

Application Form



European Entrepreneurial Region Award 2019

Principado de Asturias

1. Fact sheet



GOBIERNO DEL
PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS



General information

Name of the territory	Principado de Asturias
Date of application	16/04/2018
Political endorsement	<i>The application is supported by the Government of the Principado de Asturias, represented by Isaac Pola Alonso. Regional Minister of Employment, Industry and Tourism</i>

Regional data

NUTS code	ES12	GDP/inhabitant (year)	20.855 €/inh (2017)
Population	1.034.960 (2017)	GDP growth rate (year)	3,5 % (2017)
Area in km ²	10.602 Km2	Unemployment rate (year)	13,71 % (2017)
Cohesion category	Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> More developed region <input type="checkbox"/> Transition region <input type="checkbox"/> Less developed region	

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The territorial EER strategy in a nutshell

As 2019 EER, Asturias will give an extra boost to the regional entrepreneurship policies to foster an innovative, inclusive and environmentally responsible entrepreneurship that involves all regional stakeholders. Asturias entrepreneurial vision is:

- Innovative: Innovation should become a distinctive character of entrepreneurship in Asturias. Innovative and knowledge-based entrepreneurship is critical to complete the regional diversification in line with RIS3. The enhanced research base and human capital shall become the two pillars of a competitive regional economy.
- Inclusive. Entrepreneurship should be promoted at all levels and every innovative entrepreneur must have equal opportunities. Specific instruments support social entrepreneurship: social enterprises, social innovation, or the support to the third sector and non-lucrative undertakings. It also requires measures to encourage entrepreneurship among less-represented groups, particularly youth or women.
- Sustainable. The entrepreneurship and innovation policies should contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy. Entrepreneurship is also needed to preserve and exploit the region's natural resources, and to promote a territorially balanced development.

EER award represents a unique opportunity to bring together stakeholders and policies, developing a new set of original and unique EER activities, to dynamize a long-established entrepreneurship and SME measures and activities.

**How did you learn
about the EER
2019 call?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CoR website | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E-mail announcement from the CoR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EWRC | <input type="checkbox"/> Announcement in CoR Plenary/Commission meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other CoR event | <input type="checkbox"/> Info table at CoR Plenary |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Previous EER awarded regions | |

Please keep the fact sheet to one page. Please use English only.

2. Political vision

During the 30-plus years since Spain joined the European Communities, the Principado de Asturias has undertaken a profound restructuring of its economic structure, turning a traditional industrial in a dynamic metropolitan area where global industrial groups and local small and medium size companies have found the appropriate conditions to prosper. The consistent, sustained and focused effort and the diverse approaches applied to overcome the social, spatial and economic consequences of industrial decline are now beginning to yield results.

The SWOT analysis reflects that the transformation has progressed yet it needs to be completed. A dense metropolitan area, a strong industrial tissue and a closely knitted social structure are the legacy of the early and intense industrial development. The regional industrial model, based on coal mining and heavy industries, thrived under a protectionist policy but suffered when exposed to international competition. The transition to an entrepreneurial, low-carbon and knowledge-based economy represents a new challenge, but also an opportunity to complete the transformation of the productive model.

Strengths	Large urban agglomeration, +800.000 inhabitants Strong industrial tissue: metal mechanic cluster Large global industrial groups Human capital with high educational level University with +25,000 students Research capacity in key sectors Well-established social dialogue Entrepreneurship support schemes Well-developed Entrepreneurship Education Tourism resources High self-employment rate Regional Identity	Small business size Slow business dynamics Limited business cooperation Low R&D intensity and productivity Limited spin-off processes from leading firms and research centres Peripheral location, low accessibility Low activity and occupation rates, high unemployment	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Sectorial change and Smart Specialisation Acceleration of business dynamics in knowledge-based sectors Growth of technology-based start-ups Growing entrepreneurial spirit, and international activity of SMEs Silver economy, active and healthy ageing Social economy Circulation of talent Digitisation, good broadband coverage Transition to low-carbon economy	Population ageing and declining Depopulation of rural areas Key employers highly exposed to international competition Weak social recognition of entrepreneurship Brain drain	Threats

Asturias socioeconomic structure still shows some traces of the old economy. The innovation and business dynamics indicators are not yet satisfactory. There is a risk of a growing divide between a dynamic metropolitan area and declining rural areas. The peripheral location and some infrastructure gaps have weakened the regional competitiveness. Despite the improvement of external trade figures, unemployment stays stubbornly high and local talent is frequently seeking professional opportunities elsewhere, with a risk of brain drain.

The economic restructuring process has also had serious sociodemographic consequences. Asturias is one of the most aged regions in Europe. The combination of long-term low birth and negative migration rates has resulted in an extremely unbalanced demographic structure that is hampering economic growth and increasing pressure on social resources. The demographic challenge may also be regarded as an opportunity, as Asturias is an excellent lab to explore solutions on active and healthy ageing.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are regarded as the new foundations for the social and economic recovery of Asturias. Both axis are strongly supported by Regional Government policies and by the main social and economic stakeholders, through social dialogue and partnership. The 2016 Agreement for Economic Competitiveness and Social Sustainability (ACCESS) is the latest of a series of social and economic agreements that set the policy framework, which is then developed through different sectoral or thematic programmes.

On those foundations, during the past two decades Asturias has developed a sophisticated support system for innovation and entrepreneurship. This Entrepreneurship and Innovation policy framework also mirrors the EU guidelines and recommendations, including the Small Business Act, the Green Action Plan and the Europe 2020 Strategy. The ten principles of the SBA can be traced through the main policy documents the Principado de Asturias EER Action Plan will be built on.

