

EN
ANNEX

PILOT PROJECT:

COHESION POLICY AND THE SYNERGIES WITH THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS: THE STAIRWAY TO "EXCELLENCE"

1. Introduction

1.1. Budget line: 13 03 77 13

1.2. Basic Act: Not applicable

1.3. Policy context

The two EU funding sources (The European Structural and Investment Funds and Horizon 2020), when operating individually, provide significant support for research, development and innovation. Supporting synergies in their use may deliver additional gains in terms of innovation results, close the innovation gap in Europe and promote economic growth. Enhancing a better combination of research, development and innovation strategies is an important component of the Directorate General's work programme as a contribution to the Union's regional policy.

1.4. General objectives of the Pilot Project:

Building excellence in a given area of research and innovation often takes sustained efforts and long-term strategic planning. The development of good national/regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) is considered essential for sustaining the innovation performance and the economic growth of the European Union. Therefore, the support by the Smart Specialisation Platform to Member States and regions to design and upgrade their RIS3 is essential. In particular, this allows Member States who joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013 and catching-up regions to identify a limited number of areas of good quality research and industrial activities with high innovation potential in their territory that will be further reinforced and developed using the European Structural and Investment Funds to become more excellent and more competitive in H2020 calls. Beyond a stronger innovation generation capacity, this policy framework also allows to increase the absorption capacity by Member States who joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013 of the innovation results developed / generated in more innovative territories in the context of past Framework Programme projects.

With the resources of the Pilot Project, a new activity will be launched within the Smart Specialisation Platform in order to support Member States who joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013 and regions to develop and exploit the synergies between H2020 and European Structural and Investment Funds, building on and exploiting synergies.

The Pilot Project is centred on the provision of support to enhance the value of two key EU funding sources for research, development and innovation (the European Structural and Investment Funds and Horizon 2020) by actively promoting their combination.

2. Actions/ Type of financial intervention

In 2014 the Pilot Project implementation will be entrusted to the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission through the signature of an Administrative Agreement.

The duration of this Pilot Project should not exceed fifteen months from its launching. However, these activities would need to be continued beyond 2014 if they are to have a major impact on moving Member States who joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013 up the Stairway to Excellence.

2.1. ACTION 1: Assistance to Member States who joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013 in closing the innovation gap, in order to promote excellence in all regions and Member States of the European Union

The action aims at launching "Upstream actions" to prepare regional R&I players to participate in Horizon 2020 ("stairways to excellence") to be developed, where necessary, through capacity mapping and capacity building. Communication and cooperation between Horizon 2020 national contact points and managing authorities of the European Structural and Investment Funds shall be strengthened.

The objective of this Action is twofold.

First, it will provide new Member States and regions with preliminary analyses and evaluation of their past performance in Framework Programmes, strengths and weaknesses in terms of R&I capacity, institutional features, and alignment between public R&I and business innovation needs. These inputs will be mainly built on data and analyses already carried out by new MSs and they will aim at better defining the methodological aspects which could lead regional actors to successfully adopt and finance support structures and R&D&I instruments via synergies between funds.

Second, it will adapt the highly effective peer review and mutual learning methodology developed for assessing RIS3, to peer review the structures and instruments used by the old and new Member States/regions to enhance participation to Framework Programmes and exploit the synergies between H2020 and ESIF. As is the case for the RIS3 peer reviews, S2E peer reviews would be organised by MS/regions with the support of the S2E Platform. Moreover, it is envisaged to expand the mandate of the S3P Mirror group of stakeholders to provide advice to the S2E Platform in order to reinforce consultation and advice of stakeholders.

Indicative budget: EUR 900 000

2.2. ACTION 2: Stimulating the early and effective implementation of national and regional Smart Specialisation Strategies

The action aims at launching "Downstream actions" to provide the means to exploit and diffuse R&I results, stemming from Horizon 2020 and preceding programmes, into the market with particular attention on creating an innovation-friendly environment for business and industry, including SMEs and in line with the priorities identified for the territories in the relevant smart specialisation strategy.

It is proposed that 2014 is used to develop and test some methodologies to do it effectively. Eventually, it could be envisaged a full deployment of those methodologies in subsequent year.

Some possible actions in 2014 are as follows:

To identify a limited number of common thematic priorities within RIS3 of several new MS/regions. Key Enabling Technologies (KET) and ICT will probably be horizontal priorities that can have a high impact in most new MS/regions.

To select a number of on-going or recently finalised Framework Programme projects in these limited number areas. To organise approximately two events where project participants from leading countries, business, research community and policy makers from new MS/regions and stakeholders.

These events may try different formats to see which one would be most effective for wide transmission of knowledge.

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000

3. Total budget: EUR 1 200 000

Of this total budget, an indicative amount of up to EUR 300 000 will be reserved for procurement of experts. This will be engaged mostly through individual expert contracts. Their main purpose will be to review / profiling Regions and Member States in their capacity to use/attract ESIF and FP innovation-related investments, assess their research and innovation policies to complement and support the work of JRC-IPTS.

This will include the preparation of briefing materials, participation in and animation of workshops and other specific stakeholder liaison activities, and associated reporting. This would involve up to 8 selected experts.

In addition up to three further experts with relevant expertise in other relevant regional contexts would be engaged to support the work, through workshop participation and supporting analysis.

Given the duration of the project, the necessary procurement procedures would be initiated in the first quarter 2014.

4. Indicative calendar for the implementation of the action

The Union contribution to the procedures described in the work programme will be covered by commitment appropriations for 2014 for which an amount of EUR 1 200 000 is to be made available. Most of the actions will start on the 2nd quarter of 2014 and in any case after the signature of the Administrative Agreement.