



# GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

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# REGIOSTARS 2023

REGIOSTARS are the yearly competition organised by DG REGIO since 2008: it has become Europe's label of excellence for EU-funded projects, which demonstrate the impact and inclusiveness of regional development. From 2023, we are introducing some novelties to the competition, the first one being that projects can compete in six categories, detailed here below, which will stay constant throughout the years. By putting forward solutions to common challenges and tapping into the biggest opportunities, the REGIOSTARS have inspired regions to deliver evermore-impactful EU regional policy. We encourage applications from comparatively less-developed regions in Europe and from all programme areas. The online application platform is open from 27 February until 31 May 2023.

The REGIOSTARS are awarded to projects in six thematic categories.:

- Category 1) A COMPETITIVE AND SMART EUROPE
- Category 2) A GREEN EUROPE
- Category 3) A CONNECTED EUROPE
- Category 4) A SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE EUROPE
- Category 5) A EUROPE CLOSER TO THE CITIZENS
- Category 6) TOPIC OF THE YEAR (European Year of Skills 2023)

The selection process was also revised. Firstly, a panel of high-level academics in the respective fields will assess the submitted applications and select the finalists. Secondly, the finalists will be invited to a "final round" of selection during the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels.

As in previous years, the public will have the opportunity to vote for their favourite finalist for the Public Choice Award. All winners will be announced during the REGIOSTARS ceremony in Ostrava (Czech Republic) on 16 November 2023.

The winners of the six categories will get a local communication campaign managed in cooperation with DG REGIO to promote the awarded activities in the region.

This guide for applicants provides you with all the necessary information to make your project a winner. Next to the detailed description of the award categories and the eligibility and award criteria, the guide contains practical information on the application process.

We are looking forward to receiving your project application, and good luck!  
The REGIOSTARS team

# Competition categories

## Category 1 – A competitive and smart Europe

Category 1 focusses on projects in support of Policy Objective 1, to achieve a competitive and smart Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity.

The single market is at the heart of the European project, enabling people, services, goods and capital to move freely, offering opportunities for European businesses and greater choice and lower prices for consumers. It enables citizens to travel, live, work or study wherever they wish. Overall, it helps the European cities and regions to deepen their integration into the European Union. It is a major objective to provide a frictionless single market, where companies of all sizes and in any sector can compete on equal terms, and can develop, market and use digital technologies, products and services at a scale that boosts their productivity and global competitiveness, and where consumers can be confident that their rights are protected. Through a single market, the European Union is committed to strengthen its position on the global market, become a global digital player, and to provide a fair and competitive digital economy, as laid out in the European Digital Strategy “A Europe fit for the digital age”. The EU’s digital strategy aims to make this transformation work for people and businesses, while helping to achieve its target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050.

We are looking for good projects that promote innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity. This includes projects that enhance digitalisation processes and show innovative approaches to implementing RIS strategies involving stakeholders. Projects that prepare European SMEs for competing in a globalised economy are welcome and may involve, for example, activities that develop new technology and products, improve innovation systems, build competitiveness through design and creative industries, foster social entrepreneurialism, enhance social and service innovation, support new business models and practice-based innovations. Contributing to sustainable regional innovation systems and furthering the job market in the digital industries could be features of such projects.

### Useful references

- European Digital Strategy: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en)
- European Industrial Strategy: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en)
- Smart Specialisation Platform: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>
- European Single Market Strategy: [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/single-market-strategy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/single-market-strategy_en)

## Category 2 – A green Europe

Category 2 focusses on projects in support of Policy Objective 2, to achieve a green and resilient Europe promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility.

