



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

04.09.2017

### **NICHE - Building innovative food value chains in regions**

Tartu Science Park as a partner in the NICHE project co-funded by the Interreg Europe Program is calling for proposals for carrying out the following task **“Producing a regional Action Plan concerning innovative food value chain in South Estonia”**.

#### **1. Project summary / Background**

The food sector as a whole is faced with major challenges that arise from changes in the sector’s economic and noneconomic environments. The availability of safe, sustainable and healthy food has taken a new and pressing dimension in the light of the growing global population and increasing environmental and sustainability concerns. Technology has already substantially reshaped the business models, value chains and efficiencies in this sector, but a new wave of driven innovation is needed to give response to this new demand. A special feature of the food production sector in Europe is that the 99% of the enterprises, generating 50% of the turnover, are SMEs. These current challenges cannot be met by any individual enterprise, but require concerted actions and coordination of initiatives. Aware of the role that innovation may have in giving response to this demanding sector, the NICHE project wish to realize its potential by effectively promoting policies in 7 European regions where food has been identified as a key sector to apply existing research and innovation strengths.

By working together the NICHE partnership aims, by 2019 and through the improvement of existing policies, achieve an average 15% increase in the adoption of research and innovation solutions by food sector companies in their regions to give response to the demand of this sector identified as a high potential sector for their smart growth. In doing so is key the creation of the right conditions to maximize all this existing potential in the way of establishing effective open innovation ecosystems, at both regional and interregional level, that will bring together all the relevant actors to facilitate technology and knowledge exchange that will be translated in new products and services.

NICHE project addresses the issue of effectively promote regional innovation policies as a key driver to give response to the demands of the food sector in 7 European regions where it has been identified as a key sector to apply existing research and innovation strengths for their socioeconomic development based on smart growth.

Regarding Interreg Europe program, the project directly tackles the Specific Objective 1.2: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, European Territorial Cooperation programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by players in regional innovation chains in areas of “smart specialisation” and innovation opportunity. NICHE project is conceptualized and built on the strengths of the participating regions on a particular smart specialisation, in this case the food sector. Interregional



cooperation will become a key factor in helping regions to learn from their peers as well as exchanging experiences that can be integrated and implemented to guarantee a regional development based on a more effective introduction of the existing innovation capacity.

The project implementation period is 1.4.2016-31.3.2020. The period is divided into two phases, the first one in 1.4.2016-31.3.2018 and the second phase between 1.4.2018-31.3.2020. The action plan shall be finalized at the end of phase one and then implemented and monitored during the second two-year-phase. The project has altogether seven partners from seven countries all over the EU. The lead partner is the Regional Development Agency of the West Region Romania.

In South-Estonia the policy instruments to be addressed are:

- 1) Tartu County Development Strategy 2014-2020. The project addresses the priority: Tartu County in entrepreneurship, Subpriority: 4.1.3. Self-realization in entrepreneurship. The main goal of this policy is to improve living and working conditions. The expected results of this policy include an improved business environment and new jobs, incl. jobs with higher value added.  
Additional aims are establishment of focused and coordinated entrepreneurship policy, increase of innovation, development competence and capacity.  
These themes are relevant so that SMEs would be competitive in the global economy, would increase their productivity and capacity to export.
- 2) Southern Estonia Smart Specialization Strategy. One of the Smart Specialization areas that were selected on a regional level for South Estonia is:
  - food industry, especially dairy and functional foods.

By participating in NICHE, the Tartu Science Park aims at specified the political instruments under section 4.1.3. in the Tartu County Development Strategy 2014-2020 and chapter 2, 4 and 9 in the Southern Estonia Smart Specialization Strategy. Tartu Science Park hopes to find solutions from other European countries. The solutions should be analyzed and modified for the local circumstances. By making a regional Action Plan, there is a possibility to find executable European solutions that support the policy instrument and influences the Tartu County Development Strategy 2014-2020 and the Southern Estonia Smart Specialization Strategy.

### **The policy defined indicators in the NICHE project application for South Estonia region:**

**Indicator: % of enterprises that export their goods and/or services in respective Smart Specialization growth area.**

**Target: 70%** (figure only referring to healthy food). *Baseline from 2014.*

## **2. Introduction to the key tasks**

The Action Plan is a crucial part of each partners output of the project. It is stated in the Interreg Europe project manual that the Action Plan should provide for each partner a concrete roadmap and a range of solutions on how to implement the local initiative. The action plan intends to improve the impact of



interregional exchange and learning on local policies, give concrete form to the implementation of the activities carried out by the partners and be an instrument for further change.

It is suggested that the Action Plan will follow the structure presented in the Annex I. In short, it should explain general information about the project, explain the policy context and the policy instrument addressed and finally, introduce coherent actions for the future. As stated in the previous chapter, the policy instruments to be addressed in South Estonia are Tartu County Development Strategy 2014-2020, the priority: Tartu County in entrepreneurship, Subpriority: 4.1.3 and the Southern Estonia Smart Specialization Strategy, vision and strategic activities in chapter 2 and 4, Smart Specialization area: food industry (especially dairy and functional foods).

