



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**2019 Action Plan of the *Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP)*
European Committee of the Regions**

The **Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP)** is a form of cooperation between the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Commission's DG for Research and Innovation (DG RTD). Its main objective is to present new R&I solutions, innovative products and best practice in response to the numerous societal challenges facing local and regional authorities (LRAs) in Europe today.

Background

2016 was the first year with a full programme of KEP events based on two themes, Bioeconomy and Key Enabling Technologies. In total, seven events were held (two thematic seminars, two peer-to-peer events and three showcasing events). In 2017, the KEP events were organised on Energy and Public Sector Innovation. In total, four events were held (two thematic seminars and two peer-to-peer events). In 2018, the KEP events were organised on Innovating cities with nature and Nature-based Solutions and Cultural Heritage. In total, five events were held (two thematic seminars, one peer-to-peer event, and two showcasing events).

Four areas of cooperation have jointly been identified by DG RTD and the CoR for 2018-2019:

- Innovating cities with nature and Nature-based Solutions;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Industry 4.0;
- Social innovation.

The themes agreed for 2019 are Industry 4.0, and Social innovation.

KEP objectives

As agreed in 2015 by Mr Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, and Mr Markkula, then president of the CoR, the KEP has the following objectives:

- greater cooperation between the departments of DG RTD and the CoR;

- turning new knowledge created through Horizon 2020 projects to good advantage and increasing up-take and its impact on innovation at local and regional level;
- maximising synergies between Horizon 2020 and implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds at regional level;
- assisting CoR members in becoming active drivers for change and innovation leaders in their multiple roles as political decision-makers, by showcasing the benefits of a modern triple-helix approach (cooperation between business, academia and government).

KEP instruments

These objectives will be met, *inter alia*, through the three types of instruments agreed upon:

- **Thematic seminars (TS)**, bringing together experts, stakeholders and CoR policy makers. Held in Brussels, they allow CoR members to have a high level knowledge exchange with experts from DG RTD and other DGs, as well as with local and regional representatives and other stakeholders, on the current state of play and the outlook in the subject areas in question. One TS will be held on each annual theme.
- **Peer-to-peer events (P2P)**, promoting mutual learning at local and regional level. These events take place at local/regional level at the invitation of a CoR member as approved by the SEDEC chair and follow a thematic seminar. During these meetings, CoR members have the opportunity to exchange views with DG RTD experts, representatives of on-going EU-funded research and innovation projects as well as other stakeholders locally. These should lead to a direct exchange of good practice between participants.
- **Showcasing events (SE)** are events organised by other parties (e.g. relevant partner organisations, relevant Directorates of DG RTD) but that contribute directly to the KEP annual Action Plan. In order to be labelled as SE, it is essential that CoR members participate in the event and that on-going EU-funded research and innovation projects on a KEP theme are showcased. The SEs may be held in Brussels or elsewhere, subject to mutual agreement.

For organisational and implementation purposes, **the designated lead services (DG RTD Unit B5 and the CoR SEDEC secretariat) form the contact group** between DG RTD and the CoR, calling on the expertise and participation of the other stakeholders as required. This contact group will meet regularly to plan joint action and monitor implementation of the above-mentioned instruments.

KEP actions in 2019

KEP actions will be implemented in 2019 in the thematic research and innovation areas of **Industry 4.0** and **Social innovation**, as described below.

KEP activities in the field of Industry 4.0

The 2016 KEP activities in the field of Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) have brought to the attention of local and regional policy makers the knowledge created within EU Framework Programmes for R&I in the area of Industrial Technologies and helped to increase its societal impact. Industry is a main pillar of the European economy. The ongoing revolution in industrial production, Industry 4.0 ranges from a variety of digital technologies (such as 3D printing, the Internet of Things, advanced robotics) and new materials (bio- and nano-based) to new processes (for example, data driven production, artificial intelligence and synthetic biology). However, Industry 4.0 is more than digital it is about the re-industrialisation of Europe through innovation for smart products, resource and energy-efficient manufacturing and circular economy aspects.

The report of the *High Level group on KETs*¹ has underlined the importance of perusing the technological leadership in industry in Europe. Important European policy goals depend on the timely availability of new technologies and innovation. Regions and local actors also play an important role in supporting innovative eco-systems through co-investment and different types of collaboration.