The European Union strives to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. With the ambitious European Green Deal the European Union aims to improve the well-being and health of citizens and future generations by providing (1) fresh air, clean water, healthy soil and biodiversity, (2) renovated, energy efficient buildings, (3) healthy and affordable food, (4) more public transport, (5) cleaner energy and cutting-edge clean technological innovation, (6) longer lasting products that can be repaired, recycled and re-used, (7) future-proof jobs and skills training for the transition as well as a (8) globally competitive and resilient industry. As such the Green Deal is an important framework. With the REPowerEU Plan the EU aims to support the saving of energy, producing clean energy and diversifying the energy supplies. To achieve climate neutrality the Commission proposed the European Climate Law, which also sets a new, more ambitious net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least -55% by 2030, compared to the level of 1990. At the heart of the European Green deal lies the preservation and protection of Europe's seas, oceans, and environment which are a source of natural and economic wealth for Europe. For example, the EU Green Deal foresees to plant 3 billion additional trees by 2030. Overall, it includes to protecting the EU's biodiversity and ecosystems, reducing air, water and soil pollution, moving towards a circular economy, improving waste management and ensuring the sustainability of the blue economy and fisheries sectors. Europe also aims for a shift in the agricultural and food system that makes the EU the global leader in terms of safety, security of supply, nutrition and quality.

We are looking for good projects that promote a greener and more resilient Europe and help achieve the European Union's Green Deal goals of climate neutrality, and improve the environmental conditions. Amongst others, projects can include investments in green initiatives that improve air and water quality, promote sustainable agriculture, preserve environmental systems. Creating an effective circular economy, transforming towards a resource- efficient economy or transitioning to renewables can also be features of such projects.

### Useful references

- European Green Deal: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)
- Farm to Fork: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en)
- Environmental Policy: [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/index_en)

## Category 3 – A connected Europe

Category 3 focusses on projects in support of Policy Objective 3, to enhance mobility and connectivity.

A connected, modern, secure and smart infrastructure will be key to achieving cohesion and to delivering the European Green Deal. As such the European Union is committed to support the development of high performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the fields of transport, energy and digital services. Transport policy at the European level aims to ensure the smooth, efficient, safe and free movement of people and goods throughout the EU by means of integrated networks using all modes of transport (road, rail, water and air). Energy Policy works towards a continent-wide energy system where energy is flowing freely across borders, based on competition with effective regulation of energy markets at EU level where necessary, and to deliver secure energy provision to citizens. As such the Energy Union outlines the goal of a resilient Energy Union with an ambitious climate policy at its core. This means to provide EU consumers – households and businesses – with secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy. At the same time, in its Digital Strategy, the EU formulates the goal for Europe to be the most connected continent by 2030. In order to achieve this, for example, the EU is developing harmonised rules for connectivity services, introduced the European electronic communications code, supports wireless networks such as 5G or ended roaming charges in the EU. Yet, the main goal for connectivity in the Digital Decade is to have access to high-speed internet coverage for every European household by 2025 and gigabit connectivity by 2030. The Connecting Europe Facility allows for investments that fill the missing links in Europe's energy, transport and digital backbone.

We are looking for good projects that promote the delivery of a more connected Europe. This includes projects that support efficient, safe and environmentally friendly mobility solutions within the EU that create the conditions for a competitive industry generating growth and jobs. These can also include wide-ranging issues such as passenger rights or clean fuels. Projects can also help achieve goals of the Trans European Networks in the field of energy, transport or digital connectivity. Explicitly, projects can showcase the development of new energy or transport infrastructure, or the rehabilitation or upgrading of existing one. They can also showcase the development of safe, secure and sustainable high-performance infrastructure including Gigabit and 5G networks; increased capacity and resilience of digital backbone infrastructures; or the digitalisation of transport and energy networks.

Useful references:

- Digital Agenda for Europe: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/64/digital-agenda-for-europe>
- Digital Strategy for Europe: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/connectivity>
- Energy Policy: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/68/energy-policy-general-principles>
- Energy Union Strategy: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2015:80:FIN>
- Connecting Europe Facility: [https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/connecting-europe-facility\\_en](https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/connecting-europe-facility_en)
- Transport Policy: [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/facts-fundings\\_en](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/facts-fundings_en)

