

## Regional Innovation & Smart and Sustainable Specialization Strategies



*This webinar seeks to discuss the regional innovation strategies, domains of interest and flagship projects of European regions and Chinese cities in order to identify areas for cooperation.*

### Regional Innovation in the EU and China similarities and differences



*Cooperation at the regional and local levels between Europe and China in the field of innovation, therefore, in addition to focusing on sectors, must primarily take into account these cross-cutting challenges that are common to both parties*



**Ronald Hall**

Senior Advisor, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission

Innovation plays an important role in regional competitiveness, realized through emerging important components.

The regional policy framework of the Art. 174 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and regulations on the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund aim for a more competitive, smarter, greener, more connected, and social Europe, which is closer to local citizens for integrated sustainable development.

The new Smart Specialisation Platform provides advice to EU countries and regions for the design and implementation of their Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), connecting regional ecosystems:

- Industrial Modernisation
- Agri-food
- Energy
- Sustainable blue economy



**Amadeo Jensana**

Cluster manager of IURC China

Regional innovation is a bottom-up and inclusive process, centred on entrepreneurial discovery. The strategy embraces a broad view of innovation, supporting technological and social innovation, and calls for constant review and agile response. The scope of innovation includes not only science and technology, but also design, services, business models, and social solutions.

The EU-China cooperation opportunities:

- Traditional industries: transformation
- Regional inequalities: Leaders and followers
- Technology transfer
- Multi-stakeholder involvement
- Interregional cooperation
- Civil society
- Green dimension of smart specialization
- Incorporation of SGDs
- Funding and monitoring
- Post COVID19: Recovery and transition
- Strong contact point
- Action plans

# Regional innovation in the EU and China

## Yangzhou, South Bohemia, Haikou, Western Greece, Suzhou

*Case studies: place-based strategies in innovation ecosystems*



**Yangzhou**

Yangzhou is a major transportation hub due to its location at the junction of different bodies of water including the **Grand Canal**. Yangzhou seeks to **protect, develop** and **utilize** the Grand Canal heritage and to cooperate with European canal cities:

- Integral Protection of Cultural Heritage
- EU-China cultural dissemination
- Ecological Evaluation and Protection of Canal areas
- Canal Tourism development



**South Bohemia Region**

South Bohemia's goals in the Smart Specialization Strategy are to support Smart solutions in public administration, entrepreneurship, boost innovation and research and encourage the upgrading of traditional industries. The region also stands out for having one of the most important water reserves in the Czech Republic, with numerous canals and ponds crossing its territory:



**Haikou**

Haikou's strongest areas are **tourism** and **services, agriculture, and strategic hi-tech industries**. Development of the port, international trade and the **blue economy** are strategic sectors. There is strong interest in:

- low-carbon industry and service sector
- Circular city
- Wetland restoration and biodiversity conservation
- Attract green and low-carbon companies



**Western Greece Region**

The Western Greece region supports its **place-based strategies** in **innovation ecosystems**. the region has set up **horizontal priorities**:

- Sustainable Energy
- Information & Communication Technologies
- Sustainable Growth and Circular Economy

and **vertical priorities**:

- Agrofood and Food Industry 4.0
- Materials, Microelectronics and Manufacturing
- Tourism, Cultural and Creative Industries



**Suzhou**

Suzhou seeks to cooperate with European regions for the development of the Yangze river Delta Eco-Green Integrated Development Demonstration Zone in the Wujiang District, focusing on the creation of **industrial innovation clusters** in the area and on building a **livable district** for the citizens:

- Eco-city development
- Research and industrial innovation
- Digital Economy
- Green and blue infrastructure

# Regional innovation in the EU and China

## Yangzhou, Western Greece, Haikou, South Bohemia, Suzhou

*Conclusions and recommendations:*



1

In addition to the areas in which each region or city has specialized, there are in particular two **cross-cutting areas** that should be addressed in the collaboration and are of interest to all the participants:

- Transition to a sustainable economy and environmental protection: in the case of Europe, for example, the regional and local level play a significant role for an effective implementation of the European Green Deal. In the case of China, cities and provinces have also environmental targets to fulfill.
- How regions/cities are boosting digital transformation from different perspectives: education, skills and talent, infrastructure, digital transformation of SMEs, etc.

2

It may also be of interest to share information and best practices in areas such as **multi-stakeholder involvement**, **technology transfer** between universities and companies, **interregional cooperation**, incorporation of **SGDs at the local level** or the implementation of monitoring systems to **evaluate the performance of the regional/local innovation strategy**.

In particular, there is a common challenge in both China and the EU at the local level in the **transfer of technology** from universities to the private sector, which has not been successfully solved in many cases. **Knowing first-hand** the reality of the regions and cities participating in this cluster can be very useful.

3

Social challenges should also be taken into account, among which one of the most important is the aging of the population. In both China and Europe, the fertility ratio of women is around 1.3, so both countries will have to face a marked transition towards a much older population structure.

4

In order to achieve concrete results in the collaboration between European regions and Chinese cities, it is important to develop action plans shared by both parties, as well as to have a focal point of contact for each region/city with decision-making power