TRANSFORMER USER FORUM OPEN CALL

Open Call for Super-Lab Regions for Climate Neutrality

Open Call – Description

Do you want to scale up living lab methodologies to achieve climate neutrality in your region? Then apply for the TRANSFORMER User Forum!

Background

The TRANSFORMER project aims to foster long-term systemic transformation in European regions, expediting the transition towards climate neutrality. A conceptual framework is being developed, mapping, defining, and categorizing Transition Super-Labs (TSLs). The project launched four pilot TSLs in the Ruhr area (DE), Emilia Romagna (IT), Lower Silesia (PL), and Western Macedonia (GR). The primary objective is to provide a roadmap blueprint, toolkit (including matchmaking mechanisms), and knowledge hub, supporting both pilot regions and others across Europe. Additionally, an evaluation framework will be established to measure the impact of TSLs in the pilot regions and assess the effectiveness of their tools and structures.

Throughout the project, TRANSFORMER will engage in comprehensive communication and dissemination, sharing intermediate results and pilot TSL activities. The TRANSFORMER Hub will serve as a valuable information resource, offering training and capacity-building activities for various stakeholders. Together, these efforts will ensure a lasting impact through the Exploitation Plan, driving positive change and advancing climate neutrality throughout Europe.

As part of the [TRANSFORMER project](#), we are establishing a **User Forum for the Transition Super Lab approach**. Transition Super Labs are regionally operating assemblies of representatives from business, government, science and civil society. These assemblies use co-creative methods to develop and implement a portfolio of multiple innovative solutions simultaneously to accelerate the transition to achieve climate neutrality in the region. In short, Transition Super Labs scale up living lab methodologies to fit a regional scale and address the big societal challenge of accelerating the way to climate neutrality.

The User Forum presents an excellent opportunity for European regions to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and replicate successful social innovation initiatives using the TSL methodology. An overall fund of €50,000 is available to support **11 regions** to participate and to contract experts.

What we offer

- A platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and networking among regions on different ways of scaling up living lab methodologies to be applied at a systemic level. The forum will host a series of online and in-person events, providing ample opportunities for collaboration and learning
- Practical insights into the TSLs currently being implemented in Emilia Romagna (Italy), Lower Silesia (Poland), Ruhr Area (Germany) and Western Macedonia (Greece)
- Access and information on ongoing funding possibilities thanks to a broad network of our partners, enabling participants to explore and tap into available funding sources
- Funding possibilities for conducting studies to assess the potential and challenges of TSL implementation in the applicant region. These studies will be presented and discussed among the project partners, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving.

Who we search for:

- Organizations, businesses, civil society groups or individuals from the EU, *interested* and able to host a Transition Super Lab within their region.

- Applicants *already experimenting* with scaling-up living lab methodologies, particularly concerning stakeholder engagement, for regional sustainability goals.
- Applicants with prior experience in initiatives and projects aimed at achieving regional sustainability goals, involving engagement with stakeholders from the quadruple/quintuple helix. Candidates with existing familiarity with living lab methodologies would be considered an asset.

Our expectations for the participation:

As participants in this initiative, we hope for:

- **Substantial Participation**: We encourage your enthusiastic involvement in the events and workshops hosted by the forum. This will foster a rich exchange of knowledge and insights among peers.

- **Project Collaboration**: We invite you to engage collaboratively with the project, bringing forth your experiences and expertise that can contribute to the accomplishment of TRANSFORMER's objectives.

- **Creation of a Replication Plan:** As part of your engagement, we kindly request you develop a concise replication plan spanning two to three pages. This plan will play a pivotal role in guiding your approach to implementing the Transition Super Lab concept in your region.

Your active participation, collaborative spirit, and thoughtful replication plan will undoubtedly propel the success of this transformative endeavour.

The TRANSFORMER User Forum

The TRANSFORMER User Forum aims at supporting the take-up of TRANSFORMER's concept of Transition Super-Labs in regions of Europe.

In the following details on the purpose, the replication levels, the eligibility criteria, budget and funding conditions, the submission procedure, as well as call timing and deadlines are described.

The TRANSFORMER User-Forum fund is a financing mechanism within the TRANSFORMER project which aims to support the transfer of the TSL concept to follower regions. The funding is up to 100% for replication activities set up by individual or teamed-up organisations from European countries.

The TRANSFORMER User Forum offers two different replication levels and activities, which range from inspirational – such as workshops– to small-scale study activities. Replication levels and activities, therefore, differ in terms of scale and funding. One proposal may include more than one activity within a chosen replication level but it needs to be limited to a maximum funding amount of €1,000 for replication level 1 and 2,500€ for replication level 2.

