

## **Joint action plan for enhanced cooperation in research and innovation**

The new Joint action plan for enhanced cooperation in research and innovation marks an important stage in reinforcing the regional dimension of European research and innovation policies. The document was published by the Publications Office of the European Union in 2026 and focuses on research, innovation, competitiveness, enhanced cooperation, and sustainable development.

The Plan was signed on 24 April 2026 by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. It establishes a cooperation framework for the period 2026–2029 between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, the Joint Research Centre, and the European Committee of the Regions, in particular the SEDEC Commission.

The document highlights four priority areas: the development of local and regional innovation ecosystems; support for the green and digital transitions through innovation adapted to specific territories; the promotion of funding opportunities for research and innovation and the creation of synergies between funds; and support for evidence-based regional policymaking, including through territorial foresight and resilience.

The Plan also includes actions supporting the development of local and regional innovation ecosystems, the strengthening of synergies between different actors and funds, engagement in bottom-up applied research initiatives, and the co-creation of knowledge tools with practical applicability. The document also pays attention to cultural and creative industries, including through exchanges of views with local and regional authorities, taking into account the role of regions in cultural policies, smart specialisation strategies, and cluster strategies. According to the Plan, over 120 smart specialisation strategies from 124 regions in 22 Member States include priorities related to culture and creativity.

For the Republic of Moldova, this Plan is relevant in the context of its gradual integration into the European Research Area and its participation in the Horizon Europe programme. The Republic of Moldova has the status of an associated country to Horizon Europe, which allows research entities from Moldova to participate in the programme under the same conditions as entities from European Union Member States.

The Joint Action Plan can serve as a reference point for the development of national and regional initiatives in the Republic of Moldova, including increasing participation in Horizon Europe, strengthening project development capacity, and developing partnerships between research, public administration, the business sector, cultural and creative industries, and local communities. The Plan can also inspire projects with territorial impact in areas such as regional innovation, cultural heritage, creative industries, climate resilience, smart cities, and digital transformation.