## Category 4 – A social and inclusive Europe

Category 4 focusses on projects in support of Policy Objective 4, to achieve a more social and inclusive Europe by implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The European Union is based on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. In line with that, the EU is taking huge efforts in combating discrimination of any kind and enhancing the equality of treatment of all Europeans, including gender equality, integration of migrants, and the accessibility for disabled persons. Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights clarifies that any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation is against the values of a European Model of Society and shall be prohibited in the EU. In line with these, the 20 principles under the European Pillar of Social Rights are guiding the EU towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive and full of opportunity for everyone. This includes equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and the right to adequate social protection and inclusion. The ensuing Action Plan shall assure to reach three ambitious targets until 2030. First, this is to have at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 in employment; second, to have at least 60% of all adults participating in training every year; and third, to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million people.

We are looking for good projects that contribute to a more inclusive society at large, non-discrimination of any person, and gender equality within and beyond the EU. In particular, projects shall be supportive of the 20 principles as well as of the three targets of the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This may, for example, involve activities on the labour market, in the education sector, in local communities and international networks. Explicitly, projects shall demonstrate innovation in terms of fostering active inclusion of discriminated persons or persons at the risk of discrimination, easing the reintegration of disadvantaged persons into the labour market, contributing to gender equality and diversity through management strategies, or creating jobs in course of integration work and anti-discrimination efforts. As well, projects are welcome that engage with child, elderly, or health care and contribute to a good work-life balance.

Useful references:

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights_en)
- The European Pillar of Social Rights: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en)
- The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en)
- DG JUST, Gender Equality: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality_en)

## Category 5 – A Europe closer to the citizens

Category 5 focusses on projects in support of Policy Objective 5, to foster the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.

The European Union is committed to the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas through local initiatives. Key to achieving European Cohesion is to overcome multi-thematic challenges for an integrated regional development across sectors. With the introduction of this cross-cutting Policy Objective, the EU aims to recognise the importance of integrated investment strategies targeting different territorial scales – for example cities, rural areas, metropolitan areas and functional regions) where people work, live and commute daily. The EU thus aims to respond to the challenges identified within a certain territory, for which local stakeholders develop local solutions. Having an explicit territorial focus means that needs, challenges and opportunities for development must match the appropriate spatial scale and territorial context. The Commission recognizes the role of small and medium size cities and functional area approaches as important driving forces for regional and rural attractiveness and development by creating positive spill-over effects between urban areas and other territories, and reinforcing urban-rural linkages. During 2021-2027, in each Member State at least 8% of the ERDF resources are set aside for cities of all sizes and their metropolitan and functional areas through territorial and/or local development strategies, i.e. using Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), Community-led Local Development (CLLD) but also similar tools supporting integrated approaches designed by Member States. Territorial strategies provide the opportunity to build capacity and initiate local actions contributing to European policies, including green and digital transitions.

We are looking for good projects that support the implementation of local and regional strategies, such as, for example, Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies or territorial and local development strategies. Projects can also showcase specific areas of improvement for citizens daily life and support capacity building. Projects aim to help the region encounter specific development challenges in a functional urban area or territory and develop specific place-based solutions for the citizens.

### Useful references

- European Citizens Initiative: [https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/get-involved/european-citizens-initiative\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/get-involved/european-citizens-initiative_en)
- Territorial Cohesion: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/what/territorial-cohesion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/what/territorial-cohesion_en)
- Handbook of Urban Development Strategies: <https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/urbanstrategies/territorial-focus#the-chapter>
- Handbook of Territorial and Local Development Strategies: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC130788>

## Category 6 – TOPIC OF THE YEAR: European Year of Skills 2023

Category 6 is devoted to the European Year of Skills 2023. The European Union targets at enhancing upskilling and reskilling, as well as developing skills intelligence tools.