The following activities can be funded within the TRANSFORMER user forum:

Replication level 1: "Being inspired"

At this initial phase of the replication process, inspirational activities are useful to explore the feasibility of the uptake of the TSL concept in the region. Regions participating in this replication level will have access to the Capacity Building Programme offered by TRANSFORMER to better understand the concept of Transition Super-Labs and develop a replication plan.

Regions can also experiment with the stakeholder engagement process, particularly the quadruple helix identification and engagement methods, defined in TRANSFORMER and provide feedback to the TRANSFORMER project on specific opportunities and challenges.

Regions could also have access to the Quantitative Regional Assessment Framework Tool and gain support to interpret the data on their region, easily access the tool, and benchmark their region among other European regions.

Eligible costs for these activities include staff time, travel and subsistence costs. Proposals will be evaluated according to best value-for-money. The upper limit for funding via the user-forum fund for staff time is 1,000€.

Replication level 2: "Replication potential"

Regions participating in this replication level will have access to the Capacity Building Programme (see Annex 1) offered by TRANSFORMER to better understand the concept of Transition Super-Labs and develop a replication plan.

Regions participating in this replication level may choose to conduct a feasibility study of their choice which they will have to detail in the application form. In these feasibility studies, TRANSFORMER assessment methodologies (QRAFT, Transition Readiness Assessment, and Evidence-based Use Case Impact Assessment Methodology) are applied, tested, and evaluated to gain a deeper understanding of your region, its transition needs, and potentials..

Note: Additional activities may be accepted when considered relevant and contribute to the future take-up of the TRANSFORMER Transition Super-Lab approach and in case they stay within the given funding limits.

Eligible costs for these activities include staff time, travel and subsistence costs. Proposals will be evaluated according to best value-for-money. The upper limit for funding via the user-forum fund for staff time is 2,500€.

Participation in the TRANSFORMER User-Forum

TRANSFORMER will organise **three events,** in addition to the workshops taking place as part of the TRANSFORMER Capacity Building Programme. starting with the first **Forum Meeting in November 2023** (online, date still to be confirmed), **a workshop in Brussels** (February 2023) and a **final TRANSFORMER Event** in the Ruhr Area (at the end of June 2023, in Bochum, Germany, exact date still to be confirmed). The Forum will be the main knowledge and experience exchange platform for TRANSFORMER partners, selected 11 follower regions and external experts.

The follower regions shall actively participate in **at least 2 events**, providing updates on the latest developments in their regions so that the forum members can learn from one another's experiences. A **Final Activity Report**, including a replication plan, of two to three pages must be submitted by 14 July 2024 to complete the activities undertaken as a member of the User Forum.

For the participation in two to three TRANSFORMER events, the 11 regions, Members of the TRANSFORMER User Forum, will receive additional funding for travel and subsistence costs of up to €2,000 maximum.

Eligibility criteria

An application for the TRANSFORMER User Forum fund must satisfy all of the following eligibility criteria to be retained for evaluation:

- ❑ It is submitted before the deadline stated in the call text, i.e. 23 October 2023
- ❑ It involves at least one legal entity established in a Member State of the European Union and Third countries associated to Horizon Europe, namely Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine.

❑ It is complete in all elements required in the application form.
❑ It is submitted in English (the official language of the TRANSFORMER project).

Only proposals that satisfy the above eligibility criteria are acceptable and will be evaluated by the TRANSFORMER Project Management Group

Budget and funding

One region member of the User Forum is expected to be funded with a maximum funding of €2,500 (depending on the planned activities). The maximum amounts of funding per activity are 1,000€ (Replication Level 1) and 2,500€ (Replication Level 2).

Eligible costs include staff time, travel and subsistence costs.

In addition, a budget of up to €2,000 can be required for travel and subsistence costs to participate in TRANSFORMER events (based on actual cost).

Resources have to be provided in Euros. If not in Euros, the official conversion rate at the date of requesting cost reimbursement could be used. VAT is not eligible.

Please provide time in hours and based on average hourly rates (based on real annual gross salary) for the staff involved.

Procedures

Submission

Proposals must utilize the application form and follow the procedures detailed in the application form. Applications submitted past the deadline or incomplete applications will not be retained for evaluation. Applicants will receive a confirmation e-mail.

Applications meeting all formal requirements are forwarded to the evaluation committee, composed of the Management Group members of the TRANSFORMER project.

Implementation and reporting

Once the funding "Agreement" has entered into force, the awarded party can kick off the User Forum replication activities. Activities are expected to start with the participation in the TRANSFORMER first User Forum Online Meeting in November 2023 (exact date to be confirmed) at the latest and shall be finalized within eight months after their commencement.

A **Final Activity Report** must be submitted by e-mail by 14 July 2024 to the TRANSFORMER Project Management Group contact (see below). The Final Activity Report needs to include a replication plan as well as a one to two-page publishable summary intended for the public. A template will be provided in due time.

