



Application form
European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Scheme

EER 2013

1. Contact details

Applicant region	NORD PAS DE CALAIS REGION
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Please also fill in a **fact sheet** for your region. A template is available on the EER web page: www.cor.europa.eu/eer

2. Presentation of the political vision

Please describe your region's entrepreneurial potential in no more than 2 pages.

***Note:** the document should ideally contain a **SWOT analysis** of the region's entrepreneurial potential, a **broad political description** of what it wants to achieve within **the next 2 years**, and a presentation of the **resources at its disposal** to achieve this vision. The vision plan should focus on **areas** where the candidate region expects political measures to produce **tangible results** in the coming years.*

SWOT analysis

Regional weaknesses

- An economic history significantly affected by the industrial (textiles, iron and steel, etc.) and mining crises.
- An underdeveloped culture of entrepreneurialism in the region
- Unemployment rates above the national average
- Underinvestment in R&D (0.7% of the GDP in 2005)
- A lack of researchers in the region and under-representation of public research establishments
- Levels of entrepreneurship and business start-ups/takeovers below national figures
- Major groups making it difficult for SMBs to gain a foothold

Entrepreneurial strengths of the Nord Pas de Calais region

- A young population of almost 4 million people (36% of whom are under 25)
- A dynamic redeployment programme that has diversified the economy
- The widespread mobilisation of regional institutions and the private sector, made possible by consolidated funding plans
- Considerable human and financial resources invested in this area, with nearly €400 million allocated by the Conseil Régional over the last ten years
- A 242% increase in the number of business start-ups between 2002 and 2010 (compared with 190% nationally)
- A quality private/public partnership with promising results
- A culture of high quality managerial entrepreneurialism
- An attractive region for foreign investment (ranked 4th nationally)

Threats

- Widely dispersed tools and redundancy of operators on the ground
- A lack of understanding of innovation among SMBs
- Under-investment in young people, thereby weakening the region's economic recovery in the medium and long term
- Initiatives weighted disproportionately in favour of business start-ups, to the detriment of business takeovers
- The drain of young graduates from the region, despite a large student population

Opportunities

- The vibrancy of networks both on the ground and in economic and institutional environments
- The effectiveness of schemes implemented and their distribution across the region
- Improved collaboration between SMBs and large businesses through competitive clusters, centres of excellence and other clusters
- Presence of rapidly developing activity sectors: transport, health, innovative textiles, business and mass retail, and plastics technology
- A regional innovation strategy placed decisively at the heart of north-west Europe, and prioritising the initiatives to be taken and the sectors to be supported
- A substantial increase in the amount of national investment in research: Inria, Ircica, CNRS, etc.

Policy vision: To give the regional economic policy of Nord Pas de Calais a new lease of life

⇒ Mobilisation of the region's socio-economic sector to encourage the creation of new activities that have proved successful

The implementation in 2000 of the **PRCTE** (regional programme for business start-ups and transfers), which aimed to raise the profile of entrepreneurship among the local population (through TV and radio adverts) and identify, support, finance and monitor business creators and takeover management teams, was followed in 2005 by the establishment of the **SRDE** (regional economic development scheme), which was modelled on the now proven structure of the PRCTE.

The only regional plan to operate at both sectional and regional levels, designed and implemented in conjunction with the region's socio-economic sector, it prioritises entrepreneurialism whilst highlighting the importance of innovation, international markets, ICT, financial tools, competitive clusters, centres of excellence and economic intelligence. The SRDE decided that the ERDF operational programme and the regional and national development agreement (CPER) would run from 2007-2013.

The PRCTE was followed by the launch of specific action plans focusing on the **social and solidarity-based economy** in 2003, **trades** in 2007, **innovation** in 2008 and **business** in 2009. These programmes also include support mechanisms and financial tools specific to the activities concerned.

⇒ The SRIE (regional economic initiative strategy): the establishment of a new strategy that promotes a unique vision of entrepreneurship

Boosted by these joint efforts consolidated over a decade of equal sharing within the region's socio-economic sector and plentiful funding, and following the publication of the 2010 Degroote **Report** "Developing Entrepreneurship in the Nord Pas de Calais region", the region decided to follow the example of the **SRI** (regional innovation strategy) and give priority to regional economic initiative by co-producing a **SRIE** (regional economic initiative strategy) in conjunction with the education authority, the university, the delegation for women's rights and local businesses.

