)

**Best practice learnt from RECORD project meetings with local stakeholders, here specifically other Cluster Managers.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration** through the improvement of **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.**

The Action concerns the proposal of setting-up an “INNOSUP-style” instrument at regional level. The INNOSUP instrument is part of the Horizon 2020 programme of the European Union and aims to use SMEs key-intermediaries (mostly clusters, having huge capabilities to deliver on reaching out to SMEs) to drive strategically and serve the needs of SMEs with customized support for specific challenges through the combination of support tools that may include – for the continuity of support after the action – the scaling up linked to internationalization, financing, etc..

If introduced in the ERDF ROP Toscana, the instrument can offer several benefits:

- Possibility to drive a single approach (e.g. adoption of new skills, technologies, approaches, etc.) within the clusters’ value chains through the definition – first – of a specific high-level (“European-edge looking”) methodology and – then – its implementation through micro-financings to SMEs.
- Design and delivery of the action by the Clusters (Regional Districts) will improve the “value chain impact” – with more coordinated and visible results on the territory vs. individual initiatives self-promoted by SMEs through (e.g.) the valuable action “Bando Servizi Qualificati” (that, although successful, does not allow a holistic coordinated scale-up of groups of SMEs from the same value/supply chain, and brings to results that are ‘jeopardized’).



2. **Nature of the action** (please describe precisely the content of action 6. What are the specific activities to be implemented)

The action proposed consists in the Region introducing an INNOSUP-model instrument to drive – under a strategic, consistent and coordinated point of view – transformational processes in large groups of Tuscan SMEs.

Some EU-level policy lines such as *Green Deal*, *Digitalisation*, *resiliency of European value chains* after COVID-19 are of cross-sectoral interest and a regional-based INNOSUP-model instrument could be the best way to – first – identify and – then – drive and implement in Tuscan SMEs the necessary transformations to embrace such key challenges.

Given this high-level and cross-sectoral interest, the Region could invite its Clusters (Regional Districts) and key regional research/technical organisations with previous experience in INNOSUP projects in order to co-develop a joint cross-sectoral proposal to be managed and funded following the INNOSUP-model, so that the impact on the Tuscan companies could be visible and able to deploy a multiplying effect on wider numbers of SMEs.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to discuss through open dialogue with the Regional Districts and key research organisations (a) the key topics and key achievements expected through a similar action (b) the characteristics of the pilot-scheme and call to be funded under ERDF 2021-2027;
- The Regional Districts to provide their experience in INNOSUP projects at EU level;
- The other regional actors with previous experience in INNOSUP projects / cascade-funding projects to provide their experience;
- To test, measure the medium-long term impact and fine-tune the pilot-scheme.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 6 and explain their role)

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 6 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the usefulness of a similar pilot scheme to drive large-scale transformations in Tuscan SMEs through a strong cooperation of regional key stakeholders and to identify its rules;
- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* to contribute to the process, to launch and manage the pilot-scheme;
- The managers of the Regional Districts: to cooperate all in the definition of the strategic framework, and then to co-develop a single, high-level, proposal in the interest of their SMEs and according to the specificities of the different sectors although under the overall coordinated strategy and methodology;
- The industry associations: to represent other key value chains of Tuscan economy not represented by Regional Districts (e.g. agro-food) and that might be interested to be supported in embracing the Green Deal, the Digitalisation processes etc..





**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 6*)

The timeframe necessary to include the new pilot-scheme in the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new pilot-scheme should be launched once the collaborative definition of the model has been completed.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 6*)

A fraction of the ERDF budget should be dedicated to this. In order to reach the desired impact, the amount should be of some millions, with the actual budget to be identified via the calculation of:

< what transformation we want to achieve >

< how much it costs to deliver the assistance necessary to drive / induce such transformation in a SME

>

< how many SMEs we want to address to achieve the expected territorial impact >.

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

ERDF 2021-2027 – new 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration and new 1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.