Agreement for Economic Competitiveness and Social Sustainability (ACCESS)			SBA Principles	EP	RIS3	PCTI	Others
Entrepreneurship Programme	RIS3	Research, Technology and Innovation Plan (PCTI)	1. Promoting entrepreneurship	X		X	X
			2. Second chance	X			
			3. Think Small First	X			
			4. Responsive administrations				X
			5. Access public procurement				X
Other Programmes: Digital Transformation Plan, Rural Development Plan, Business Internationalisation Programme, Demographic Plan			6. Access to finance	X	X	X	
			7. Single Market	X			X
			8. Skills and Innovation	X	X	X	
			9. Environmental challenges		X		X
			10. Internationalisation	X		X	X

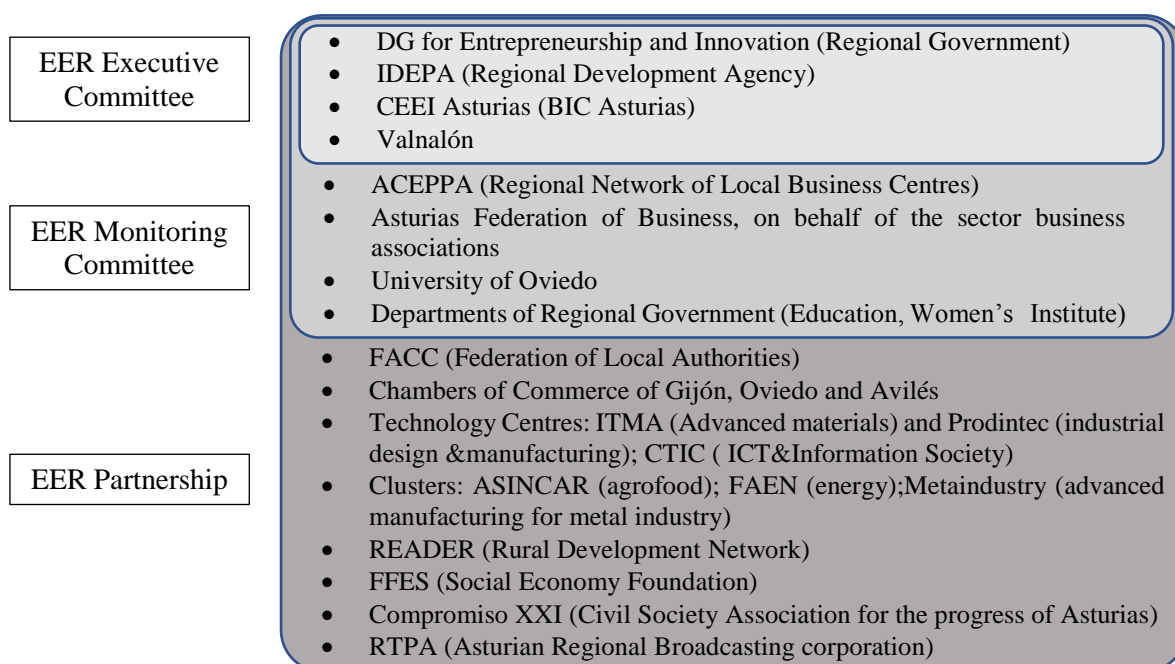
Under the auspices of the European Entrepreneurial Region Award, Asturias will be fostering an innovative, inclusive and environmentally responsible entrepreneurship that involves all regional stakeholders and permeates the whole regional society. This Entrepreneurship Vision is based on the pillars of the well-established Entrepreneurship Education and Business Support Programmes, which favour entrepreneurship culture and create a friendly environment for any entrepreneurial person:

- **Innovative.** Innovation should become a distinctive character of entrepreneurship in Asturias. Innovative and knowledge-based entrepreneurship is critical to complete the transformation of and diversification of the regional productive structure, in line with the Regional Innovation and Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3). An enhanced research base and a well-educated workforce shall become the two pillars of an open and competitive regional economy.
- **Inclusive.** Entrepreneurship should be promoted at all levels and every innovative entrepreneur must have equal opportunities to enterprising. This leads to the deployment of specific instruments to promote social entrepreneurship: promoting social enterprises, addressing new social challenges through social innovation, and supporting third sector and non-lucrative undertakings. Inclusive entrepreneurship also requires deliberate policies to avoid any discrimination and positive measures to encourage entrepreneurship among less-represented groups, particularly youth or female entrepreneurship.
- **Sustainable.** The entrepreneurship and innovation policies should contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy in Asturias, drawing on its experience and expertise in energy production and use. Innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship is also needed to preserve and exploit the region's valuable natural resources and life quality (high quality and safe food and other bio products, responsible tourism, health and care, and many others), and to promote a territorially balanced development.

3. Governance and partnership

Asturias has a long and well-established tradition of social dialogue and partnership. Since 1999, the Regional Government and the social agents have signed a series of social and economic agreements to drive the social and economic transformation. The latest social and economic agreement, the Agreement for Economic Competitiveness and Social Sustainability (ACESS), was signed in 2016. The general social and economic agreements set the policy framework, which is then developed through sector or thematic programmes: entrepreneurship, R&D, internationalisation, industrial policy, job creation, or social inclusion, and social partners are associated to the monitoring of their implementation.