The European Union is increasingly developing into a knowledge-intensive economy. Therefore, its labour markets call for highly qualified and skilled workers. Skilled workers will enjoy better job opportunities and fully engage in society. This is key to ensure that the economic recovery as well as the green and digital transitions are socially fair and just. The European Year of Skills will give a fresh impetus to lifelong learning, empowering people and companies to contribute to the green and digital transitions, supporting innovation and competitiveness. It will help companies, in particular small and medium enterprises, to address skills shortages in the European Union and to promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling, helping people to get the right skills for quality jobs. Currently, more than three quarters of companies in the EU say they have difficulties finding workers with the necessary skills; in particular, this concerns jobs in industries of high-technology and digitalisation. Challenging drivers around the European skills agenda are, amongst others, the proceeding of the demographic change towards an ageing society and the global crises that impact on Europe. The rapid shift towards a climate neutral Europe and digital transformation is changing the way we work, learn, take part in society and live our everyday lives. Europe can only grasp these opportunities if its people develop the right skills. For this, the European Skills Agenda has set out a five year action plan with 12 actions to help equip people in Europe with better skills.

We are looking for good projects that support workers in need to acquire new skills and move to new jobs in a different sector of economy or in need to upskill to keep their job in a new work environment. These can be projects that engage with labour market services to improve and innovate vocational trainings and education. As well, projects are welcome that support firms in upskilling and reskilling people and to re-integrate people into the labour market; in particular long term unemployed, women, as well as young people who are not in training or education. Additionally, there may be projects that enable to attract needed specialists and talent from third country.

### Useful references

- European Year of Skills 2023: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-year-skills-2023\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-year-skills-2023_en)
- European Skills Agenda: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1196](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1196)
- Pact for Skills: [https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en)

# Eligibility and Award Criteria

## **Eligibility criteria**

All applications for the REGIOSTARS Awards shall meet the following **eligibility criteria**:

- a) The application shall be submitted via the REGIOSTARS online platform no later than 31 May 2023, 23:59:59 CET.
- b) Applications must be in one of the official EU languages.
- c) The application shall include an endorsement letter of the relevant Managing Authority. The endorsement letter – a filled endorsement form signed by the head of the Managing Authority or an email with the equivalent information from the Head of the Managing Authority confirming endorsement – should be uploaded as a PDF together with the application. (Please note that it is possible to submit up to five projects per programme. The Managing Authority is responsible for respecting the limit.)
- d) The application shall refer to a project that has received EU co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, Just Transition Fund or a project which has received EU funding under any strand of Interreg programmes, starting earliest on 1 January 2014.
- e) Only completed projects are considered. A completed project is a project which has carried out all the planned activities, has received its final financial contribution and has been declared closed by the project beneficiary and/or the Managing Authority.
- f) The project must clearly refer to one of the 6 award categories. The same project cannot be submitted for several categories.

## **Award criteria**

All eligible applications will be assessed by the REGIOSTARS jury against the following **award criteria**:

Cohesion	The contribution of the project to economic, social and territorial cohesion at large; with a supranational to European perspective. A project's added value in relation to cohesion will be evaluated here.
Impact	The local and regional impact of the project and the quality of the final results. How did the project change something for the better in its region?
Innovation	The innovative character of the project within the logic of the selected award category. What is new? What has not been done before? Innovation may be understood in economic, social and/or ecological terms.
Sustainability	The potential of the project to last into the future, in terms of economic sustainability. Efforts of the project to live beyond the actual project life-time should be demonstrated.
Citizens	How citizens and actors of civil society got involved in the development and/or implementation of the project.
Transferability	The potential of the project to be transferred to other regions in Europe and, in the best case, to be upscaled and rolled out across the European Union.

# Selection process

Starting from this year, the selection process has been revised, with a two-step approach replacing the former procedure for selecting winners. In a nutshell, the process will work in this way:

- By 31 May 2023, you submit your application, including the endorsement letter by your Managing Authority.
- By 10 July (TBC), an independent jury composed of academic experts in the fields of competition will select up to a maximum of 5 finalists per category. The selection will be based on the submitted application form.
- From 14 September to 14 November, an online public vote will be open to choose the Public Choice Award among all finalists.
- Finalists will be invited to Brussels during the European Week of Regions and Cities for a final selection round. Here, they will be asked to:
  - Deliver a short project pitch in front of the jurors and the audience
  - Have a short panel discussion with jurors

Please note that the final selection round will be carried out in English.