## **ACTION 7**

Name of the action: **Cluster Policy vision and approach**

**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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meeting (Cluster Managers) in May 2020.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.**

The Action consists in proposing the Tuscany Region to follow a different approach in the definition of its Clusters Policy ("Distretti Tecnologici/Regional Districts"). The Policy under the current ERDF Programming Period and the operational implementation through the "Bando Distretti Tecnologici" (Call for Management of regional clusters) has showed several points needing a revised approach in the following ERDF Programming Period, according to the current Managers (organisations) of the Regional Districts:

- The Cluster policy has been developed top-down, with no interaction with the regional actors having managed the Regional Clusters in the previous programming period 2007-2013 (they are also the current Cluster Managers). For the new Programming Period the current Managers of the Regional Districts call for a policy being defined not just in regional offices



rather taking into consideration from-the-field inputs, that can make the Policy more 'pragmatic' while pursuing the higher objective of regional economic development. The Managers of the Regional Districts can do much more than what the Region has asked them to do. Almost all Districts are active at EU level as coordinators/partners of projects (INTERREG EUROPE, H2020-INNOSUP, ESCP-4i, ESCP-4X, H2020...) and this activity has made them scale-up as strong, visionary and very pragmatic managers. It is advisable the Region to capitalise on this huge field-experience for the definition of the new Cluster Policy.

- The Cluster policy has not been fine-tuned along the ERDF Programming Period 2014-2020. Under the stated principle that *once an action has started you cannot change the rules*, the result has been that objectives defined in 2014/2015 ended to suit a real interest after few time and only turned to become activities not core for the Clusters and their members (e.g. organising matchings and drafting minutes of them, pursuing agreements between companies and financial institutions, etc.) and diverting Clusters' staff's effort from real-key activities for the companies and the ecosystem. This calls for the need for periodical (yearly) revision, allowing to take into consideration internal (in the value chain) and external (the world environment: technologies, markets, politics, pandemics, etc.) changes to re-set meaningful activities.
- The Clusters activities – at the very end – have been lived by the Managers only as “organising matchmakings”. The EU Cluster Policy teaches that Clusters are very dynamic and multi-purpose key intermediaries with companies and ecosystems. This role should lead also at regional level to identification of more effective and valuable (for companies) activities like visits, exchanges, online meetings, sharing info, internationalisation.

**2. Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 7. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The nature of the action is strategical, as it has to do with the *strategic vision* of Regional Districts the Tuscany Region has, and therefore of the deriving *mission*.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to review its Cluster Policy vision and strategy under the ERDF 2021-2027 capitalising on the concrete and professional experience of the current Managers of the Regional Districts;
- The Managers of the Regional Districts to ensure their high-level advice on how to make of the Tuscany Region Clusters Policy a benchmark at national and European level;
- To test, measure – also against other territories - and fine-tune the new vision and strategy.

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

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 7 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the need for collaborative identification of the new *vision* and *strategy* for the Regional Districts;



- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing the Clusters Policy to implement the new collaborative approach, opening a partnership-based dialogue with the current Managers of the Regional Districts;
- The Managers of the Regional Districts: to ensure the Region their strategic capabilities deriving from local to European experience, to identify the best *vision* for the Regional Districts suitable to achieve the highest impact of the Clusters Policy under the ROP ERDF 2021-2027.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 7*)

The timeframe necessary to develop the new *vision* and *strategy* for the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new *vision* and *strategy* should be implemented from the first regional acts the Region will adopt and from the first regional calls it will launch.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 7*)

No extra costs for the Region and the ERDF budget will derive from a revised *vision* and *strategy* concerning the Cluster Policy already budgeted.

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

n.a.

## **ACTION 8**

Name of the action: **Cluster Management KPIs and monitoring system**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meeting (Cluster Managers) in May 2020.** Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument **1.1.4 Support to collaborative R&D for developing new sustainable technologies, new products and services.**

The definition of proper KPIs to measure the effectiveness of Clusters action is key to ensure – on the one side – the efficient expenditure of ERDF on the territory and – on the other side – to measure the impact (= benefits) produced by the Clusters for their members.

The selection of proper KPIs for Cluster Policy is a topic addressed from EU level downwards. Some sets of KPIs have become mainstream in all territories, but given their importance for Clusters' life and correct measurement, other KPIs need to be defined according to specificities of Clusters and their sectors'/value chains'/supply chains' characteristics.



