

**Conclusions from workshop "Aligning implementation of RIS3 and H2020 Funding across research priorities"**

**9 March 2017**

The rationale behind the interactions between the two policy frameworks, the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Framework programme for research and innovation, is that the combination of place-based investments through Smart Specialisation Strategies and excellence in research and innovation will enhance the impact of funds.

The ultimate aim of building synergies is not only bringing efficiency, but having an increased impact on regions in terms of jobs, growth and competitiveness.

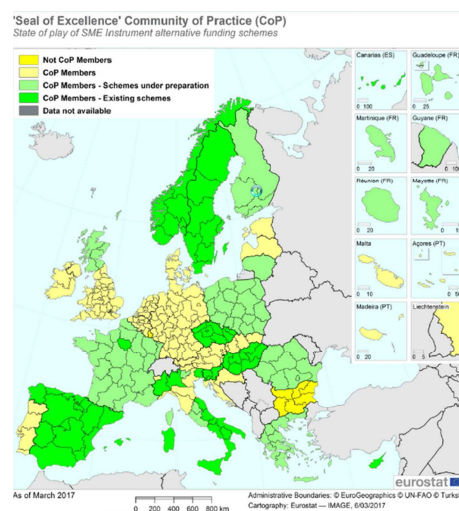
**EU Policy framework**

- Stairway to Excellence project has produced a number of documents and outcomes to facilitate the generation of synergies by European regions and member states and can be accessible through the website (<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/stairway-to-excellence>):
  - ✓ Policy insights on "Lessons learnt from S2E events" and "EU participation in International science"
  - ✓ National policy events & Joint statements for EU13 countries
  - ✓ National and regional "Fact and Figures" & "Country Reports" for EU13 countries
  - ✓ 25 synergies examples of combined funding
  - ✓ Online tool R&I Regional Viewer, to visualise main economic and R&I indicators, attraction of H2020 funding and R&I-related investments under ESIF
- The JRC online tools aim to facilitate to regions and countries develop their RIS3 based on their unique strengths. EYE@RIS3 enables to identify the priority areas selected by other countries/regions to find their unique niches of opportunity and seek out potential partners for collaborations <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>
- Synergies have to be understood in a more strategic and impact-oriented way, not only project-oriented. Strengthening the dialogue of ESIF and Horizon 2020 stakeholders and managers is a key issue, learning and talking to each other, ensuring that the step towards each other are taken.
- Synergies should be enhanced along the entire programming cycle, starting from RIS3 development, to programme design and implementation.

- There is an increasing interest in trans-national and inter-regional cooperation (Vanguard, Macro-regional strategies, INTERREG). In this regard, the Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms (S<sup>3</sup>P) (<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3-thematic-platforms>) are focusing on facilitating and supporting regions to coordinate within common/complementary S3 priority areas to align efforts and team up around value-chains.

It is important that the process takes into account:

- ✓ With strong leadership of motivated regions
  - ✓ With strong Entrepreneurial Discovery Process mobilising the key actors of the region
  - ✓ Involving relevant clusters, intermediaries and EU level initiatives (JU, EIT-KICs, ETP, ERA-Nets, etc)
  - ✓ Facilitate access to financing for resulting projects (ESIF, H2020, others..)
- Important disparities in research and innovation performance are a barrier to competitiveness, growth and jobs in Europe. The "Widening" programme is tackling the R&D divide with 800 M€ under H2020, but there is a need to complement these initiatives with structural reforms of the national R&I systems, especially through appropriate use of ESIF for R&I.
- The Seal of Excellence Community of practice shows that there is an increasing interest in applying the scheme, not only for Phase 1 but also for Phase 2 SME Instrument projects.



