Reinforce the access of the Outermost Regions in the European Research Area

Press file - FORWARD final Conference : June 2nd 2022

The European Research and Innovation program in the ORs

FORWARD final conference

Thursday June 2nd 2022

KBR venue Kuntsberg 28, B-1000 - Panorama room - Mont des Arts 28, BRUXELLES

Press contact for FORWARD project : Karine LEOPOLD +594 694 20 96 89
karine.leopold@ctguyane.fr

contact@forward-2020.eu

This project has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 824550

PRESS INVITATION

The FORWARD consortium, partner of the European Green Week of May 30 and 31, is pleased to invite you to its final conference in hybrid format online and onsite :

Thursday, **June 2nd** at KBR – Royal Library of Belgium - Panorama room
Mont des Arts 28, - BRUSSELS

To present the European project FORWARD, actiivities, results achieved by the 9 EU Outermost Regions (ORs) and perspectives of ORs future collaboration in research and innovation.
The Outermost Regions represent a European geographical area extended towards America and Africa with real potentialities in terms of research and innovation.

> Attached you find the press release and official agenda

> Registration link
: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdEfnWxzjKhWre0C6P0CcxV63xprKqnTg4kzIL-7ZRjPnpMgA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0

Click here for more information on :

- The conference : News : https://forward-h2020.eu/forward-final-conference-2-june-2022-brussels/
- FORWARD project: https://forward-h2020.eu/

Thank you to share this information.

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PRESS RELEASE

FORWARD final international conference at Brussels – June 2nd, 2022

FORWARD is the first European project gathering the 9 European outermost regions: Azores, Canary Islands, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Madeira, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island, Saint-Martin. The Forward project aims at improving the excellence of the outermost regions in research and innovation.

As a member of the FORWARD Consortium, the Collectivité Territoriale de Guyane is pleased to invite you to the final hybrid (online and face-to-face) conference of the FORWARD project on June 2nd at KBR Kunstberg 28, Mont des Arts 28, B-1000 Brussels.

This virtual and physical event follows the first Island Biology conference held in La Réunion in July 2019 and the second Forward conference organized in conjunction with the annual meeting of LABEX-CEBA (Laboratory of Excellence, Center for the Study of Biodiversity in Amazonia). Open to the outside public, it aims to present the progress and actions of the project.

The conference will be held after the EU Green Week scheduled on May 30 and 31, of which Forward is a partner event.

The expected highlights are the following:

- Presentation of the representatives of the OR monitoring committee and the project coordinator (Canary Islands government).

- Results of the diagnosis of the OR Research and Innovation ecosystems

- Results of the thematic groups set up for the common action plans of the ORs

- Round table with OR experts on the green transition

- Post-Forward perspectives and OR-izon network

As a reminder, FORWARD is a European exchange program between the 9 ORs aiming to increase the participation of these regions in the European calls of the Horizon Europe program for Research and Innovation and in the European framework program in general.

The Outermost Regions (ORs) play a strategic role for a smart and innovative Europe. FORWARD contributes to optimize the research and innovation ecosystems of the ORs, by developing distinctive expertise and connecting them to international networks.

Thank you to share this information.

Press Contact for FORWARD project :

Karine LEOPOLD - + 594 694 20 96 89 karine.leopold@ctguyane.fr contact@forward-h2020.eu

2 - The Forward project: a partnership and an involvement of each OR

The FORWARD consortium is composed of 9 ORs:

Azores, Canary Islands, Madeira, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Saint-Martin, Reunion and Mayotte.

