

TAF conference shares experiences from interregional investment projects

The final conference of the Technical Assistance Facility for Industrial Modernisation and Investment (TAF) took place on Thursday 18 November 2021. The event gave over 70 participants the chance to exchange and learn about the process of developing and financing interregional investment projects.

The online conference welcomed a wide range of stakeholders from across Europe, including representatives of public authorities, research and technology organisations, industry, clusters and other business entities, as well as Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) partnership coordinators.

The event looked back on the TAF project's achievements, reflecting on lessons learnt and good practices from the Smart Specialisation Platform for Industrial Modernisation (S3P-Industry) community's experience with TAF's tailored advisory services, which have a template - Commission Template can be found here. It's got quite a few of the styles already added but not all - should save you a bit of time. Publications Office logo is on the back page, but hidden by a white box. A supporting project promoters over the last three years.

A look back and forward at the EU agenda

The conference began with an introduction by **Marek Przeor**, team leader at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW).

Mr Przeor looked back at the creation of TAF and its aim to facilitate exchanges among regions developing S3, while reinforcing investments through complementary infrastructure. He also reflected on how the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of collaboration and initiatives such as TAF in building resilience.

He then looked ahead at the EU's industrial policy and interregional collaboration agenda, which offers many opportunities for future projects through initiatives such as [Interregional Innovation Investments](#) under the [European Regional Development Fund](#), the [European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#), and [Interreg](#) programmes and projects.

Reflections on TAF's success

The conference offered an opportunity for representatives of the TAF Consortium to summarise the key achievements of TAF over its three years of implementation. TAF has supported **19 projects** with a total potential investment of over **€155 million**, emerging from **14 Partnerships** from the S3P-Industry platform. It has involved **52 regions** across the EU, covering more than **75% of its industrial ecosystems**.

More than **580 participants** have taken part in the TAF project's **22 events and dissemination activities**, which have included in-person workshops, webinars and pitching sessions. The responses from beneficiaries have also been overwhelmingly positive: project surveys have shown that **100%** of beneficiaries agree that the TAF advisory services have been valuable and useful, while **85%** agree that its services have improved the bankability of projects.

As Mr Przeor also highlighted in his opening remarks, one of the outputs of the project has been its **toolbox**, which features practical examples of case studies and lessons learnt from the support.

Good practices and lessons learnt

The conference also saw four **TAF beneficiaries** share the experiences of their respective investment projects, describing how TAF supported them to develop their investment ideas and business plans.

The projects ranged from the creation of a business school and the recovery, recycling and extraction of biomass, to the development of a nano innovation centre and the promotion of sustainable circular mining. While these projects have faced many different challenges, their presentations highlighted the value of TAF's support with mentoring, coaching and business development, and practical lessons for similar future projects.

The conference also featured **presentations by TAF business and legal experts** on lessons learnt for the development of successful interregional investment projects.

The TAF business experts spoke about how market segmentation helped with interregional projects that had great potential but tended to be challenging to define, and how business model validation enabled projects to test out concepts, identify risks, and scale-up projects across regions. The TAF legal expert then explained how they supported projects to follow their legal obligations by helping them to define their scope and approach more clearly.

'A reference point for the future'

The event later featured an **expert panel discussion** on the S3P approach to interregional investment projects, the impacts of TAF and other EU Smart Specialisation Platform (S3P) support instruments, and reflections on challenges that have been encountered.

The panellists discussed various topics, including the importance of the capacity-building sessions run by TAF in developing business plans, the need for private sector involvement alongside technical assistance and capacity-building, the role of S3 in identifying strengths, and the continuing importance of S3 partnerships and innovation ecosystems going forward.

The conference concluded with some closing remarks by Marshall Hsia of DG GROW. **Mr Hsia** emphasised how much has been learnt through the experience of TAF and how much this will help for future projects, reflecting on the positive success stories that were shared during the conference. Mr Hsia also said TAF is a reference point when it comes to improving the innovation potential and commercial perspective of projects to make them investment ready.

