

A closer look to the Regional Stakeholder Group in Lombardy

The Strategic Communities of AFIL - Lombardy Intelligent Factory Cluster are working groups focused on strategic issues involving the regional manufacturing ecosystem. They represent a network of Lombardy stakeholders (companies, universities, research centers and associations) aiming to identify challenges and opportunities in the field of Advanced Manufacturing, fostering collaborations and proposing projects.

Among them, one Strategic Community is focusing on Advanced Polymers and is co-coordinated by AFIL Cluster, the Polytechnic University of Milan and the University of Brescia. The working group is dedicated to enhancing the regional competitiveness in the field of advanced polymers and smart plastics through cross-sectoral and interregional networking actions, as well as supporting Research and Innovation actions by facilitating the participation in public funding calls at regional, national and European levels.



Figure 1. AFIL's Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers at Innovhub in April 2023

Among the most relevant activities at regional level, it is worth mentioning that several members of the Strategic Community have applied in the Lombardy Region's Call for Expressions of Interest for Value Chains, an initiative launched in March 2022 that focuses on supporting and boosting the competitiveness of existing supply chains or ecosystems, as well as generating new ones related to regional specializations.

In particular, the proposal for the Lombardy Sustainable and Smart Value Chain on Advanced Polymers, led by ROLD and facilitated by AFIL, was presented and approved in February 2023 within the regional Call for Expressions of Interest. A wider Regional Stakeholder Group was born on that occasion, including both members and non-members of the Cluster.

In light of this focus and relevance, the regional initiative has been chosen by AFIL as the Policy Instrument for PLASTIX (Plastics Revolution for European Regions), while, in this sense, Lombardy Region has been involved as Associated Policy Authority.

At European level, in addition to benefitting of PLASTIX project activities, the Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers seeks opportunities through various calls, such as Horizon Europe, I3, Cascade Funding and many more, with the goal of identifying possible interests and stimulating active participation.



Figure 2. AFIL's Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers at CSMT in September 2023

With special regard to PLASTIX, the meeting of the Strategic Community on Advanced Polymers serve as a platform for showcasing the insights gathered during the On-Site Deep Dive (OSDD) Visits and learning about the latest trends, policies and best practices in other European regions.

At the same time, through the participation to the working group activities, regional stakeholders are invited to present their own best practices with a view at cooperating at regional level, but also at travelling to PLASTIX partner regions in order to share them, like it happened with ROLD and University of Brescia.

Additionally, members benefit from these meetings by staying informed about regional policy initiatives and maintaining direct ties with Lombardy Region, in order to be ready to apply to future funding initiatives dedicated to plastics, also related to the Call for Expressions of Interest for Value Chains.