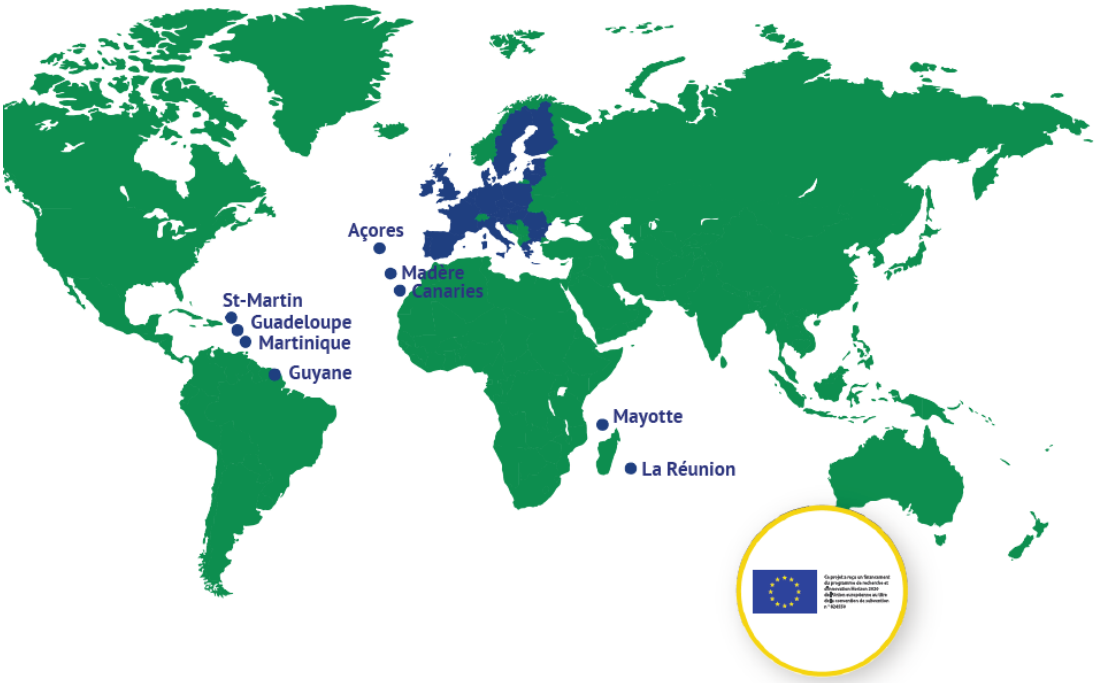
The FORWARD project allows the ORs to mobilize European research funds in order to strengthen their capacity to respond to European calls for projects on research and innovation. It is a win-win project. Indeed, it also offers the possibility for the European Union to radiate in the tropical geographical space. Thanks to these remote territories, the European Union will strengthen its position in different areas of research and innovation:

- the Atlantic Ocean with the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries

- the Caribbean basin with the French West Indies, Guadeloupe and Martinique

- the Amazon basin with French Guiana, the only department located in South America

- And the Indian Ocean with Reunion and Mayotte.



For the outermost regions, the remoteness of major research centers weakens the visibility and the skills of these territories in terms of research and innovation. The interest of FORWARD is to work in a collaborative way between the 9 ORs and also with the largest European centers.

The objective is to reach the critical mass necessary to work together on projects concerning the ORs but also Europe and the world in order to develop solutions that can be replicated everywhere.

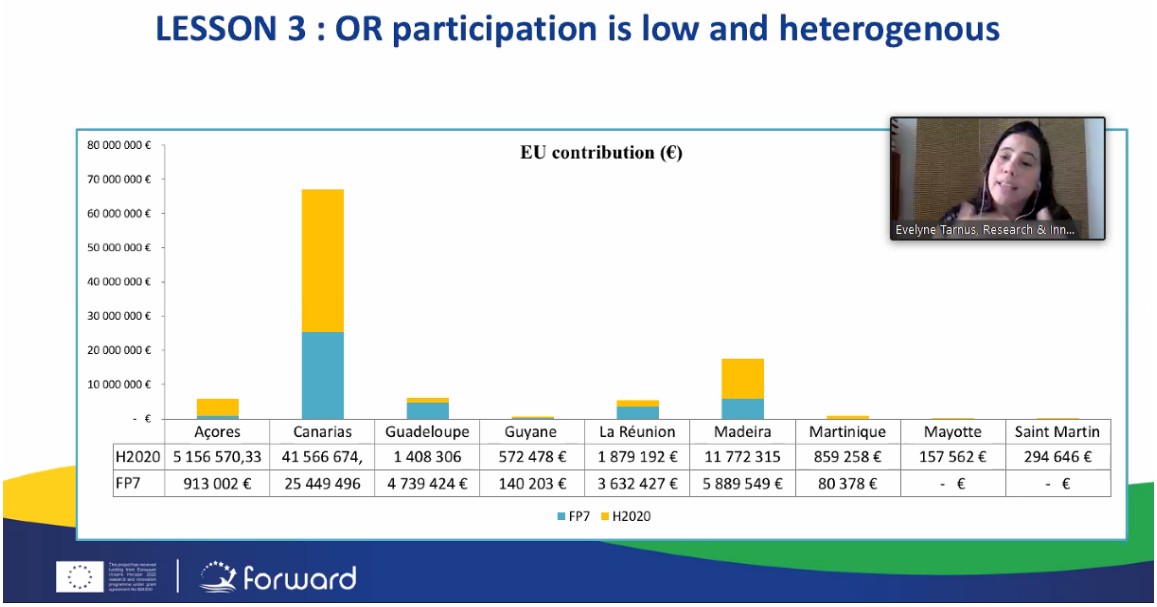
FORWARD is an opportunity to map the capacities of the ORs in their areas of research experience and, on this basis, to select potential European and international partners who can further strengthen their capacities. The project has provided assistance to ORs on the knowledge of their Research and Innovation ecosystem via a diagnostic.