6 working groups each held three meetings during 2010-2011 aimed at producing a report on the current situation and identifying the obstacles, levers and cross-functional focus areas (male-female equality, assessment and communication) relevant to each group: academics, students, women, businesses and regions, which would also be the focus of assessments and research. **Phase 1** of the SRIE ended on 4 November 2011 with all six groups presenting the results of their work. In **phase 2**, a debate at regional level (in order to garner as much support as possible) aims to kick-start the official launch of the SRIE in the **last quarter of 2012**, as part of **European Entrepreneurship Week**.

However, the **SRIE** should be in a position to **begin operating** as of **January 2012**, along with the monitoring of action plans, particularly for the **women's entrepreneurship** and **school entrepreneurship** components. It will be tasked with mobilising human and financial resources alongside those in engineering and expertise right across the region, from both regional institutions and co-producers.

3. Action

Please present your action plan in no more than 8 pages.

Note:

*Candidate regions should list the measures they intend to launch in at least **four out of the six areas** listed in the run-up to the EER year and in the EER year itself and beyond, and demonstrate the overall **sustainability** of those measures.*

⇒ Introduction: Sustainability of the action plan

The sustainability of this action plan can be illustrated with reference to the following three points:

- Economic and entrepreneurial priorities are an integral part of the regional and national development agreement (CPER) and the priority focus areas of the ERDF operational programme. This means that the lever effect of European funds is fully exploited for co-funded projects and the principle of additionality also plays a valid role.
- In terms of funding, the budget allocated by the SRDE to economic development (2 billion 850 million euros between 2006 and 2010) is testament to the region's unwavering political determination.
- Regional partners are particularly aware that the ultimate aim is to bring about a genuine cultural revolution. This will require consistent and sustainable levels of involvement over time.

A- Implementation of the European Small Business Act at regional level

Principle 1: To create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can prosper and entrepreneurial initiative is rewarded

⇒ EER objectives for the PRCTE for the period 2010-2013

- an increase in business start-ups from 15,000 to 20,000 by 2013, with new targets: women, self-employed people under the “autoentrepreneur” scheme, continuation of efforts in the takeover sector.
- regionalisation of the PRCTE as part of PLDEs (local economic development programmes). Following the 2007-2010 phase of implementing PLDEs with a start-up component, work will be carried out between 2010 and 2013 to improve the coordination of actions led by PRCTE operators with the PLDE start-up component.
- improved coordination with the other SRDE programmes: innovation, competitive clusters, and the PRDESS (regional programme for the development of the social and solidarity-based economy). It should be noted that the growth of social entrepreneurship constitutes the 8th lever of the Single Market Act of 13 April 2011, since it is considered to be a source of employment and social inclusion.
- a more comprehensive range of financial tools to cover the various stages of life that a business will experience
- awareness raising: to pursue cultural change by developing the culture of entrepreneurialism and business creation, particularly among women and young people

Principle 6: To make it easier for SMBs to obtain finance and to establish a legal and commercial environment that encourages prompt payment for business transactions

The aim of enabling SMBs to obtain finance more easily, by exploring new finance methods such as risk capital, remains a priority for European policy, as it constitutes the first of the 12 levers of the Single Market Act “Working together to create new growth” [COMM (2011) 206 final] that came into force on 13 April 2011.

⇒ ***Current situation:***

There is currently a wide range of financial tools available to support those starting up or taking over a business, and to promote the growth of businesses in Nord Pas de Calais. These tools cover the majority of business needs, such as seed capital, guarantee funds, risk capital and development funds.

A study commissioned by the SRDE Regional Conference in 2009 highlighted several improvements to be incorporated into the current schemes, including:

- financing of high risk projects and businesses with potential
- boosting finance for budding projects
- increasing funds designed to finance projects generated by the social and solidarity-based economy.