Governance of the EER will follow the same social partnership approach. The EER proposal has been endorsed by the main social and economic partners following the Quadruple helix approach. The broad EER Partnership is supporting the proposal and will be involved in the implementation of the Action Plan and Communication activities.



The **EER Executive Committee** is composed of the departments and agencies of the Regional Government in charge of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. It will ensure the efficient governance of the actions implemented in the context of the EER year in Asturias and will be responsible for the coordination of the programme. The EER Executive Committee will meet once per month.

The **EER Monitoring Committee** includes the representatives of the main social and economic partners: ACEPPA (the regional network of local entrepreneurship centres), FADE, the Asturian Federation of Business, representing the whole business community; the University of Oviedo and also the Department of Education. It will meet bi-monthly and will be responsible of:

- overseeing the implementation of the EER Action Plan,
- ensuring the adequate coordination of regional & local (urban and rural) governance levels
- channelling the EER outcomes and results to the companies and other social and economic actors.

The **EER Partnership** will bring together all the stakeholders involved in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Asturias: FACC (Association of Local Authorities); Chambers of Commerce; Technology Centres; sectorial business clusters; READER (Association of the Leader LAGs); NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (Compromiso Asturias XXI); and the RTPA (Asturias Public Broadcasting Corporation). It will meet twice in the year, at the launching and the closing event of the EER year to enhance the visibility of the EER Action Plan and its outcomes.

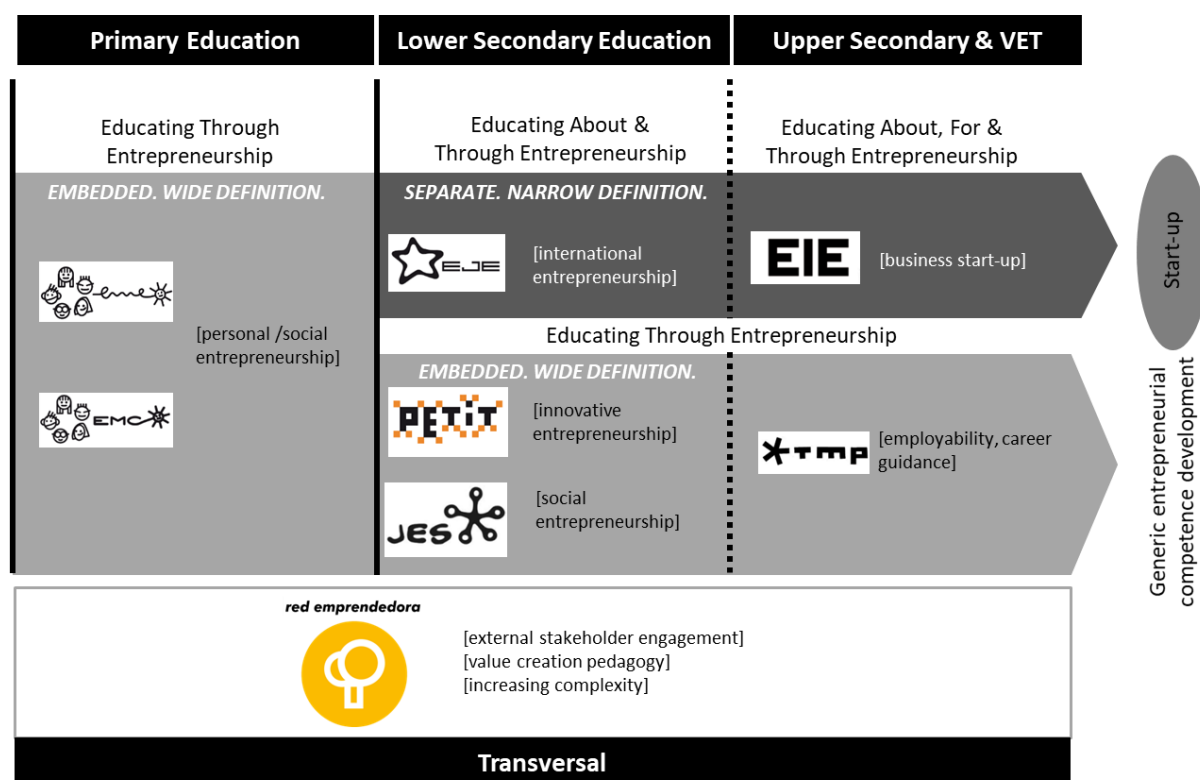
It will also involve other **EER regions** as Extremadura and Murcia to favour the interregional exchange of best practices.

4. Action plan

The Principado de Asturias EER Action Plan will contribute to the full development of the political vision of fostering innovative, inclusive and environmentally responsible entrepreneurship spreading throughout the whole regional society. The Action Plan will build on the existing economic and social policy architecture, which mirrors the principles and guidelines of the EU policy documents, the Small Business Act, the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and others. In particular, all stakeholders involved in Entrepreneurship in Asturias are engaged in the implementation of the 2019 Entrepreneurship Programme, which succeeds previous Entrepreneurship Culture Programmes that have had a significant impact in the development of the institutional and organisational support for entrepreneurship in the region. The strong commitment of the Regional Government towards Entrepreneurship, and the engagement of other stakeholders guarantees the sustainability and continuation of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation support policies.