3 – The results of the diagnosis of the R&I ecosystem of the ORs

Within the framework of the Work package 2 "Diagnosis of the Research and Innovation ecosystems of the ORs" carried out by the partner from Reunion, NEXA, the partners have acquired an in-depth knowledge of the participation of regional actors in the European Framework Programs and a broad and precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses impacting this participation. The results show that the traditional handicaps such as geographical, demographic, economic do not hinder our participation in the framework programs.

By aggregating these results and the highlights of the analysis, the territorial diagnosis involved the regional actors of the 9 territories, by questioning their representations on regional participation in the European framework programs, in particular, their perceptions of the determining factors explaining the relative performance. These elements allowed each region to build a territorial action plan to remove obstacles to the H2020 program and increase participation in these programs such as Horizon Europe.

Capitalizing on this regional exercise, the joint strategy was developed through a co-creation process from September to December 2019, with face-to-face consortium meetings (the mutual learning event in Brussels) but also online meetings.



	Açores	Canarias	Guadeloupe	Guyane	La Réunion	Madeira	Martinique	Mayotte	Saint Martin
H2020	5 156 570,33	41 566 674,	1 408 306	572 478 €	1 879 192 €	11 772 315	859 258 €	157 562 €	294 646 €
FP7	913 002 €	25 449 496	4 739 424 €	140 203 €	3 632 427 €	5 889 549 €	80 378 €	- €	- €

4- The co-creation of a common OR strategy

The result of the mutual learning event in Brussels in 2019 is also a bottom-up approach based on the diagnosis of the R&I ecosystems of the nine outermost regions carried out at the beginning of Forward.

It aims to present a common ambition, vision and values to improve, promote and support the participation of OR R&I ecosystems in the European Framework Program.

The ambition - to support the transformation of ORs towards a knowledge and innovation based economy and their integration into the ERA (European Research Area). The participation of ORs in European and international networks will strengthen their research and innovation ecosystems through the mobility of researchers and the promotion of scientific knowledge.

The vision - a common objective to achieve excellence in OR R&I ecosystems. The outermost regions are not "handicapped" to participate in the European Framework Programs as specified in Article 349 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, but "differentiated" regions.

Despite their constraints and their heterogeneity, the ORs can bring added value to the Research and Innovation ecosystems in EUROPE. The improvement of their infrastructures, the qualification of their human resources and the integration in international networks are the keys.

Values - Common principles taking into account regional specificities.