Payment procedures

After the funding "Agreement" has entered into force, the reimbursement of the costs will be made within 30 working days of the approval of the Final Activity Report.

Timing and deadline

The TRANSFORMER User Forum Call will open on September 1st 2023 and will close on October 23rd 2023. Proposal evaluations will be completed within two weeks (ten working days) of the closing date of the TRANSFORMER User Forum fund call.

Annexe 1: TRANSFORMER Capacity Building Programme

Timeframe	Topic	Partner involved
November 2023	Online workshop: Launch of the User Forum A session to co-design and validate the Capacity Building programme with the user forum participants, presentation of the User-Forum, getting to know each other, launch of the activities of the user forum	European Network of Living Labs & all
December 2023	Online workshop: Discussing what is a TSL and and their benefits when considering implementation in various contexts and regions. Identifying potential topics of your region	Ruhr University Bochum
January 2024	Online workshop: TSL Roadmap and transition model Knowledge Hub & toolkit presentation, overview of asssessment frameworks	Knowledge hub: The Centre for Research & Technology, Hellas Toolkit: FIT consulting Roadmap: Rupprecht Consult
February 2024	TRANSFORMER workshop in Brussels: Vision building proces Intro to stakeholder engagement *Peer to peer exchange between TSL & user forum regions*	Business Metropole Ruhr & experts
March 2024	Online training: Stakeholders engagement - how to manage complex regional relationships	European Network of Living Labs & Twenty Communications
April 2024	Online session: Action plan development and Funding and financing opportunities	European Network of Living Labs / expert Business Metropole Ruhr
May 2024	Online session: Transition Readiness Assessment & QRAFT	The Centre for Research & Technology, Hellas; Ruhr University Bochum
June 2024	Final TRANSFORMER Event, in Bochum:	Lessons learned: The Centre for

	Transition Super-Labs' Lessons Learned (alternatively new version of the roadmap if the lessons learned are not ready yet + results) Replication plans	Research & Technology, Hellas

Exact date of the online workshops will be agreed with the user forum participants based on their availability and preferences.

Duration of sessions: Anticipated time for online workshops is approximately 1.5 hours, whereas in-person events are projected to span an entire day.

Descriptions of the sessions:

Online workshop: Discussing what is a TSL and why should you implement it in your region?
In this session, participants will gain an understanding of the concept of a Transition Super Lab (TSL) and its distinctions from a Living Lab. They will also be introduced to the various stages involved in the development of a TSL, along with an exploration of the primary obstacles associated with its successful implementation. In addition, the participants will begin brainstorming potential topics and methodologies that are relevant for their regions in connection to the transition readiness assessment.

Online workshop: TSL Roadmap and transition model, Knowledge Hub & toolkit presentation, overview of assessment frameworks

Participants will learn about the development of the TSL roadmap and transition model. The roadmap is designed for professionals working in urban and regional institutions, as well as other stakeholders involved in the creation and execution of the TSL process. The purpose of the roadmap is to outline the steps involved in preparing and implementing a TSL and will be a guiding tool for the user forum participants.

To facilitate the participants' learning journey, tools from the TRANSFORMER toolkit and informative snapshots from the Transformer Knowledge Hub will be presented. Clear instructions on their use will also be provided. The session will conclude with an overview of qualitative and quantitative assessment frameworks.

TRANSFORMER workshop in Brussels:
The face-to-face meting in Brussels will offer a chance to delve more profoundly into the regions' process of shaping their vision and initiate conversations about stakeholder engagement. Participants of the user forum will also have the opportunity to interact with Transformer regions and invited experts, fostering productive exchanges. This collaborative environment is set to yield valuable discussions.

Online workshop: Stakeholder engagement

Quadruple helix stakeholder engagement is an essential element of a TSL. During this session, you will acquire knowledge on effectively overseeing complex regional relationships and discover the array of methods and tools available for fostering engagement.

Online session: Action plan development and Funding and financing opportunities
The user forum partcipants will be guided through various steps necessary for development of a comprehensive action plan and different funding and financing opportunities which the regions can utilize.

Online session: Transition Readiness Assessment & QRAFT

Transition Readiness Self-Assessment Tool developed by the project will be presented and the user forum participants will be able to test it on their own cases. The tool will enable them to conduct a thorough evaluation of the transition readiness by analysing core indicators.

To complement the assessment, the session will include an introduction to the Quantitative Assessment Framework, seamlessly integrated into the Knowledge Hub. This methodology, developed within the project, empowers regions to quantitatively evaluate their transition requirements and potentials at the NUTS 2 Level.

Final TRANSFORMER Event, in Bochum:

Main lessons learned by the project regions will be presented based on the analysis oft he context, barriers and framework conditions that have impacted the establishment and operation of TSLs. In addition, the user forum participants will share their replication plans. The face-to-face format of the event will allow participants in the user forum to obtain feedback and support from the TSL regions.