For this reason the set of KPIs defined top-down by the Region for Cluster management have put the Cluster organisations in difficulties along the action implementation. The “narrow view” adopted through the selected KPIs, accompanied by a monitoring system “guns blazing”, didn’t help build a partnership relationship between the Clusters and the Region aimed to deliver the actual best results and impacts for the ecosystem.

For the next ERDF Programming Period, it should be recommendable:

- To identify on a collaborative basis the KPIs.
- To allow KPIs to differ from one Cluster to another according to the sector and ecosystem specificities.
- To set up an IT platform “CRM-like” allowing a smoother communication and monitoring of Clusters activities. The example here refers to the IT platform in use by the Berlin Brandenburg Regional Clusters (Berlin Partner), that speeds up the monitoring activity on all types of initiatives, providing the Region an overview going beyond basic activities like matchmakings. Here the Berliner Clusters feed regularly information on their activities and about the companies/academia/research organisations involved (e.g. participation at conferences accompanied by x and y companies; participation at exhibitions with x, y, z companies; participation at study visits with academia, organization of innovation awards and members involved, etc.). From the Region side, this automatizes both the information input from Clusters and analysis of value chains from the Region.

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 8. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed consists in the Region identifying, in collaboration with all the current Managers of the Regional Districts, new sets of KPIs that can be more meaningful to both parties, so that the actual impact of Regional Districts can be measured more correctly.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to invite the current Managers of the Regional Districts to identify new sets of KPIs for the new calls through which the Region aims to assign the management of its Regional Districts;
- The current Managers of the Regional Districts to ensure the best contribution thanks to their specific and professional knowledge of each sector/District specificity;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the new sets of KPIs.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 8 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 8 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the need for collaborative identification of new sets of KPIs to measure the impact of the Managers of the Regional Districts;



- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing the Clusters Policy to implement the new collaborative approach and to co-identify the KPIs with the Managers of the Regional Districts;
- The Managers of the Regional Districts: to ensure the Region the know-how *from the field* to identify the best possible KPIs in the interest of both the Region and of the future Managers of the Regional Districts.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 8*)

The timeframe necessary to review and identify the new sets of KPIs from the ROP 2021-2027 can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ROP. The new KPIs should be implemented in the first open call due to assign the management of Regional Districts.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 8*)

No extra costs for the Region and the ERDF budget will derive from the introduction of new KPIs.

**6. Funding sources** (*please describe how action 8 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

n.a.

## **ACTION 9**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals - Bureaucracy**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

“Too much bureaucracy” is the first complaint made by the Tuscan Stakeholders when asked *3 things that don't work well in the current R&I Calls for proposals and should be modified*.

Though the ERDF Programme follows different – and more complex - rules from other European Union's programmes like Horizon 2020 or COSME, still the amount of bureaucracy requested for applying for the regional R&I Calls - and then along the project lifetime management and reporting – results to be very high also compared to other territories implementing the same ERDF instruments.



Despite the excellent results of the Tuscany Region in allocating the entire ERDF budget devoted to R&I (all regional Calls see applications going beyond the available amounts), still the bureaucracy makes *de facto* mandatory for the SMEs to use external consultants helping them to manage the application process and then the reporting process. This turns to be for SMEs extra costs that could be saved should the red tape be reduced to the level of other EU programmes.

**2. Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 9. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed is of mainly organisational nature, as it consists in an overall critical review of the current administrative requests made to regional projects beneficiaries towards their optimal simplification. This should be made with the collaborative support of Tuscan key stakeholders such as industry associations, research organisations, regional Districts, that can provide insightful and very practical suggestions to find the best possible solutions for achieving effectiveness in projects administration while ensuring the respect of wider legal rules.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to start the overall critical analysis of current rules in use in own calls;
- The Region to invite the key regional stakeholders to make specific suggestions for their improvement / simplification / cancellation should they result to be redundant or not strictly necessary;
- The Region to draw the conclusions and to identify simpler and more effective rules;
- The Region to start to implement them in own calls;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the new rules.