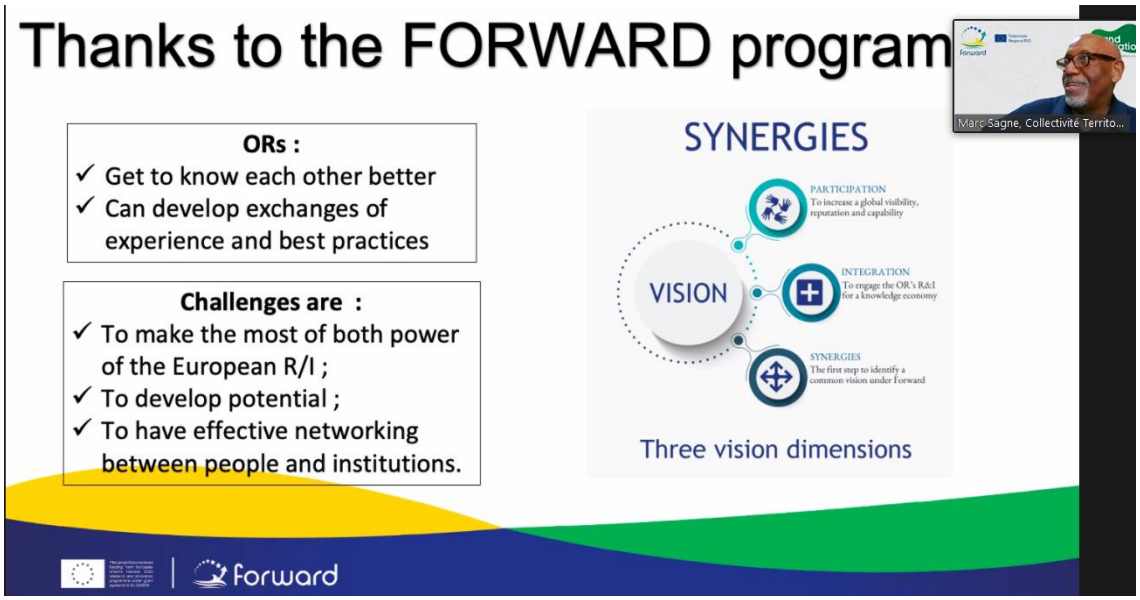
Our territories have different levels of maturity, political systems and research and innovation ecosystems. Nevertheless, the needs, the common objectives and the potential are a reality.

Taking into account the conclusions of the WP2 diagnosis, three main values are identified within the Forward project

- Synergies for an alignment between ORs

- Integration in networks to increase the critical mass, the missing point to promote the research and innovation system.

- Participation in Horizon Europe or framework programs to increase the flow of ideas, stimulate collaborations and increase critical mass.



5 - Results and strategy roadmap

At the end of Forward, the common strategy and the regional orientations have been designed to be updated through the results of the four operational Work Packages: Thematic Working Groups (WP3), Capacity Building and Training (WP4), Networking Actions (WP5) and Research-Policy Connection (WP6).

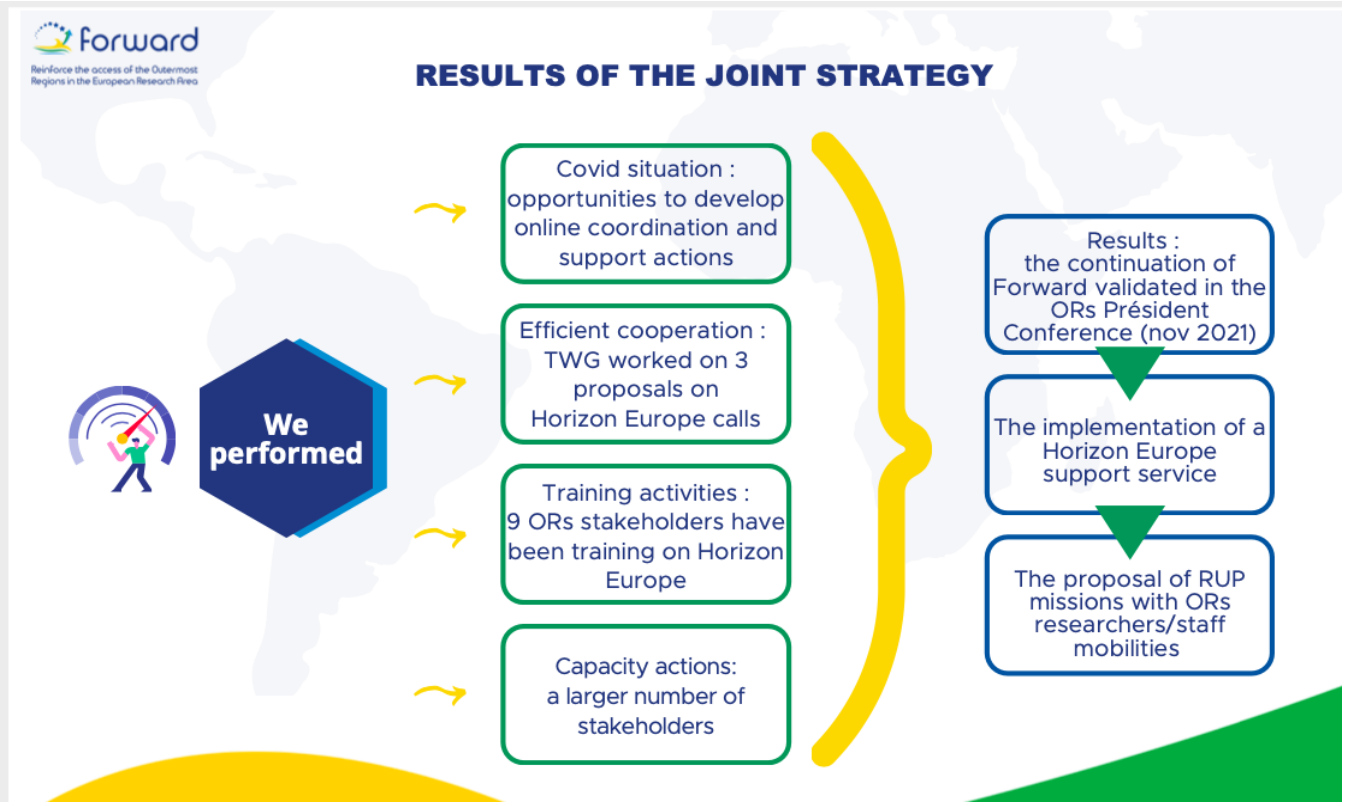
1 - Due to Covid, the Forward consortium had to adapt. Through the use of digital video conferencing platforms and digital collaboration platforms, i.e. brainstorming, sticky notes, voting, mind-mapping, among others, the objectives were achieved.