By the date of the REGIOSTARS ceremony (16 November) jurors, in coordination with DG REGIO, will decide one winner for each category.

- Winners, including the Public Choice Award winner, will be announced during the REGIOSTARS ceremony in Ostrava, Czech Republic, on 16 November.

# Practical guide to the REGIOSTARS 2023

## 1. Is my project a good candidate for the REGIOSTARS competition?

### 1.1. What is the Commission looking for in this competition?

The Commission is looking for impactful EU-funded projects that contribute to Europe's cohesion. The awards scheme encompasses six categories, five of which are familiar from the cohesion policy objectives and the topic of the year, which changes every year.

### 1.2. What are the competition categories?

The six competition categories are:

- Category 1) A COMPETITIVE AND SMART EUROPE
- Category 2) A GREEN EUROPE
- Category 3) A CONNECTED EUROPE
- Category 4) A SOCIAL AND INCLUSIVE EUROPE
- Category 5) A EUROPE CLOSER TO THE CITIZENS
- Category 6) TOPIC OF THE YEAR (European year of Skills 2023)

A more detailed description of the categories and an indication of the projects that could be relevant for meeting the award criteria are presented at the beginning of this Guide.

Projects should apply within the category that corresponds to the policy objective under which they have been funded. For the projects funded during the 2014-2020 period, the applicants should refer to the competition category corresponding to the thematic objective under which they have been funded as indicated in the conversion table (annex 1).

Projects wishing to apply in the 'Topic of the year' -category can be funded under any policy or thematic objective, but its objectives and achievements should be aligned clearly with the category description.

The same project cannot be submitted for several categories.

### 1.3. Which types of EU co-funded projects are eligible?

All projects which received funding from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (including Interreg), Cohesion Fund (CF), European Social Fund (ESF) and European Social Fund +, Just Transition Fund, and any Interreg strand.

In terms of funding periods, projects from both the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 period are eligible. Please note that only completed projects are eligible.

In addition, projects and initiatives that combine the aforementioned funds with other EU funds are welcome.

Eligibility criteria are presented in a specific section of this guide ('Eligibility and Award Criteria').

#### **1.4. Can I submit a project that started before 2014?**

No. The starting date of the project must be earliest 1 January 2014.

#### **1.5. Can I submit a recently completed project?**

Yes. Only completed projects are eligible.

#### **1.6. Is there a maximum number of applications?**

Yes. A maximum of five applications per programme can be submitted. The Managing Authority of the programme ensures with its endorsement that this maximum number is respected.

### **2. How do I submit my project?**

#### **2.1. How does it work in a nutshell?**

You fill in the online application and upload an endorsement letter from your managing authority by the deadline indicated. Endorsement letters may be in the form of the filled-in template available on the [online platform](#) or an e-mail with the equivalent information by the Head of the Managing Authority, uploaded as a PDF file. *That's it!*

#### **2.2. Where do I submit the application?**

On the REGIOSTARS online platform: <http://www.regiostarsawards.eu>

#### **2.3. When is the deadline for submission?**

31 May 2023 23:59:59 CET

#### **2.4. Who should submit the application?**

Applications must be submitted by the project promoter (= the organization who was responsible for the implementation of the project). The application form shall be accompanied by the endorsement letter, signed by the Managing Authority. The form for the letter is available on the [online platform](#). Also, an email with the equivalent information from the head of the Managing Authority confirming endorsement, uploaded on the platform as a PDF, can replace the endorsement letter.

#### **2.5. In which language can I submit the application?**

Applications can be submitted in one of the official EU languages. All applications will be machine translated into English for the assessment of the jury.

#### **2.6. How do I indicate the localisation of my project?**

You either indicate the geographical coordinates or the exact address of the building where the project is located.

For projects with several locations or no fixed location (e.g. employment projects or SME funding), please select the most emblematic one (e.g. where most important investment took place) or choose the location of the project promoter (e.g. the headquarters of the funding agency). This information is used to display the locations of all projects on our website.