- The Committee of the Regions has drafted and presented an opinion report in which highlights key aspects that should be considered in order to improve the implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies. The opinion suggests that the European Commission should encourage stronger involvement of the key stakeholders at national/regional/local level to ensure effective compliance. Improved guidance on monitoring and evaluation of S3, introducing common indicators for all regions are needed.
- In terms of synergies between the European Structural and Investment Funds and other programmes, certain aspects have to be improved to support the process:
  - ✓ Simplification of the regulatory framework
  - ✓ Extension of synergies to other EU policies and intervention mechanisms

- ✓ Encourage training programmes, especially in regions with limited experience in the field, highlighting sectoral success stories as a way to learn from experience
- ✓ Encourage links between different levels of governance- EU, national, regional and local- and coordination between management authorities and national contact points, amongst others.

### **Thematic approach to synergies**

- Regions need to move from disconnected to connected regions, developing their generative capacity (talent attraction, universities, etc.), absorptive capacity (private sector investment, clusters, critical mass), collaborative capacity (networks, joint projects, etc.) and leadership capacity (boundary spanners, shared vision for the future, etc.).
- There are two tribes that have to coordinate and work together to make synergies operational. The research and innovation one, with an ecosystem approach, focused on innovative ideas and personal career focused on research publications and peer review. The regional administration one, managing ESIF, focused on processes, efficiency, budget and auditing constraints.
- There is going to be an increasing need of new/improved coordination mechanisms at the regional level, with a wider role for NCPs working as facilitators with extensive knowledge and experience on H2020 programmes as well awareness of ESIF rules and procedures. Different roles are needed in orchestrating regional innovation ecosystems. Both a stronger NCPs regional and sectoral focus as well as looking for territorial impact and spatial planning could be of interest.
- In the health area, there are examples in establishing coordination mechanisms between NCP and ESIF managers:
  - ✓ Mutual training of NCP/ESIF MA have been organised to receive information and training in both programmes, gaining knowledge on funding opportunities for better establishing synergies.
  - ✓ The circulation of experience and specific operational issues about the implementation of H2020 SC1 programme NCPs has been proved to be relevant for Managing Authorities, especially for the use of the Seal of Excellence.
  - ✓ Reference groups in Brussels bringing together regional stakeholders to gather inputs for stakeholders' consultations and to give insights for H2020 programme committees, taking into account RIS3 priorities.
  - ✓ Danubalt project has established synergies between the Baltic Sea and Danube Macro region in health research and innovation. Evidence has been generated on the state of the art of Baltic Sea to understand how to address differences in health R&I across regions. Pilot projects have been promoted to increase the participation and establish complementarities between EC support programmes in combination with national and regional public-private investments.
- In the industrial modernisation area, several activities have been carried out to approach NCPs to the regions and to establish links with regional authorities.

- ✓ NCPs in Greece were officially involved in some regions at the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process level.
  - ✓ Specific workshops with local stakeholders to present H2020 priorities are regularly organised
  - ✓ Assistance to SME groups building links with researchers to define project ideas in response to H2020 calls and organisation of thematic workshops on agri-food involving SMEs, academia, industry associations and chambers of commerce.
  - ✓ Organisation of meetings with Ministries representatives to describe instruments funded by ERDF and CAP.
  - ✓ Vanguard Initiative has identified a clear scope for synergies with H2020 through aligning various RIS3 through interregional cooperation, exploring complementary capacities of regions to tackle major industrial challenges.
  - ✓ Scope for synergies with H2020: aligning various RIS3 through inter-regional cooperation can develop critical mass combining forces and complementing capacities to tackle major industrial challenges.
- In the Bioeconomy field, interesting examples that are working in introducing complementarities between ESIF and H2020 funds were presented:
    - ✓ The BioEcon project on "New Strategies on Bio-Economy in Poland", led by the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation, the largest research development centre in Poland. The aim of the project is to unlock the research potential of the Institute through the creation of an internationally excellent and interdisciplinary department on bio-economy. The project works on mobilising the regional stakeholders and the concentration of resources and widening participation in international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral projects through bridging Cohesion and innovation funds with H2020 and other EU funded opportunities.
    - ✓ The Central and Eastern European Bioregions Forum is an initiative integrated by 6 Polish regions and opened to membership of other EU regions interested in networking around the bio-economy field.
    - ✓ The Forum has signed an agreement with BBI Joint Undertaking to work on synergies between research and development regional strategies and Strategic Innovation and Research Agenda of BBI JU (SIRA), promote the participation of industry to participate in BBI JU and joint actions on the promotion of synergies between RIS3 and other EU funding programmes and initiatives.