Furthermore, there is insufficient public awareness of these tools, which actually accounted for regional funding of €20 million between 2006 and 2009, not to mention the contribution made by co-financers.

As part of the SRDE, coordination of the various regional financing organisations has remained an on-going effort, with the creation of an information and promotional portal for SMBs looking to obtain equity capital: www.jetrouvedesfondspropres.com

In terms of education, the IAE (business administration institute) has created a post-Master's degree in innovative project training.

⇒ ***EER objectives: To make the existing tools more transparent and straightforward, and to finance both new and high risk projects***

- Seed capital creation project (second round of financing - FINORPA) topped up by European funds, in anticipation of new financing methods put forward under the new European regional policy 2014/2020
- Project to overhaul the JEI (young innovative businesses) incubation programme

Principle 8: To encourage SMBs to improve their qualification levels and to promote innovation in all its forms

A Qualifications

⇒ ***Current situation:***

The issue of qualifications and human resources in SMBs constitutes one of the focus areas of the 2,000 SMBs Plan launched at the end of 2009. This SMB Plan (or objective) believes that, in the face

of change affecting markets and technology, greater responsiveness of the regional economic fabric and growth of regional innovation can be achieved by:

- making efforts to adapt the strategy of regional businesses, particularly SMBs, in order to differentiate themselves from the competition and acquire market share.
- making the right tools available to the aforementioned businesses, such as engineering, human resources and financial resources
- 700 businesses visited, with 280 action plans already implemented since April 2010

⇒ **EER objective: To provide SMBs with the engineering required for skill reinforcement, particularly in the areas of innovation and development**

- Setting up a pool of appropriately trained and equipped developers so as to be able to identify the needs of businesses, working closely with SMB managers: support for growth strategy, human resources, innovation, international development, etc.
- Mobilising 1,000 young graduates as business innovation volunteers (placements in first job) in order to ease their introduction into the workplace and help regional SMBs with their innovation projects.
- Identifying qualified “civil” project founders to implement innovative projects stemming from research in tandem with researchers.

B Innovation

As part of the Europe 2020 strategy and intelligent growth, innovation is backed by a flagship initiative called “A Union for Innovation”. This aims in particular to improve the framework conditions enabling businesses to innovate (European patents, copyright, etc.) and to continue developing European funding tools that support innovation.

⇒ **Current situation:**

Nord Pas de Calais numbers seven global¹ and national competitive clusters that aim to:

- develop the competitiveness of the economy by boosting innovation efforts
- consolidate in various areas hi tech, mainly industrial activities, or start-ups
- enhance the region’s attractiveness by making it more visible at international level

To reinforce this economic momentum, the Nord Pas de Calais region has decided to set up 11 economic centres of excellence and to organise the region into industries of excellence, using the following criteria:

- innovation (key technologies, processes/procedures, market, organisation system)
- the development of promotional actions at regional, national and international level
- businesses' human capital: training, recruitment of specific skills, e.g. innovation, international experience – analysis of medium term skills requirements, etc.

¹ **I-Trans** – Ground transport, **NSL** – Nutrition-Health-Longevity, **UP-Text** – Advanced Textile Materials, **PICOM** – Business industry, **MAUD** – Materials and Applications for Sustainable Use, **AQUIMER** – Aquatic products, **TEAM 2** – Waste recycling and recovery

- growth of SMBs and SMIs: major groups/SMB links, actions designed to identify their specific needs
- economic intelligence
- corporate social responsibility

⇒ EER objectives: in accordance with the voted SRI of 9 November 2009 subsequently approved by the European Commission on 11 December 2009

- To support existing competitive clusters and on-going projects
- To consolidate the growth of the eleven centres of excellence

1 - To support existing competitive clusters and on-going projects in our region

- To consolidate links with research as part of the campus plans and the PRES (higher education research network).
- To issue each competitive cluster with an anchor project and a technological platform.