1. Entrepreneurship Education.

Asturias is implementing an integrated Entrepreneurship Education itinerary that covers all educational levels and centres in the region. Throughout their schooling, students develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes in a progressive way, closely in line with the SBA first (**Promote Entrepreneurship**) and eight (**Upgrading of skills and innovation**) principles. In this scenario, entrepreneurship education from primary through lower secondary provides a foundation for students to take entrepreneurship as a separate subject in their later years, e.g. upper secondary and beyond, up to University. Active and collaborative learning and value-creation are central aspects in the modules and programmes that celebrate the multidimensional nature of entrepreneurship (personal, social, economic, cultural, innovative). They are already reaching a sizeable part of the education community, with more than 120 schools and over 6,000 students per year.



These programmes targeted to specific educational levels are just part of a holistic approach to Entrepreneurship Education involving the whole School Community -students, teachers, families and the local community- that intends to disseminate and embed entrepreneurship culture. Acting as a central node of the Entrepreneurship Education programme, the Valnalon Team is in close connection with the Department of Education to produce and update educational materials and methodologies, to train school teachers and to support schools in the implementation of the different projects. A wider community involvement is sought through the creation of the Enterprising Network, which will associate schools,

companies and other organisations to the implementation of the Entrepreneurship Education programmes. Currently, there are over 200 member companies and organisations and over 120 schools that are jointly running 100 actions.

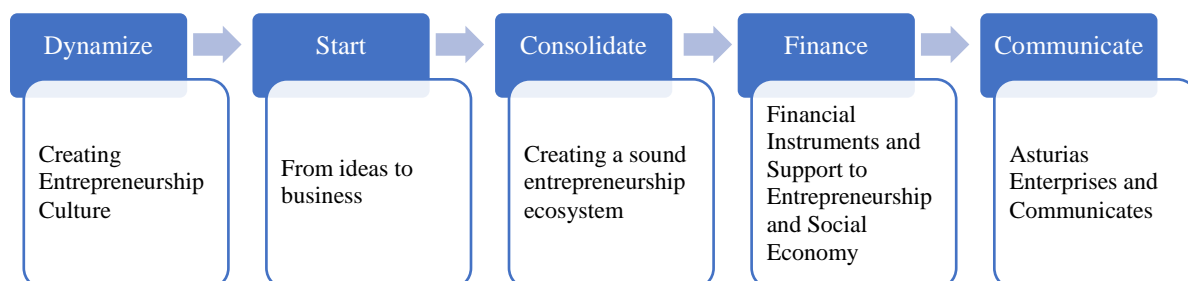
Valnalon's Entrepreneurship Education programme implemented in Asturias has been repeatedly recognised as good practice by the EU. The programme has been referenced in some key documents on entrepreneurship, such as:

- Taking the future into their own hands. Youth work and entrepreneurial learning. Inventory of good practices (2017).
- Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe (2016).
- Building Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Skills in the EU (2012)
- Entrepreneurship Education: Enabling Teachers as Critical Success Factor (2011)



2. From Idea to Business. Supporting business creation and growth

The 2019 Entrepreneurship Programme is designed to support all the entrepreneurship itinerary, from nurturing entrepreneurship culture to the consolidation and growth of companies. All the ten SBA principles are incorporated into the Programme to create the most favourable environment to entrepreneurship:



Any person starting-up a business in Asturias has access to a wide range of instruments to support the entrepreneurship journey. Basic advice, training and support to budding entrepreneurs and small companies is provided by 14 public funded business incubators deployed throughout the region. Some of the incubators are funded by the Regional Government, while others are run by the municipalities and Chambers of the Commerce. The Asturias main cities, Gijón, Oviedo and Aviles have developed

their own structures to promote entrepreneurship and to support local start-ups. All of the incubators are integrated in a regional network (ACEPPA).



Support to business creation and consolidation aims at closing the gap between the business idea and the market, to increase the rate of survival, and the potential for growth and job creation. The integrated regional network will standardise and ensure equal and easy access to basic and specialised services, as well as to monitor the activity of the different support centres. The activities to be carried out will be:

- Individualised support to the entrepreneurs, through experienced advisors trained in business management, innovation and digitisation.
- Training actions to develop business model, manage innovation, finance...
- Close cooperation with local stakeholders (job centres, local authorities, LAGs...)
- Specialised programmes to cater for particular needs (marketing, digitisation, technology transfer, IP management...)

The Entrepreneurship Programme also caters for the growth of newly created companies, providing tailored and highly professional support and training to entrepreneurs, helping them to develop their business skills, to access private investment or financing, to go international or digitise their processes and activities.

In line with some of the principles enshrined in the SBA, giving a **Second chance to entrepreneurs** is one of the priority areas for entrepreneurship support. Unsuccessful entrepreneurs may have accumulated an invaluable experience and knowledge that could help them to launch new initiatives and to team with new entrepreneurs. A regional partnership will propose training, advice and mentoring actions to consolidate the second chance entrepreneurship.

According to the **Think Small First** principle, Asturias policy-making give full consideration to SMEs at the early policy development stage. The ACCESS and the social dialogue governance system facilitate the effective implementation of this principle. The **Responsive administration** principle has led to the simplification of licensing procedures and to setting-up specialized points to reduce the cost and time to register a business managed by Local Entrepreneurship Centres (ACEPPA), which are also acting as one-stop-shops for entrepreneurs.

Access to **Public procurement** is also at the core of key policy measures. Social agents are negotiating proportionate requirements to facilitate participation of micro-firms in public tenders, and social clauses are being added to the ToR. As a pioneer initiative, a programme enabling Innovative Public Purchase SME Access is currently developed and will be reinforced in the coming years.

Finally, the Europe Enterprise Network (EEN) advisory services and the business internationalisation programme help SMEs to take full advantage of the **Single Market** opportunities.