- In the energy field, different possibilities of synergies have been identified:

The H2020 NCP for energy clearly identifies a potential for 4 types of synergies, especially in the framework of the new Energy H2020 Work programmes 2018 – 2020:

- ✓ Providing funding from alternative sources for positively evaluated Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 proposals but not funded due to insufficient
- ✓ Funding actions that build research and innovation capacities of actors aimed at participating in the Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 or other internationally competitive research and innovation programmes
- ✓ Combining funding from the Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 and the ESI Funds (and/or from other sources)

- ✓ Funding actions that capitalise on already implemented Framework Programme/Horizon 2020 research and innovation actions aimed at market uptake (sequential – downstream)
- ✓ Climate KIC RIS Network is a very interesting instrument to link place-based research and innovation strategies, the mobilisation of actors in the quadruple helix as multipliers of knowledge and expertise and the internationalisation and reinforcing synergies and complementarities with EU, national, regional innovation initiatives and funding sources
- In the space field, there is interesting potential for increasing the impact of funding through policy mix:
  - ✓ Between 2014 and 2020, Europe will invest 12 billion € in space activities, representing the second largest public space budget in the world (EU COM 2016 705, Space Strategy for Europe).
  - ✓ Investing on space-based solutions for territorial management results from a strong political vision or a strong demand from citizens.
  - ✓ The new regulation of the European Commission on Pre-commercial Public Procurement (in which satellite earth observation has been included) has a strong potential, as local and regional authorities are the main drivers of innovation from the demand side and 55% of public spending is done by them
  - ✓ Interesting examples on policy mixes combining top down and bottom up approaches to support the emergence of regional vocations and assets were shown:
    - Lombardy region acceleration of transformation of traditional and mature industries into emerging industries through direct support to stakeholders via call for proposals with regional initiatives to build up innovative environments and hubs
    - Bretagne region has put in place 2 specific entities, Bretel GIS Teledetection and Pôle Mer, in order to strategically implement targeted areas of innovation and research for prioritization of funds. With a total funding of 14.41 M€, the ERDF investment will reach 1.77 M€.

Conclusions from the discussion related to the future NCP role in the process of synergies:

- **NCPs** play/can play a meaningful role in supporting and facilitating synergies process at the regional and national level, as well as enhancing implementation of smart specialisation strategies and in certain cases their reformulation. The process itself is to a significant extent related to **trust between NCPs and MA's communities** as well as other relevant stakeholders creating the eco-system for synergies such as KICs, thematic platforms, etc.
- Many **best practices** reflecting synergies between H2020 and ESIF, including those based on collaboration between NCPs and MA's, in regions can be extracted and therefore should be further promoted to show possible **solutions and motivations for all communities**.
- **EC** plays a significant role in delivering a **proper frame for synergies** (i.a. clarification of state aid rules, audits requirements etc.), analysing data, providing knowledge and supporting **tools** (e.g. Stairway to Excellence initiative and Smart Specialisation Platform).

- The issue of **synergies** is to a significant extent **sector specific**, therefore to create a favourable environment for synergies **thematic NCPs** should recognize main elements of particular areas as well as build links with main stakeholders. **Thematic platforms** might be a space for collaboration between NCPs and other partners, exchange of know-how, experience and best practices.
- There is a pending need of **exchange experiences between NCP networks** on dealing with synergies process as well as constant **capacity building** in the topic.