- In this sense, the scope of any training and capacity building action extends to the whole territory, eliminating territorial and border barriers, reaching a larger number of agents of the regional ecosystem of each OR, and there is even the participation of other regions in various actions.

2 - Regarding WP3, TWG1 and TWG8 have submitted 3 proposals, TWG8 has 2 proposals in progress, and TWG5 has prepared 5 abstracts with the potential to be presented. In addition, more than 60 meetings have been held, involving nearly 250 people. This WP also represents a great opportunity to connect several actors and organizations around a specific theme.

3 All Forward partners of each OR have carried out training actions on the Horizon Europe program, proposal writing, implementation of calls and monitoring of a Horizon Europe project (administrative and financial part).

4 - In WP6, an important step was taken with the written declaration of the XXVIIth conference of the Presidents of the ORs confirming their willingness to pursue Forward and to promote the OR-izon network.



All this has led to a roadmap with concrete priority actions and perspectives such as

- the perpetuation of thematic working groups to reinforce the visibility of the added value of the ORs

- groups dedicated to the alignment of regions in the RIS3 network

- the creation of a concept note on the ORI-izon network and the letter of support and commitment of the nine regional governments to this network.

The next steps are the creation of a regional contact point like the National Contact Point for Horizon Europe but at the regional level. The Forward consortium also has a big challenge to face: to define what will be the image chosen for the years to come. It has to change and valorize the ORs as a particular and different region, living European laboratories with great assets.

6 - ORs exchange in thematic groups : progress and perspectives

There are 8 thematic groups set up in alignment with the Horizon Europe program.

They bring together experts (European and third countries), European representatives and institutions.