**3. Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 9 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholders to be involved in the implementation of the Action 9 are:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to acknowledge the need for an overall review of administrative rules of ERDF regional calls and to lead the review process;
- The Tuscany Region – Government: the *Direzione Attività Produttive - Settore Politiche di sostegno alle imprese* managing ERDF calls for companies, to participate in the review process;
- Key regional stakeholders such as industry associations, research organisations and managers of the Regional Districts to collaborate with the Region to provide suggestions for the improvement.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 9*)

The timeframe necessary to undergo the review process should go in parallel with ongoing drafting of ROP 2021-2027. The new rules should start their implementation as soon as possible, possibly with the first calls the Region will launch.



5. **Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 9*)

Costs are only the ones for internal regional staff, for the time necessary to undergo the review process. The effort offered by the regional stakeholder, on the contrary, won't create any cost for the Tuscany Region.

6. **Funding sources** (*please describe how action 9 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

Tuscany Region internal budget.

## **ACTION 10**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Too low co-funding for Large companies**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

"Too low co-funding for Large companies" is another complaint made by the Stakeholders when asked *3 things that don't work well in the current R&I Calls for proposals and should be modified.*

In the ROP Tuscany the Large companies can apply for R&I Calls only if in partnership with minimum 3 SMEs (that is definitely an important stimulus to collaboration); a great visionary idea risking to be not fully exploited against its potential for the very low % of co-funding reserved to Large Companies, that are losing interest in ERDF Calls.

With the Large Companies representing driving forces for SMEs in collaborative projects, less participation results in losing opportunities for R&I territorial projects with higher visions (driven by the Larger Companies) and involvement – and growth - of the local SMEs. This is what is happening in the Railway sector, to which the RECORD project is addressed.

With the other EU programmes for R&I based on mandatory transnationality, ERDF is the only source that can support chains of companies – large and small – from the same ecosystem to work together and create a visible impact on the territory because growing together.

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 10. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed is budgetary, since it is suggested to increase the % of co-funding from ERDF.



For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to use higher % of co-funding in the regional calls under ERDF 2021-2027.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 10 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 10 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

4. **Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 10*)

The timeframe necessary to adopt the decision can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new percentages of co-funding should be introduced from the first open calls for R&I projects the Region will launch.

5. **Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 10*)

A higher percentage of co-funding can create more costs for the Region. Should the Region acknowledge that a higher percentage of co-funding be able to deploy positive impacts on the competitiveness of regional value chains thanks to more competitive projects from the companies, this could be managed with - *de facto* – reducing the number of projects funded in favour of value chains projects that can deliver higher impact on the Tuscan ecosystem.

6. **Funding sources** (*please describe how action 10 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

ROP ERDF 2021-2027.

## **ACTION 11**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Fault of reporting at least 30% of project costs at 1st Period under penalty of revocation of the project**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**





“The rule of mandatorily report at least 30% of project costs at 1st Period under penalty of revocation of the project” is another complaint made by the Stakeholders when asked *3 things that don't work well in the current R&I Calls for proposals and should be modified*.

The 1st Reporting Period of R&I projects co-funded by ROP Tuscany is systematically defined at a too short term if considering usual dynamics of R&D projects, and this – far from being a stimulus to implementation - creates undue risks for beneficiaries.

Overall, the possibility to re-modulate costs more freely – like in other EU Programmes such as COSME and Horizon 2020 - and eliminating min/max % and various limitations are recommended by the Stakeholders.

**2. Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 11. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed is of regulatory nature, as it consists to pragmatically review some rules of regional calls.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to lower the minimum % to be mandatorily reported at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of a project;
- The Region to introduce more flexible rules on eligible costs in terms of % and – above all – in terms of possible remodulation of them between one category and the other according to the actual project implementation needs, while of course respecting the overall project budget;
- The Region to start to implement the new rules in own calls;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the new rules.

**3. Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 11 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 11 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 11*)

The timeframe necessary to adopt the decision can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new rules should be introduced from the first open calls for projects the Region will launch.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 11*)

No extra costs should derive from this for the Region.



6. **Funding sources** (please describe how action 11 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):

n.a.

## ACTION 12

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Request to immobilise prototypes for 5 years**

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?)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

“The request to «immobilize» prototypes deriving from projects for 5 years after the end of the project” is another complaint made by the Stakeholders when asked *3 things that don't work well in the current R&I Calls for proposals and should be modified*.