Because of the high investment-intensive nature of the processes where Industry 4.0 is applied, the specific interest of regional and local governments in engaging in such processes must be explored in detail. The 4th Industrial Revolution is also about offering access to testing and validation of such technologies. At least three out of the existing 13 national 4th Industrial Revolution initiatives in Europe foresee – as a prominent feature – to support technology infrastructures: Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. The CoR through its members can play a key role in promoting and supporting such activities in their regions and cities.

The organisation of the KEP on Industry 4.0 is outlined in the following:

In June 2019², a thematic seminar will be organised with the working title "Industry 4.0 to support the low carbon and circular industry in cities and regions". For this thematic seminar, experts on topics related to Industry 4.0, local and regional authorities, and EU policy makers will be brought together to discuss on how to make European priorities in manufacturing, circular economy and Industry 4.0 relevant in regions and cities.

EU funded projects on key topics related to Industry 4.0 and possible further collaborations will be presented.

1-2 peer-to-peer events on Industry 4.0, including artificial intelligence will be organised with CoR members interested in hosting such events between July and September 2019.

KEP activities in the field of Social Innovation

Social innovation being a cross-sector competency, synergies and collaborations must be explored between DG RTD and the CoR services in order to stimulate R&I based social innovation and bring together stakeholders from thematic local – regional – national – European social innovation ecosystems for better social outcomes.

DG RTD, through its R&I programme Horizon 2020 supports academic research on social innovation as well as the implementation of social innovation as a form of innovation that combines technical and

¹ <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/28e1c485-476a-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

² To avoid the overlap with the European elections.

non-technical features and involves a multitude of stakeholders such as public authorities at local, regional, national and EU level, social entrepreneurs, academia, associations, foundations, financial intermediaries, citizens, etc. Its current main initiatives are the iCapital Prize³, the Horizon Prize for Social Innovation⁴, the European Social catalyst fund and its work to support foundations and innovation ecosystems (at all levels). In this context cities and regions are among the most favourable grounds for social innovation and experimentation. The iCapital prize is an edifying example. This contest awards each year a cash prize to the European cities that proved their ability to harness innovation in order to improve the lives of their citizens. Paris, winner of the 2017 contest and Athens, winner of this year demonstrated how they used social innovation and unleashed the power of communities to drive change to overcome endured economic hardship.

The organisation of the KEP on Social innovation is outlined in the following:

A thematic seminar will be organised in October 2019 in connection with a major Brussels-based event "European Week of Regions and Cities". In this thematic seminar, experts in social innovation, local and regional authorities and EU policy makers will be brought together to discuss the topic and inform the actors at local and regional level of the main dimensions of social innovation.

1-2 peer-to-peer events on Social Innovation will be organised with CoR members interested in hosting such events between October and November 2019.

A showcasing event: two-day High-level conference on R&I foundations and other venture philanthropists" with the European Foundations Centre to explore and develop ideas for innovative forms of finance in order to 'bring science into finance and finance into science'. There are more than 146,000 "public-benefit foundations" in Europe making an impact at community, city, regional, national and international level. (Date and place to be confirmed).

Further actions include:

- Fellowships on social innovation: which is a is an outcome from the 'Social Innovation Declaration', which has been produced by the Social Innovation Community (an H2020 funded project) as a result of a campaign to identify the biggest challenges faced by social innovators in Europe. It compiles a set of policy recommendations for public support for social innovation at all levels - local, regional, national and EU (to be confirmed).
- Workshops on the EU's long term budget: Social innovation in the Social Window of the InvestEU to create an environment that is conducive to and fuels social innovation and social finance. (Date and place to be confirmed)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/prizes/icapital_en

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/research/horizonprize/index.cfm?prize=social-innovation>

Annual Timetable 2019 (times approximate, tbc) for the planned activities:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Ma y	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Thematic seminars (TS) in Brussels (two per year, one during the European Week of Regions and Cities)						x				x		
Peer-to-peer events (P2P) in the regions (max. four per year, subject to availability of CoR members and regions willing to organise them)							x		x		x	x
Showcasing events (SE) as agreed with partners, times and number subject to mutual agreement and budget constraints (allocated flexibly during the year depending on availability).												
Political dialogue to summarise the achievements of the first years of the KEP in 2019.												