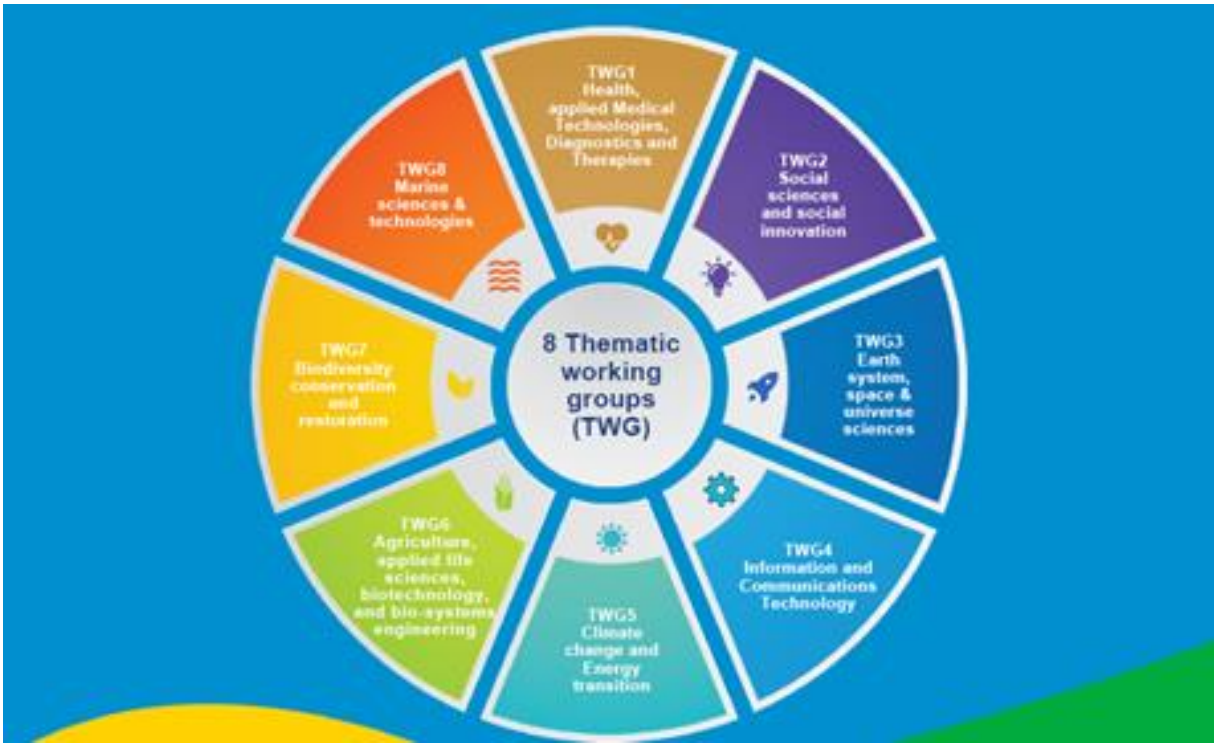
The thematic working groups are transregional and based on the common interest of the ORs.

They contribute strongly to :

- identifying critical fields and topics of research in the ORs;

- establishing networks between external actors who will cooperate in building critical masses and projects. 8 thematic groups have been defined on the basis of the pillars of the Horizon Europe program and the common interests of the ORs.

1. Health, applied medical technologies, diagnosis and therapies;
2. Social sciences and social innovation
3. Earth, Space and Universal Sciences;
4. Information and communication technologies;
5. Climate change and energy transition
6. Agriculture, applied life sciences, biotechnology and biosystems engineering;
7. Biodiversity conservation and restoration;
8. Marine Science and Technology;



Since December 2020, experts from Europe, the ORs and other countries have been meeting. After three months of exchanges and joint work, an action plan has been defined by all the members of the thematic groups with a general ambition for each group.

Constituting the basis of Forward, their sustainability modality is a common will of all ORs. It is the subject of a survey currently underway for the members of the steering committee, in order to define a collection of possible ways to support the thematic working groups, to fully meet the objectives of FORWARD and to keep them alive after the end of the project. Solutions should be proposed to support them in a long-term perspective.

7- Participation in the Horizon Europe program: an opportunity for the ORs

The participation of the ORs in the European Union's framework program for research and innovation allows :