2 – To consolidate the growth of the eleven centres of excellence, in order to strengthen the development of the region's entire economic fabric

- Development of SMBs/SMIs in conjunction with the 2,000 SMBs Plan.
- Development of calls for innovation projects and tie-ins between centres of excellence and competitive clusters in a bid to increase the innovative capacities of strategic SMBs for the region.
- Development and reinforcement of anchor projects, thereby making it possible to pool the R&D of centre of excellence businesses.
- Development of links with business start-ups.

B – Encouraging entrepreneurial initiative among women and young people in schools and universities

Fully consistent with the European policy “A modern SMB policy for growth and employment” [COM (2005) 551 final] which includes the promotion of entrepreneurial initiative and skills (with particular emphasis on women and young people) among its five key areas, the Region is also targeting these groups through the SRIE.

⇒ Current situation:

Raising awareness among the general public has been one of the PRCTE’s priority objectives ever since the programme was created.

Communicating to the general public:

Communication campaigns at regional level have been organised since 2002, the key aims of which are to remove any psychological and cultural barriers the public may have as regards business creation and to encourage people to get involved.

In higher education:

Those responsible for raising awareness, attached to the **PRES** (higher education research network) - to which *all* higher education establishments belong – have already made the following available to their members:

- training modules in business creation that can be incorporated into degree courses

- development of the EPI (initiative project centre) facility, known as Hubhouses
- interactive kiosks for analysing entrepreneurial skills, installed in the Hubhouses and designed to enable students to evaluate their own entrepreneurial abilities.

The *difficulty* for university students (with a few exceptions) lies in the fact that these modules are not an approved component of their degree. For lecturers, it's the fact that the teaching of these modules is not taken into account when assessing their career progression.

Numerous initiatives have been implemented within the secondary education system (mini-businesses, competitions, quizzes and workshop days, etc.), but are yet to cover every area.

Tools: a range of tools (board games, role play games) can be used to provide support activities in entrepreneurship workshops.

⇒ EER objective: To make entrepreneurship awareness-raising an educational priority for state education and universities

The Lille educational authority has been recognised at national level as a pilot authority for the promotion of entrepreneurialism in schools. Agreements between the authority and the region, and the regional delegation for women's rights and the region should be finalised by the end of 2011, in order to formalise the agreement between the authority and the delegation of women's rights in this area. This national experiment will be translated into action with the help of extensive resources mobilised by the authority, in order to serve as a trial at national level.

One of the tools that the authority hopes to promote is the entrepreneurship passport that enables students to capitalise on their experiences as budding entrepreneurs well into the long term.

The PRES is also keen to promote Lifelong Entrepreneurship.

The region now boasts a collection of Hubhouses dedicated to student entrepreneurship. These are places where students can meet to discuss and develop their projects, aided by a range of tools (phones, computers, meeting room, interactive kiosks, etc.) and resources (themed workshops, conferences, opportunities to meet business professionals, an Entrepreneurs' club and even Junior Enterprises). They are open to all students enrolled at any higher education establishment in Nord Pas de Calais.

Hubhouses already exist in Dunkirk, at the Université Catholique de Lille and in Valenciennes, with more planned to open shortly in Béthune and at Lille 1 and Lille 3 universities.

⇒ EER objective: To launch a purely educational initiative designed to foster cultural change and encourage business start-ups:

- Pilot scheme in the Dunkirk area

Over the last few years, the Dunkirk area has developed a business creation awareness-raising scheme that is now bearing its first fruits.

The Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale includes the industry and innovation research laboratory, which has been focusing on entrepreneurship.

Under the terms of the PLDE (local economic development programme), there are plans to set up a 1,200m² Entrepreneurship Campus at the university.

This area is also taking part in the Run-Up project, focusing on the role of universities in the economic growth of urban centres (the Urbact project) and in Dessine, an innovative project to develop the social and solidarity-based economy.

The Dunkirk area would be a suitable location to host a pilot operation designed to raise awareness about entrepreneurship and to lay the foundations of a regional operating procedure that could also be extended to other areas.

Some of the initiatives being looked at as part of this operation are:

- the rolling out of an awareness-raising scheme aimed at students and women via the existing interactive kiosks
- the launch of a creative operation with a pool of 200 young people employing “hi tech” activities, such as social networks, online games, RSS and pervasive communication.