Some figures illustrate the entrepreneurial and innovative new dynamism of the region: during the last 5 years, the region's business incubators integrated in the ACEPPA network have counsel 21,663 entrepreneurs, have provided advice to 9,764 business start-ups and have undertaken 426 training actions in different business management areas and skill development.

The IDEPA group, the Principado de Asturias Regional Development Agency, plays a key role in the implementation of the regional policies for entrepreneurs and SMEs, especially in facilitating the access to finance. It offers different financial and innovation support instruments to help the creation of new projects or the improvement of competitiveness of existing companies. IDEPA designs and runs all financial instruments coming out from the ERDF planning. On top of the wide range of advice services, the Regional Government offers self-employed people and SMEs an assortment of grants and financial instruments to consolidate the culture of entrepreneurship and the generation of wealth. The Entrepreneurship Programme includes specific instruments for self-employees and newly created companies -in rural and urban areas, and for social economy businesses. The ESI Funds, ERDF, ESF and EARD, co-finance many of these policies that help innovative, inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship.

The EER Commitment

- Asturias will develop a single Business Creation Service Network that will enhance the advice service provided through the ACEPPA network. That will increase the networking and digital access to high value-added services, always seeking to connect rural and urban milieus.
- A single Service Chart and a standard profile for advisors will be devised to ensure that any entrepreneur have equal access to basic services and easy access to specialised added-value services.
- The StartUp Tracking tool will be adopted to monitor the rate of business creation and survival. This advanced reporting tool will guarantee the use of specific, homogeneous, and comparable monitoring criteria to allow sound management decisions.

2019 Business Creation Service Network Activity

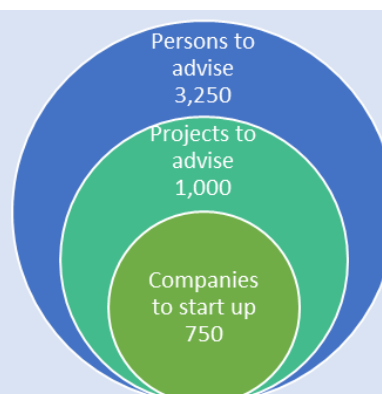


Action	Events	Participants
Awareness	95	2,500
Training	100	1,300



550 less than 3-year old companies in incubator

From Idea to Business Creation



3. Innovative Entrepreneurship

Asturias pays particular attention to the creation and consolidation of innovative and technology-based companies. Innovation is a key strategic axis for Entrepreneurship in Asturias. No coincidence that the Regional Department for Entrepreneurship has been renamed as Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

The innovation ecosystem in Asturias is becoming increasingly dynamic, drawing on the efforts made in previous years. The University of Oviedo and the network of technology centres are the main source of innovative entrepreneurship in the region. Most of the Technology-based companies created in Asturias over the last few years are led by University of Oviedo graduates and researchers, or spin-off from the technology centres or the research units of large companies. The increasing interaction between the research centres and the companies is accelerating the pace of creation of innovative and technology-based companies. Most of them are going through the incubation and acceleration programmes run by the CEEI or, with the CEEI support, in the other business incubators in the region.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are two pillars of the regional business promotion strategy, within the framework of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) and related initiatives. The RIS3 builds on the current industrial and research capacities, identifying a group of key-enabling technologies (advanced materials, advanced and digital manufacturing, network data and technologies, and biotechnology) and

two leading sectors in the region, the steel value chain and the health and biomedicine sector. A number of key RIS3 areas are being strongly developed:

- The Asturias Industry 4.0 is an integrated initiative to promote entrepreneurship and business consolidation in advanced manufacturing, one of the RIS3 priority areas. The Incubator I4.0 offers a meeting point for those involved in the Industry 4.0 value chain to facilitate the dissemination advanced manufacturing technologies.
- Asturias is meeting the social and economic challenges of ageing and turning them into business opportunities. The region was rated as a 2-Star Reference Site by the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, and the “Asturias Activa” strategy will help companies, start-ups, social organisations and innovation agents to identify the potential business opportunities in active and healthy ageing.
- The Asturias Government is speeding up the transition to a paperless e-government, with the deployment of a new the regional e-government platform, which will ensure interoperability with other administrations to avoid duplication and facilitate all administrative procedures, **making public administrations responsive to SMEs’ needs**. Public procurement e-platform and Open Data policies will offer new business opportunities and will facilitate **SMEs’ participation in public procurement**, as recommended by the SBA.

The new Science, Technology and Innovation Plan (PCTI 2018-2022) will be in line with these RIS3 priorities. It will particularly deal with Open Innovation, Digitisation, Internationalisation and Innovation, Public Innovation Procurement, Knowledge and Technology Transfer, Business Clustering, and will define the role and strategy of innovation infrastructures, such as the technology centres, the research labs and the scientific and technology parks. The Regional Government is strongly supporting innovation as a horizontal priority shared by all regional stakeholders, and a new model of innovation governance is being developed, involving all stakeholders.

The CEEI Asturias (BIC Asturias) acts as the regional node and main catalyser for highly **innovative entrepreneurship**. It runs various programmes and provides a wide range of services to support the creation and growth of highly innovative companies: support to spin-offs from University and Technology Centres, business modelling, IP strategies, or access to finance. Existing offer is reinforced with specialized facilities for strategic sectors:

- The BioIncubator offers fully equipped laboratoires for Life Science companies, and pre-incubation offices for Bio-entrepreneurs.
- The Incubator 4.0 will house Digital Industry innnovative entrepreneurs and companies specialised in activities such as 3D Printing, Robotics, Sensors and Embbeded Systems, VR and AR, Cybersecurity and others.