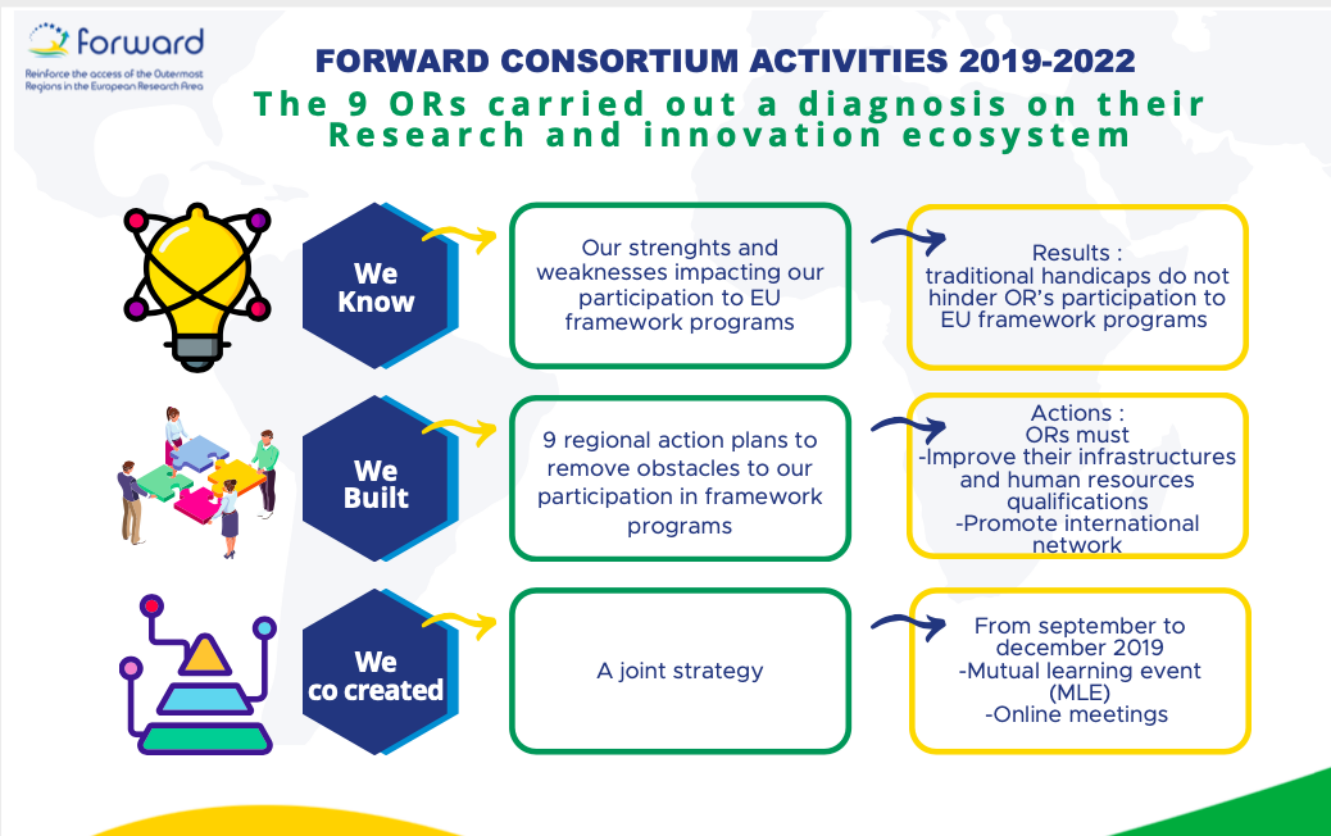
- access to funding

- cooperation with other European and international teams for enhanced international visibility mediated through participation in competitive projects

- reach the critical mass necessary for the development of the OR research and innovation ecosystem.

Thanks to the FORWARD project, the outermost regions should find it easier to respond to calls for projects under the Horizon Europe program, whose proposed budget (2021-2027) is 100 billion euros. - They will be stronger in terms of their respective knowledge of their research and innovation ecosystems with a synergy even more strengthened between them and at the European and international level. It represents the largest multinational collaborative research and innovation investment in Europe.

The FORWARD project also aims to change the way Europe looks at the outermost regions and to help raise awareness on the challenges these regions are facing in terms of research, innovation and development.



8 - Continuity of Forward included in the RCP-OR declaration of 18 and 19 November 2021

From now on, after the XXVIth Conference of Presidents of the ORs in the Azores in November 2021, the continuity of Forward until June 2022 is formal and included in the Research & Innovation paragraph of the RCP-ORP Azores declaration of 18 and 19 November 2021. The declaration specifies that in order to take full advantage of this Research and Innovation potential, the ORs must also be integrated into European and international competitive networks.

This will strengthen collaboration and networking with European and international communities and centers of excellence. Integrating these networks means for the ORs to integrate the global value chains, to increase their competitiveness, their capacities, their visibilities and the flow of knowledge and know-how.