**2.7. Can I submit a project that had already been submitted at an earlier edition of the REGIOSTARS?**

Yes, projects can be re-submitted once.

**2.8. Can I send the application also by email?**

No. To help you prepare your application, we provide you with the application form in Microsoft Word format. However, applications have to be submitted directly via the REGIOSTARS online platform: [www.regiostarsawards.eu](http://www.regiostarsawards.eu)

**2.9. Does the application have to be submitted in one step? Or can the application be saved and completed at a later date?**

Applications can be saved at any stage of the process and completed at a later date before submission. The application will only be finalised once you click on 'submit'.

**2.10. Why does the application form contain two points where project descriptions have to be submitted?**

The short, catchy project description will be used for communication purposes. Please provide here an easily understandable description which demonstrates to the wider public why your project is exceptional and how it contributes to improving the life of Europeans. This section of your application form is going to be used without major alteration, e.g. for the purposes of the Public Choice Award as a short description of your project.

The longer "description of project" is intended for the jury to get to know the project. Here you are invited to provide a longer, professional project description with all the relevant information you deem necessary for the jury to evaluate your project.

**2.11. What is the information requested under "impact of the project"?**

We suggest writing this section of the application form while thinking of all the positive effects that would not have happened in case the project would not have been implemented.

**2.12. Which technical requirements do the images have to meet?**

You are requested to submit high-resolution pictures that are going to be used on various communication channels, for instance in printed materials, online and for an exhibition, both during and after the competition. These pictures should be at least 300 dpi or 10 MB or more.

We also request you to declare that the organisation you represent is the copyright owner of the images and thus have all the relevant rights, including the authorisations of the identifiable persons in the image, and that the images can be used by the European Commission for the purposes of promoting the REGIOSTARS Awards and EU Regional Policy on all platforms (websites, print, social media and other).

### **2.13. What happens once my project is submitted?**

After the end of application period, all the project applications will go through an eligibility check. The eligible project applications will be submitted to the jury evaluation. All eligible projects will also be published on the REGIOSTARS online platform. Projects will be informed about the results of the eligibility check. Please refer to the section “selection process” and annex 1 “timetable” of this guide for further info.

### **2.14. How does the public vote work?**

An online voting system will be open from 14 September to 14 November. During this period the public will have the possibility to vote for their favourite project among the finalists. The project with the most votes receives the Public Choice Award. We highly recommend the finalist projects and their Managing Authorities to organise a communication campaign/action in order to promote their participation in the public vote.

### **2.15. Who can I contact if I have questions?**

Please send your enquiries about the application process by email to: [contact@regiostarsawards.eu](mailto:contact@regiostarsawards.eu)

## **3. What is the Managing Authority’s role?**

### **3.1. What does a Managing Authority have to do?**

The managing authority has a two-fold role:

- Providing the applicant with a signed endorsement form or an email with the equivalent information and ensuring that a maximum of 5 projects per programme are submitted;
- Participating in the awards ceremony with the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms regional policy with all finalist projects (costs are borne by the Commission).

### **3.2. Why does the Managing Authority need to endorse the project application?**

First, the Managing Authority ensures that no more than five applications per operational programme are submitted. Second, the Managing Authority provides an indication to the Commission, whether or not the project been subject to any type of investigation, which could lead to a financial correction linked to irregularities or fraud.

### **3.3. Can I submit a project without the endorsement of the Managing Authority?**

No.

### **3.4. Are there any limitations concerning the number of applications by category?**

No, this is completely up to the programmes (programmes may even have 5 applications in one single category). Overall, managing authorities are free to use whatever selection process they deem appropriate to identify the endorsed projects for their programme.

### **3.5. Can an intermediate body sign on behalf of the Managing Authority?**

Yes. However, the intermediate body shall ensure coordination with the Managing Authority.

### **3.6. What is meant by ‘the representative’ of the Managing Authority in the application form?**

It is up to the Managing Authority to decide who signs the endorsement letter. In some cases, it may be the head of the Managing Authority itself, in other cases it could also be the programme manager or the communication officer (particularly in the case of larger programmes).