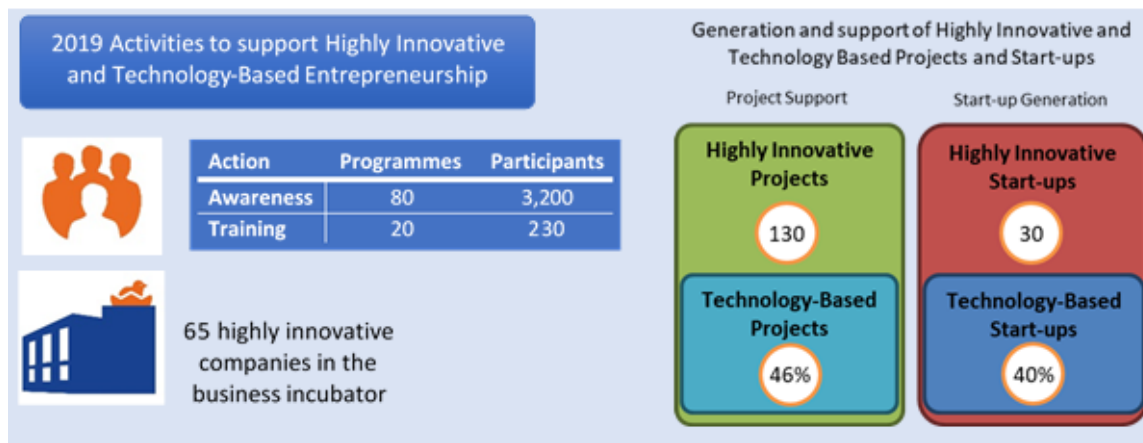
CEEI Asturias activity is mostly focused on Technology Based Companies, part of the TBCs are spin-offs that spring from University, Technology Centres and other companies. We bet on attracting and stimulating spin-offs creation as a means of transferring knowledge and results from R&D to the market while generating high quality employment and regional economic development. Since 2001, we have supported 132 spin-offs business projects, there are 65 companies generated from spin-offs in our Community.

The existing services are being supplemented with innovative financing instruments: seed financing, venture capital and cuasi-capital instruments, to **facilitate SMEs’ access to finance**, as recommended by the SBA. As an example, ERDF funding has been set aside in a pioneer and unique funding line for the creation and growth of tech-based companies, and and special funding schemes are available for H2020 Seal of Excellence holders. The effective coordination of traditional (guarantees, participative loans, venture capital) and new financial instruments (private investment) completes the regional public financing chain for SMEs.

The EER Commitments

- Explore new areas of Smart Specialisation (RIS): A public-private think-tank e-Car will encourage and support entrepreneurs and SMEs to participate in the new value chain that is being configured around sustainable mobility.
- A network of Digital Service Centres (SAT Centres) provide support to business and entrepreneurs in the implementation of digital technologies and move into Industry 4.0, in close connection with the local incubators. The new strategy will bring more specialised SAT Centres (IoT, cybersecurity, blockchain, and others) to disseminate and boost the adoption of new technologies and innovation to improve the competitiveness of traditional businesses.
- Design of a new financial instruments, the Entrepreneurship Voucher, which will provide a more intense support, easy to manage, with higher added value and innovation-focused, showing the stronger Government commitment to entrepreneurs.
- Strengthening of Open Innovation programmes to close the gap between technology-based start-ups and large corporations in different areas, particularly in those related to Industry 4.0.

During the EER Year, Innovative Entrepreneurship Actions will lead to the generation of 130 Highly Innovative Projects and 30 Start-ups. More than 40% of them will be Technology-Based.



4. Social and Inclusive Entrepreneurship

The social dimension is in the centre of the regional agenda for entrepreneurship, to ensure all personas have equal opportunities to set up a business activity and any discrimination is removed. The Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth held in Gothenburg in November 2017 highlighted the contribution to job creation of social economy businesses, associations, foundations, to ensure fair working conditions and to improve social cohesion. The recent economic crisis has shown that social economy makes business environment more resilient.

Social economy is being promoted in Asturias through a combination of legal measures, start-up support for social economy (provided by dedicated organisations, FFES and ASATA) and availability of appropriate financial instruments. The creation of the Asturian Council for Social Economy in May 2017 shows the commitment of regional policy-makers to the promotion of social economy, which is still less developed in Asturias than in other regions in Spain. That commitment is to be developed with different actions aimed at:

- Increasing the visibility and raise awareness of Social Economy among different social groups (Education, Employers).
- Exploring the potential of Social Economy for a fairer and more balanced growth, and to address some social challenges (ageing, depopulation of rural areas, youth unemployment), and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the transition to a green economy in line with the Green Action Plan for SMEs (Support to Green Entrepreneurship).

- Training social economy organisations and other stakeholders regarding the transfer of company ownership to the worker cooperatives.

The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Economy (FFES) is running awareness-raising and training actions to transfer business management tools to social action NGOs, to improve their management skills and help them to spur innovation in social intervention.

Regional policies are contributing to closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurship has been a priority in the regional strategy for entrepreneurship, in line with the recommendations of the **Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan**. Entrepreneurship is one of the core axis of the Principado de Asturias Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities 2016-2019. This Plan set ambitious objectives regarding women entrepreneurship, with a significant financial commitment, with over 30 million euro in four years to promote women entrepreneurship and equal opportunities in the labour market and the business activity, with special attention to the rural areas.