The actions for the future should be based on the lessons learnt throughout the project. The good practices (Good Practice Booklet <https://www.interregeurope.eu/niche/library/> ) presented are of high importance when evaluating and planning the actions. Therefore, one of the important tasks is to carefully analyze the good practices from other regions and how they might be applied to our region. Although there can be other actions included as well. The Action Plan may also include actions such as setting up local stakeholder working groups, preparation of bids to be submitted in local/regional/national programmes, launch of new initiatives in the region, measures to amend or adapt a specific local policy document or instrument. The Action Plan should specify the nature of actions to be implemented, their time frame, players involved, costs (if any) and funding resources (if any).

The Action Plan is conducted and validated along with local companies and with the involvement of the managing authorities in Tartu Science Park. Communication and cooperation with Tartu Science Park and the local companies is important throughout the process.

Regional action plan definition:

- Follow a common methodology and defined structure, proposal of structure is in Annex 1.
- Action plan development integrating the lessons learnt and considering the findings from the regional assessment and other local context aspects.
- Consultation/involvement of the local companies is planned with a twofold objective, on one hand, they have the regional knowledge about the topic and the regional context, on the other this involvement can serve to get support and accountability to implement the plan. The Action Plan should be implemented by local companies.
- Peer review process: The idea is that the “exporting” regions will review the specific parts of the action plans drafted by the “importing” regions since they can make recommendations based on their knowledge and experience.

### 3. Key tasks

a) The expert will bring expert knowledge to the process of writing a regional Action Plan. The Action Plan will be written by the selected expert with the help of Tartu Science Park.

b) The Action Plan follows the suggested structure presented in the Annex I. Changes are possible. It consists of a general introduction about the project, an explanation of the policy context and the addressed policy instrument and most importantly coherent actions for future to specify the addressed



policy instrument. The need for expertise is especially in the definition and writing of the concrete actions for the future.

It is important for the actions to be based on the lessons learnt throughout the project and to be conducted and validated along with the local companies. Therefore, there needs to be a high commitment to cooperate with the local companies. The expert should arrange workshops or other types of activities to ensure the input to the Action Plan from the local companies. A thorough analysis of the good practices from other regions is also an important task in the process.

#### 4. Instructions to be considered

- a) The number of actions is not defined beforehand, but it should be scaled so that they are possible to implement within 2 years of time (by the beginning of 2020).
- b) There is a peer review process during the end stage of the Action Plan procedure. The action plan should then be reflected and adjusted after this process. Peer review is planned to be held from 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017 until January/February 2018 according to the project workplan (Action Plan draft should be ready by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017).
- c) Action Plan should be finished by 16th of March 2018. The Action Plan is to be written in English and in Estonian.
- d) While conducting the Action Plan all the rules and instructions from the Interreg Europe secretariat must be taken into consideration. It is possible that new instructions and changes occur during the process.

#### 5. Content for tenders

The proposals shall demonstrate your knowledge of the project requirements and understanding of the key tasks. The proposal shall include at least the following matters:

1. Clear description of the content, approach, methodology and timetable of the work for all the tasks described above.
2. Description of the ways you communicate and co-work with the contracting party and local companies.
3. Description of the competences and references of the bidding organization and the responsible experts within the organization (Curriculum vitae)
4. Budget plan. The budget plan should be broken down into the following cost categories: expertise per unit costs (daily fee rate, number of persons and days), general costs (materials), organizing seminars /workshops and possible travel expenses. **The maximum amount available for the tasks is 7 500 EUR.**

#### 6. Schedule and process



European Union  
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The proposals shall be submitted in English in electronic form via e-mail to [ingrid.hunt@teaduspark.ee](mailto:ingrid.hunt@teaduspark.ee) by the **19th of September 2017** the latest.

The actual work could start on October 2017 or as soon as the selection procedure is finalized.

## 7. Evaluation and criteria

The proposal shall be evaluated according to the following criteria. The total amount of points is 100.

- a) The adequacy, quality and cost efficiency of the proposed work plan, approach and methodology responding to the key tasks. (50 points)
- b) The qualifications, experience and competence of the proposed expert(s) for the assignment, especially relating to:
  - a. Food sector as described in the Southern Estonia Smart Specialization Strategy, chapter 2, 4 and 9 (especially its functions, possibilities for SMEs and its national and regional policy context) (20 points).
  - b. South-Estonian region and its economy (20 points).
  - c. Qualifications for preparing successful strategies or action plans (10 points).

## 8. Contacts

The contact person in the Tartu Science Park is:

Project Coordinator Ingrid Hunt, tel. +372 51 252 98, [ingrid.hunt@teaduspark.ee](mailto:ingrid.hunt@teaduspark.ee)



Annex 1: Action plan template.

## Action plan template

### Part I – General information

Project:

Partner organisation:

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country:

NUTS2 region:

Contact person (email address and phone number):

### Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact (choose one):

Investment for Growth and Jobs programme

European Territorial Cooperation programme

Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the Policy Instrument addressed:

### Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

#### ACTION 1

1. **The background** (please describe the region and the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)
2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)
3. **Players/local companies involved** (please indicate the companies in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)
4. **Timeframe**





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5. **Costs** (if relevant)
6. **Funding sources** (if relevant)
7. **Expected/possible impact on SMEs** (if relevant)
8. **Expected/possible impact on innovation** (if relevant)

**ACTION 2 ...**

**ACTION 3 ...**

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Date:

Signature:

Stamp of the organisation (if available):



**TARTU SCIENCE PARK**

*25 years Home of Business*