This could eventually lead to an Entrepreneurship network being created in the Dunkirk area. This would consist of three main areas of action:

- raising awareness among young people (particularly through Hubhouses)
- developing SMBs
- research into entrepreneurship and assessment of the regional policy implemented

C – Best use of funding from the EU and other public funds, and participation in European networks

⇒ *Current situation:*

A Regional funds

The Nord Pas de Calais region's economic fabric is largely but not exclusively supported by its funding:

- financial schemes: these can take the form of capital, working capital and guarantee capital, and at any stage of the business's growth: seed capital, start-up, first growth phase, maturity, turnaround and transfer
- appropriate engineering support: incubators, support with innovation, change and transfer/takeover
- business accommodation: provided through a series of business incubators and in line with the region's planning and development policy (business districts)

In order to step up the level of its support, the region has also drawn up and implemented two complementary programmes:

- the SMB Objective programme. This aims to harness the prospecting results obtained by a network of around 30 development coordinators from various consular chambers, competitive clusters and centres of excellence in order to support 2,000 high potential SMBs from the region, by providing them with the human, financial and skill-based resources necessary to exceed the required growth thresholds (internal performance, commercial growth and innovation).

- the Recovery programme, adopted in September 2009, which aims to respond to the crisis by offering businesses 12 unique support measures: financial support for businesses in difficulty, innovation support for high potential businesses, support for businesses looking to expand internationally and support specially designed for the struggling social and solidarity-based economy.

B European funds

Since 2007, the Nord Pas de Calais region has been extremely keen for the policy supporting business creation and transfer to feature in the Operational Programme and the Development Agreement 2007-2013. Priority 8, "To encourage business start-ups and transfers", which finances the PRCTE, has therefore made support for initiatives promoting entrepreneurialism one of its key courses of action. This measure is managed as a Global Subsidy by the region who, as directed by the projects for which it is responsible, undertakes to ensure that all European funds allocated are properly programmed.

⇒ EER objectives: To work towards standardisation of instruction procedures, thereby ensuring that all public funds are used to their best advantage and form an integral part of European entrepreneurship networks.

- Standardising project directives and the “certificate of service rendered” for ERDF and Regional funds
- Adapting the PRCTE extranet to enable:
 - o Monitoring of public fund obligations
 - o Optimisation of their use
 - o Payment of subsidies awarded to operators

- Establishing a common certificate of service rendered for public funds granted, which would thereby simplify procedures for both the operator and the financier.

- Participating in the INTERREG IV C Prospect programme in order to conduct benchmarking (with the Spanish partner) in the areas of assessment (definition of indicators) and research (changes in long term cultural factors considered to constitute a barrier to the development of entrepreneurial initiatives).

D – Ensuring sustainability by working towards the “20-20-20” objectives

In addition to principle 9 of the SBA, which is to "enable SMBs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities", the Region is endeavouring to do its bit for the 20-20-20 objectives in terms of the economy. This involves reducing the EU’s primary energy consumption and greenhouse gases by 20%, and using 20% renewable energy by 2020, as laid down in “Energy efficiency: achieving the 20% objective” [COM (2008) 772] text.

This is a priority that has also been reaffirmed by the “Europe 2020” strategy as part of a sustainable growth policy and the EU’s resource efficiency flagship initiative.

⇒ Current situation:

The region’s overall economic strategy hinges on the fundamental principle of “creating sustainable employment that tackles the social challenges of tomorrow”, with the regional institution aiming more generally to implement policies that can help to bring about an “ecological and social conversion” within the region. This principle applies mainly to demographic aspects such as health, nutrition and aging, and to environmental aspects such as transport methods, sustainable materials and eco-construction. This strategy manifests itself particularly through the region’s cluster policy. One of the most successful projects is the creation of the eco-construction sector, which has enjoyed considerable support for several years now in terms of:

- grants for eco-technology training

- helping SMB groups to respond to the current context
- full-scale trials in eco-construction and eco-renovation (an operation to create 100,000 housing units with ERDF funds as its contribution to improving energy efficiency in the building industry, one of the measures recommended by the European Commission "Energy efficiency" text).