A dedicated regionally-funded organisation, the School of Female Entrepreneurs and Business Women, which was born out of an ESF funded EQUAL initiative, provides advice, training or networking opportunities to women entrepreneurs and to small companies. The School is fostering the creation and growth of women-led companies (77 between 2012 and 2016), raising the awareness on the gender perspective in entrepreneurship and promoting the participation of women in all economic sectors.

The EER Commitment

- Analyse and improve the conditions for the transfer of business ownership to employees and the transformation of limited companies into worker cooperatives to facilitate employees to take over the company activity in cases of crisis or lack of succession. These programmes will capitalise on the knowledge base developed by the EU-Funded Project “Saving Jobs!”.
- The School of Female Entrepreneurs will be running specific programmes to empower women to become innovation leaders within their organisations and will promote networking and cooperation between women leading innovative businesses.
- An Enterprising Woman Award will be established to recognize women that are starting-up innovative businesses, have a relevant trajectory in entrepreneurial activities or contribute to the growth of women’s entrepreneurship.
- Implementation of the specific pilot action *LivingLab on Healthy and Active Ageing*. On top of increasing the visibility of business opportunities in the area, it will enhance the social impact through better services and products available to our aging society.

5. Sustainable and Environmentally Responsible Entrepreneurship

Asturias, a former mining region, has joined the recently launched “Platform for Coal Regions in Transition” (Dec 2017). This EU-level platform is expected to facilitate the development of projects and long-term strategies in coal regions, with the aim of kick-starting the transition process and responding to environmental and social challenges. The Energy, Environment and Climate Change Cluster is developing a significant activity with business approach to promote R&D and technology transfer in clean energies, energy efficiency, environment and raw materials. Both represent a great opportunity to plan and accelerate the process of economic diversification and technological transition that dovetails with the regional innovation and entrepreneurship strategies already in place.

Entrepreneurship and innovation take a central stage on this clean energy transition that does not only fight against climate change but opens up new opportunities for job creation and growth as indicated in the Clean Energy for All Europeans package. In this sense, Asturias in cooperation with two other Spanish regions, Castilla-León and Aragón, has crafted an ambitious work plan focused on the improvement of air quality by deploying renewable energies, eco-innovation and advanced coal technologies which are compatible with the long-term vision of the decarbonisation of the European economy. This is particularly responding to the SBA priority line of **enabling SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities**.

Particular efforts are dedicated to support entrepreneurs and small companies in rural areas. Entrepreneurship and innovation are critical to meet the challenges rural areas are facing, in Asturias and elsewhere, such as ageing, depopulation, decline of traditional activities, lack of economic alternatives. Innovative entrepreneurship will be required to find alternatives for the sustainable use of the valuable natural resources and heritage of Asturias rural areas, to keep the territorial and environmental balance, reconnect social and productive tissues and, ultimately, revitalize them.

The Rural Development Plan and the 11 Leader Local Action Groups provide financial support to rural entrepreneurship and innovation in the primary sector, in the food industry, in tourism, or in social services. During the previous EARDF programming period, the LAG supported the creation and consolidation of more than 900 SMEs. In the current programming period, Asturias ranks second among the EU regions in the share of EARDF funding earmarked for Local Action Groups.

The Business Incubators and the Technology Advice Services (SAT Centres) located in rural communities are also helping rural entrepreneurs and SMEs to adopt new technologies to improve their competitiveness. Four Research and Technology Centres are dedicated to knowledge generation and transfer in food and other primary sectors, with remarkable results in the application of technology to the food value chain.

The EER Commitment

- Mainstream eco-innovation and green entrepreneurship in the regional support system for entrepreneurship and innovation, introducing specific support schemes for eco-innovation and business greening in the range of services provided by the regional incubators.
- Increase the support to entrepreneurship in rural areas: additional €12 million of the Rural Development Plan funding will be earmarked for Local Action Groups to fund the creation and consolidation of rural SMEs in the 2019-2022 period.
- Reinforce the role of the SAT Centres as key agents for innovative sustainable regional development in rural communities, in areas such as tourism and agrofood.

International networking

The Government of Asturias is a full member of the main European Regional Networks, such as the CRPM and its Atlantic Arc Commission, and the departments dealing with Entrepreneurship and Innovation are active members in specialised European networks: EURADA, the European Business Network (EBN), the StartUp Europe Regions Network (SERN), the Vanguard Initiative or the European Clusters Alliance, leading some projects and working groups. The CEEI Asturias is member of the EBN Board and has build a reputation of excellence among their network colleagues in the EU. Asturias is also actively involved in several ERA-NETs, to facilitate and fund R&D cooperation projects. All these networks will be activated to disseminate the Asturias EER programme.

The involvement in these networks, which will be activated to disseminate the Asturias EER programme, will help to access innovative methodologies and to transfer knowledge and good practices. It will contribute to increase the impact of the EER activities and their sustainability beyond the EER Year.

Monitoring

As described under Governance and Partnership, the **EER Monitoring Committee**, which includes the representatives of the main social and economic partners will be overseeing the implementation of the EER Action Plan. A set of indicators connected with the EER Commitments will be monitored and reported by the members of the Executive Committee that are responsible for the implementation.

Sustainability

The actions proposed for the EER year result of a sustained work based on social dialogue and structured planning. The EER award will increase the impact and ensure sustainability of this ambitious regional project.