### **3.7. What if the Managing Authority...?**

If the Managing Authority in charge of the 2014-2020 programme has ceased to exist or changed, the Managing Authority in charge of the 2021-2027 programme (that succeeds the 2014-2020 programme) should endorse the application.

If the same Managing Authority is in charge of several programmes, it can endorse up to five projects per programme. If successive programmes (2014-2020 and 2021-2027) cover the same territory and in essence the same themes, there should nevertheless be only five projects presented for the entire timespan since 2014.

## **4. How is my project assessed – and what happens after?**

### **4.1. How does the jury evaluation process look like?**

Please refer to the section “selection process” of this guide for applicants.

Only applications which satisfy the eligibility criteria will be admitted to the jury. In the first phase of the evaluation, the jury will assess the applications taking into account the award criteria and select up to five finalists for each category. In the second stage, the jury will meet the finalists for a project pitch and a panel discussion, during which they will have the opportunity to ask further questions about the project, based on which they will take their decision on the winners.

Please read the sections related to the eligibility and award criteria carefully for further details.

### **4.2. Who sits in the jury?**

The jury is composed of 18 high-level academic members, which are nominated by the Commission. Members of the jury work in teams of three (based on their expertise in a given award category) but take the final decision on the finalists and winners together as a group.

### **4.3. What happens if my project is selected as a finalist?**

All applicants will be informed about the jury decision on their project by 10 July (TBC), which is also when the finalists will be announced.

Following the announcement, the finalists are invited to nominate representative(s) to join the second evaluation phase as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels. Failure to participate to the second evaluation phase can be a reason for the European Commission to retract finalist nomination.

A half a day communication training will be organised prior to the event as a preparation. It is therefore strongly encouraged that the representative nominated to participate in the second selection phase also takes part in the training.

Please note that this second and the final round of the selection process will be carried out in English.

All finalists will automatically take part in the online voting for the Public Choice Award.

Finally, all finalists together with a Managing Authority representative are invited to take part in the Award Ceremony in Ostrava, Czechia.

For more precise information on the dates, please refer to the annex 2 of this guide for applicants. Costs for the participation in the above-mentioned events are borne by the Commission.

#### **4.4. What happens if my project wins?**

The winners of the REGIOSTARS will be announced at the award ceremony. The project manager and a representative from the Managing Authority will receive a REGIOSTARS trophy from the European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms.

Following the ceremony, the Commission will organise local mini campaigns with the collaboration of the winning project promoters and the Managing Authorities.

#### **4.5. When will the REGIOSTARS ceremony take place?**

Please refer to the timetable in the annex 2 of this guide for applicants.

# Annexes

## Annex 1. Conversion table

<b>Thematic Objectives 2014-2020</b>	<b>Policy Objectives 2021-2027</b>
TO 1; TO 2; TO3;	PO1- More competitive and smarter Europe
TO4; TO5; TO6	PO2- Greener and low carbon Europe
TO7	PO3- More connected Europe
TO8, TO9, TO10	PO4- More Social Europe
ITI, CLLD, UIA	PO5- Europe Closer to citizens

Projects from 2014-2020 falling under Thematic Objective 11 should be placed in one of the five categories according to their specific topic.

## Annex 2. Timetable REGIOSTARS 2023

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Competition launch	Wednesday 27 February
Deadline for applications	Wednesday 31 May
Information about the eligibility check	Friday 16 June
Announcement of the finalists	Monday 10 July (TBC)
Start of the Public Vote	Thursday 14 September
Online training on pitching project to finalists	During the week of 38 (18-22 September)
Finalists dinner with Commissioner	Tuesday 10 October
Finalists pitch to Jurors	Wednesday 11 October
End of the public vote	Tuesday 14 November
REGIOSTARS Ceremony	Thursday 16 November (in Ostrava)
Local campaigns with winners	From 1 <sup>st</sup> December on
Videos of local campaigns with winners	At launching date of REGIOSTARS 2024