As long as the final aim of R&I projects is to develop new solutions to answer market needs, hence creating competitiveness opportunities for the project promoters, being able to *use* the prototypes deriving from the R&I activities is a key-step towards the *actual* opportunity to reach that market. If this is key in any project, it should be even more important in projects co-funded by public funds, whose aim is *not just* to finance an action *rather* to put the basis for continuity.

For this the request to «immobilize» prototypes deriving from projects for 5 years after the end of the project creates difficulties for ERDF beneficiaries and *de facto* 'pushes' them to realise «sub-prototypes».

2. **Nature of the action** (please describe precisely the content of action 12. What are the specific activities to be implemented)

The action proposed is of regulatory nature, as it consists to pragmatically review one rule of regional calls.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to modify the rule of the 5 years;
- The Region to start to implement the new rule in own R&I calls;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the impact of the new rule.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 12 and explain their role)



The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 12 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 12*)

The timeframe necessary to adopt the decision can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new rules should be introduced from the first open calls for projects the Region will launch.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 12*)

No extra costs should derive from this for the Region.

**6. Funding sources** (*please describe how action 12 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

n.a.

### **ACTION 13**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Reporting of Personnel Costs**

- 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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

Here are put together two more complaints made by the Stakeholders when asked *3 things that don't work well in the current R&I Calls for proposals and should be modified*:

- A. Limit to 10% of total project budget for reporting Shareholders' and Administrators' (personnel) costs: the leading role also in operational R&I played by this type of personnel (that is usually both the "CEO" and the "Head of R&D") is a key component for Micro- and Small-sized enterprises. Their limited eligibility deprives this type of companies of important opportunities of supported R&I. Other European Union programmes like Horizon 2020 and COSME include these costs among the eligible ones with no limitations.
- B. Reporting of Personnel costs concerning the last month of the project is *de facto* impossible because payments can only be made the following month, so the cost is not recognized for



reporting under ERDF (*the same applies in the INTERREG EUROPE Programme*). Other European Union programmes like COSME consider eligible all costs *actually incurred* for the project delivery, no matter if paid the following month. This allows the beneficiaries to manage their activity in a most correct way.

**2. Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 13. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The sub-action A proposed is of budgetary nature, as it consists to allow a higher percentage for reporting Shareholders' and Administrators' (personnel) costs on R&I regional calls.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to increase meaningfully the % allowed in its R&I calls;
- The Region to start to implement the new rule in own calls;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the new rule.

The sub-action B proposed is of regulatory nature, and it has to do with general ERDF rules. In our opinion, and based on the actual problems encountered, it would be highly advisable the EU to change the rule due to which the last month of the project cannot *de facto* be reported to because payments of salaries (at least in Italy) can only be made the following month. this way the ERDF programme would be consistent with the other EU programmes rules.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Tuscany Region to suggest the INTERREG EUROPE JS to make the ERDF rules consistent with the other EU programmes;
- The INTERREG EUROPE JS to suggest the European Commission-DG REGIO to make the ERDF rules consistent with the other EU programmes.

**3. Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 13 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 13-sub A and sub B is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 13*)

Sub-A: the timeframe necessary to adopt the decision concerning can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new rule should be introduced from the first open calls for projects the Region will launch.

Sub-B: the timeframe necessary is short-term so that the new ERDF 2021-2027 at EU level can have the modification introduced.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 13*)



Sub-A: The major costs that could derive from this for the Region would not exceed the maximum budget possible for regional projects as set by the Regional calls.

Sub-B: No major costs would derive, as – simply - the ERDF projects budget would be reported entirely as planned (instead of having partners from Italy – and maybe from other similar countries – to lose the last month of each project due to the current rule).

6. **Funding sources** (*please describe how action 13 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

n.a.

#### **ACTION 14**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Advanced Payment**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey (SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

“Increase the % of advanced payment, necessary to activate possible contracts” is one suggestion made by the Stakeholders when asked *things that could be implemented to make it more effective and of impact*.

Currently the percentage is 40% of the grant and is paid against beneficiaries' subscription of a guarantee to the benefit of the Region, whose administrative costs are also not eligible.