As mentioned in the declaration, the XXVI CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF THE OUTSIDE REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, AZORES, 18 and 19 NOVEMBER 2021 REQUESTS:

- The continuation of the FORWARD project in order to strengthen the research and innovation capacities of the ORs and to enhance their assets with potential European partners ;

- Support for the establishment of a network of regional public entities to accompany Horizon Europe project leaders in the ORs;

- The launch of "OR missions" inspired by the Horizon Europe program model, which would allow actors in the ORs, as well as other European and third country partners, to coordinate their efforts on

the six key challenges identified in the FORWARD project: ecological preservation and restoration, energy transition, circular economy, adaptation to climate change and risk mitigation, water management, and the blue economy;

-Complete the statistical information system and associated publications to ensure equal treatment of French ORs on data related to research and innovation at the European level

- Strengthen the role of the relevant OR actors in the research and innovation component of the EU-Africa dialogue.

This document is available on the site of the PCR-RUP https://cp-rup.com/ -> library -> CPRUP (PT, ES, FR).

9 - Forward in the European Commission's May 3rd communication

The European Commission's communication of May 3 presents the Union's priorities for action with and for the outermost regions. It is committed to continuing to integrate the specificities of these regions into the legislation and policies of the Union through adapted and territorialized approaches. Following the strong impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the outermost regions, the Commission presents the actions needed to promote recovery and sustainable growth in these regions. The communication focuses on the following points:

- Putting citizens first - improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the outermost regions, ensuring their quality of life, fighting poverty, developing opportunities for young people;

- Leveraging the unique assets of each region, such as biodiversity, blue economy or research potential, and addressing their constraints;

- Supporting a sustainable, environmentally friendly and climate-neutral economic transformation, based on a green and digital transition;

- Strengthen regional cooperation of the outermost regions with neighbouring countries and territories.

The outermost regions are updating their smart specialization strategies to promote innovation in the most promising sectors, namely agri-food, bio-economy, sustainable blue economy, training and research on tropical medicine, tourism and creative industries. Encouraging research and innovation (R&I) can help these regions to capitalize on their strengths and to integrate into the European Research Area (ERA).

The Commission will work to improve access to excellence and to fight the innovation divide. The previous R&I program, Horizon 2020, has helped ultra-peripheral regions to strengthen their research capacity through the FORWARD project. The "Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence" component of the Horizon Europe program to support countries lagging behind in research has been extended to all outermost regions. Calls for projects recently launched under the Horizon Europe program, for example on marine biodiversity or ecosystem restoration, take into account the specificities of the outermost regions.

Several initiatives are worth noting:

The Commission:

- Will develop a customized call for projects for the outermost regions under the 2023-2024 work program of the Interregional Innovation Investments initiative;

- subject to the results of the FORWARD project, propose a specific coordination and support action under the widening participation part of the Horizon Europe programme, as proposed by the outermost regions, to further stimulate local research and innovation communities, for example through projects led by local researchers on socio-economic themes specific to these regions

- assist the outermost regions in developing and implementing smart specialisation strategies and provide tailored support through the Community of Practice to be launched by the end of 2022;

- ensure that future Horizon Europe work programmes include themes relevant to the outermost regions.

MORE INFORMATION ON FORWARD .....

The FORWARD project: Fostering research excellence in the 9 outermost regions

The main objectives of the FORWARD project are:

- To improve the research excellence of the ORs and their innovation potential in order to strengthen their participation in EU research and innovation funded projects and to link research activities to territorial development
- Facilitate collaboration and networking of representatives of the quadruple helix (university, SMEs, government, civil society) at the regional level, between ORs and with their EU and third country counterparts at the international level.

The Project is based on a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach. This approach has been developed with the aim of bringing together organizations involved in several areas of research and innovation that may be different in terms of context, expertise and skills to ensure the robustness of the measures and actions that will be implemented throughout the project.

The research and innovation potential of the ORs in a few words:

- Atmospheric sciences and climate change
- Knowledge and protection of terrestrial and marine biodiversity
- The circular economy
- Energy transition
- Space sciences
- Bio-resources

The 24 partners of FORWARD