5. Communication plan

The Principado de Asturias will exploit the opportunity of the European Entrepreneurial Region award to bring together all stakeholders involved in entrepreneurship and innovation, and to consolidate the regional entrepreneurship vision. To achieve it, a strong communication policy will be developed. A detailed communication plan will be produced and implemented, defining the communication objectives and strategy, the key messages, the main target groups and the communication channels and instruments that will be used. The involvement of regional broadcasting company RTPA in the EER partnership will favour the impact.

1. Communication Objectives

The European Entrepreneurial Region communication strategy will convey:

- how important entrepreneurship is to meet the challenges Asturias is facing, how critical innovative entrepreneurship is necessary to produce economic change and diversification, to tackle demographic decline and ageing, to keep the territorial balance, and to achieve a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.
- how committed are all the regional stakeholders, public and private, to create a friendly environment for enterprising, highlighting the different instruments available to support entrepreneurs and small business.
- how far and fast the region has built its new economic profile, illustrating the progress made by showcasing the start-ups created in the last years, particularly those reflecting the priorities of the Entrepreneurship vision: promote innovative, inclusive and environmentally sustainable entrepreneurship.

The communication strategy will be projected internally, towards the region itself, and externally, to target groups outside the region. Communication objectives and target groups will be different:

Internal	Raise awareness on innovative, inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship	Stakeholders; Public opinion; Rural communities; Educational community
	Encourage entrepreneurship careers and attitudes	Specific groups: women, university and vocational training students
External	Show the progress and the impact of entrepreneurship in Asturias economic change	Global public opinion
	Share the experiences in policy making and implementation	Policy makers in other regions

The key messages, mottos and catch-phrases will be in line with these communication objectives. The Committee of the Regions and the EER logos will be displayed in all the communication activities and materials.

2. Communication Actions

Stakeholder's engagement

All the regional stakeholders involved in entrepreneurship policy have endorsed the Entrepreneurship Region application and will be fully associated to the EER communication activities. The stakeholders will disseminate information on the EER award and on the activities being carried out during the EER year through their own communication systems, on-line and off-line, according to the agreed strategy. This will increase the echo of the Entrepreneurship message.

Asturias EER ambassadors

A minimum of 10 people will be identified as ambassadors of the Asturias EER year. Their profiles will be diverse (gender, age, sector). They will have a key role in internal and external communication activities, participate in main events and will help to spread the word about Asturias EER year, making visible the values and principles of the EER strategy.

On-line communication

A dedicated website will be produced. It will be the main source of information on the EER activities and a key communication and dissemination tool. It will also help to group and give an integrated view of all the organizations and instruments supporting entrepreneurship in Asturias, and of the impact of their activity. The website will provide information in Spanish and English.

A specific on-line communication strategy will be devised and implemented. A dedicated Enterprising in Asturias channel will be created in YouTube, to upload short videos portraying the experience of entrepreneurs, start-ups, EER ambassadors, and illustrating entrepreneurship support policies. EER hashtags (#AsturiasEuropeanEnterprisingRegion/ #AsturiasRegionEmprendedoraEuropea, #EER2019, #AsturiasEER2019, and others) will be inserted in all communication related to entrepreneurship during the year. Dedicated communication campaigns will be carried out in the social networks.

Media.

The main regional media will be associated to the EER communication strategy. The public broadcasting group (RTPA) will ensure a thorough coverage of the EER actions: news coverage, streaming of significant events... The EER communication strategy will take into account the strong influence printed and digital media group on Asturias public opinion, as the region has a high rate of newspaper circulation. They will have a significant role in cooperation with the rest of stakeholders.

3. Main communication events

Event	Expected impact
Launching Event (Q1)	Broad stakeholders & EER partnership participation in this launching EER event. Nomination of EER Asturias ambassadors. The representatives of the other EER Regions will be invited to attend and share their Entrepreneurial approach and policies.
Entrepreneurship Events & Awards (Q2&Q3)	Initiatives of recognition of entrepreneurship, involving key speakers, round tables and different stakeholders and interest groups. The events to present distinctions such as the best Spin-off projects, Technology-based projects (CEEI Awards), best Entrepreneurial projects (Valnalón Awards) and others will be used to highlight the EER values and principles.
EER Roadshow within the Asturias International Trade Fair and Show (Q3)	This is the most attended business event in Asturias, with over a million visitors. If Asturias is selected as EER, the Government of Asturias stand in will be dedicated to celebrate Entrepreneurship, with a full programme of conferences, exhibitions, thematic events, and other activities.
Closing Event of the Asturias EER Year (Q4)	It will be based on the Asturias Enterprise Encounters, which are the main convention of the Asturias Business Community every year, organised by the Asturias RDA (IDEPA). The 2019 edition will be especially dedicated to the European Entrepreneurial Region.

European Events

The Asturias EER Action Plan will be communicated at major European events in Entrepreneurship and Innovation: the **CoR Annual Conference of the EER** (1Q), the **Start-up Europe Week** (1Q), the **European Week of Regions and Cities** (4Q)

International networking

The Government of Asturias is a full member of the main European Regional Networks, such as the CRPM and its Atlantic Arc Commission, and the departments dealing with Entrepreneurship and Innovation are active members in specialised European networks: EURADA, the European Business Network (EBN), the StartUp Europe Regions Network (SERN), the Vanguard Initiative or the European Clusters Alliance, leading some projects and working groups. Asturias is also actively involved in several ERA-NETs, to facilitate and fund R&D cooperation projects.