In EU projects such percentage is >70% of the grant, it is due automatically and not upon request, and it is automatically paid within very few days from the beginning of the project with no need to subscribe guarantees. The EU, in fact, prevents any possible problem retaining a percentage (5%) of the maximum grant amount and transferring it into the “Guarantee Fund”.

A meaningful increase in the % of regional pre-financing would be therefore very suitable for SMEs, avoiding them possible financial unbalances due to the need to make the majority of investments at the beginning of the project. If also possible, new and less bureaucratic ways to introduce guarantees for the Region should be identified.

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 14. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)



The action proposed is budgetary but of regulatory/organisational nature, in fact it has no impact on overall ERDF budget.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to introduce a meaningfully higher % of pre-financing to beneficiaries of the regional calls under ERDF 2021-2027;
- The Region to make the pre-financing automatic, and not upon request;
- The Region to identify a different way – not representing extra costs for beneficiaries, furthermore not eligible – to secure a guarantee on the funds anticipated.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 14 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 14 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

4. **Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 14*)

The timeframe necessary to adopt the decision can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new percentages of pre-financing and guarantee should be introduced from the first ERDF open calls the Region will launch.

5. **Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 14*)

No costs will be generated, as the action only has a financial (not an economic) impact. The Region, in fact, should only make earlier the payment of funds assigned as grants.

6. **Funding sources** (*please describe how action 14 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II*):

n.a.

## **ACTION 15**

Name of the action: **R&I Call for proposals – Proposal template**

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?*)

**Recommendation coming from RECORD Stakeholders' meetings (SMEs, Large Companies, Academia, Research Organisations) in November 2018 and March 2019 and Companies' Survey**



**(SMEs, Large Companies) in April-May 2019. Suitable to improve ROP Toscana instrument 1.1.5 Support to pilot actions, early validation of products and large-scale demonstration.**

“The modification and simplification of proposal template” is one suggestion made by the Stakeholders when asked *things that could be implemented to make it more effective and of impact*.

The current template in use is considered too complex and long. It is suggested to use a template like the one for Horizon 2020 (clear and consistent parts and a max number of pages).

The use of Horizon 2020 template (future Horizon Europe) also for the regional R&I calls would have at least two benefits:

- Extracting from each project proposal the *actual* key elements to allow a clearer assessment of its *Excellence* and *Impact*, together with a clear *Implementation* part.
- Teaching *on the field* the regional companies to use the European template will surely build their capability to write European proposals (it is usually said the Italians are not good at drafting EU proposal), hence empowering them to exploit further R&I opportunities also on the European stage.

**2. Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 15. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The action proposed is of organisational nature, as it consists to adopt for the regional calls the same template in use for Horizon 2020 (new Horizon Europe) projects.

For this, the specific activities to be implemented should be:

- The Region to adopt the approach and template in use under Horizon 2020 (new Horizon Europe) programme;
- To test, measure and fine-tune the impact of the new template on future regional calls and also on the successful participation – on the medium-long term - of Tuscan companies and research organisations to EU R&I calls.

**3. Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action 15 and explain their role*)

The Stakeholder to be involved in the implementation of the Action 15 is:

- The Tuscany Region - Government: the *ERDF Managing Authority* to take the necessary decisional and technical actions to the scope.

**4. Timeframe** (*please specify the timing envisaged for action 15*)

The timeframe necessary to adopt the decision can go in parallel with the ongoing drafting of the ERDF ROP 2021-2027. The new template should be introduced from the first open calls for R&I projects the Region will launch.

**5. Costs** (*please estimate the costs related to the implementation of action 15*)



No extra costs should derive from this for the Region.

6. **Funding sources** (please describe how action 15 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):

n.a.

**Date:** 25/09/2020

**Name of the organisation(s) :**

DITECFER Distretto per le Tecnologie Ferroviarie, l'Alta Velocità e la Sicurezza delle Reti

**Signatures of the relevant organisation:**

President of DITECFER: Mr Daniele Matteini

Coordinator of DITECFER and Responsible of the RECORD project: Ms Veronica Elena Bocci

**DITECFER S.C.A.R.L.**  
Via Sandro Pertini, 358  
I-51100 PISTOIA  
P. IVA e C.F. IT01842130476