⇒ EER objective: To create conditions favourable to the emergence of an eco-construction cluster, and to promote corporate social responsibility

- Action plan: development of three local eco-material sectors (low carbon):
 - o Wood (Les Sept Vallées area)
 - o Linen (Cœur de Flandre)
 - o Earth (Boulonnais)
- Promotion of corporate social responsibility in order to stay one step ahead of tomorrow's markets: setting up a "CSR" skills platform for competitive clusters and centres of excellence, alongside the 2,000 SMBs Plan, with the aim of incorporating these human development and environmental impact criteria into all business projects.

4. EER activities and communication

Please limit your description to a maximum of 2 pages.

Note:

*As a minimum, candidate regions should list the **specific activities, events, hubs and/or conferences** they intend to schedule **during the EER year**. Any further communication activities, **before or after the EER year**, can also be mentioned. A clear visibility of the European Union is required throughout the process.*

⇒ Current situation:

Nord Pas de Calais is the only region to have led a series of communication campaigns (TV, radio, billboards, press) about entrepreneurship, aimed at the general public and as part of the PRCTE. These campaigns aimed firstly to remove psychological barriers to the idea of entrepreneurship and then to encourage people to get involved.

Backed by the region's economic growth policy, Nord Pas de Calais has also established:

- **A major annual event: the CREER fair:**

The CREER fair is the leading Euro-regional event specialising in business creation and entrepreneurship. CREER was first organised in 2007 and now attracts an average of 13,000 visitors from 17 different countries. Company directors and managers account for 32% of visitors and start-up project founders 48%.

One day of the CREER fair is dedicated to the exchange of good entrepreneurial practices. This forms part of the European Like-Entrepreneurship forum, where experts and professionals from across Europe are invited to share their experiences.

- **A complete online communication strategy:**

Via three information portal sites for project founders: jecree.com, jereprends.com, jinnove.com and demainjecree.com

- **The Project Centre:**

A “hi tech” showcase (video conferencing, 3D animation) designed to promote the region as the ideal location for international businesses, launched at the end of 2010

- **Brand strategy:**

Since June 2008, the Nord Pas de Calais region has been using a new brand name: “La Créativallée” (*the creative valley*). The aim is to promote the region’s identity whilst conveying its entrepreneurial vibe.

- **Themed events across the region:**

Innovation week, International week (international-week.net), launched in 2009.

⇒ **EER objectives: To make the EER label year a key year for promoting all of the region's initiatives designed to encourage entrepreneurship at regional, national and international levels.**

⇒ **Action plan:** the two areas for action under the EER scheme are:

⇒ **Within the region: to promote current achievements and encourage more people to get involved as investors in the economy**

- **Continuation of the PRCTE campaigns** with specific emphasis on young people and women in 2012.
- **Extension of the entrepreneurialism theme** to pre-existing initiatives (e.g. special entrepreneurship day at the 2012 CREER fair, international week, etc.).
- **Official launch of the SRIE** in September 2012 at the **Like** forum at the CREER fair (official presentation of the founding document of the SRIE and the multi-annual funding plan, official signature by all partners).
- **International Entrepreneurship Week** in the Universities and Hubhouses, as of 2012.
- **A European event for youth entrepreneurship** in Spring 2013.
- The launch of **Semaine de l'Initiative** (initiative week) across the region: a week of “open days” courtesy of all those involved in the PRCTE, the PRDA and the PRDESS. Open to the general public, including on Saturday to make it easier for those working during the week. No appointment necessary.

⇒ **At national and international level: to promote regional policy across France and beyond**

The extent of regional involvement in the SRIE largely justifies an ambitious communication strategy. Once officially launched at both national and European level, the aim will be to promote and develop the following initiatives by implementing the following courses of action:

- Promotion at national and international fairs
- Implementation of an ambitious press relations strategy

- Development and promotion of the European label via the Project Centre, by adapting the audio-visual messages in circulation.

Please submit your application for the EER 2013 label, together with the declaration of political commitment (in the English language), to: eer-cdr@cor.europa.eu
Deadline for applications: 10 November 2011.