

EN

ANNEX

PREPARATORY ACTION: "COHESION POLICY AND SYNERGIES WITH THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS: STAIRWAY TO EXCELLENCE-THE WAY FORWARD"

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Budget line: 13 03 77 18

1.2. Basic Act: Preparatory action as referred to in Article 54(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) N° 966/2012.

1.3. Policy context

Each of the two EU funding sources - the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and Horizon 2020 - provide significant support for research, development and innovation. Supporting synergies in their use may deliver additional gains in terms of innovation results, contribute to closing the innovation gap in Europe and promote economic growth.

1.4. General objectives of the Preparatory Action:

The objective is to provide 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 to close the innovation gap in between the countries of the European Union. The Preparatory action will continue to build cooperation with other Commission services, the Policy Support Facility (PSF) as well as other EU institutions and platforms.

2. ACTIONS/ TYPE OF FINANCIAL INTERVENTION

In comparison to the previous phase of the Stairways to Excellence initiative (pilot project 2014-2015), the geographical coverage of this preparatory action will be extended to all EU Member States.

In 2016 the Preparatory Action implementation will be entrusted to the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission through the signature of an Administrative Agreement. The duration of the Administrative Agreement should not exceed eighteen months and it will cover the following fields:

2.1. ACTION 1: Assistance to Member States and Regions in closing the research and innovation gap and promoting excellence

This action aims at supporting regional Research & Innovation (R&I) players to enhance their innovation capacity. This will be done by generating strategic synergies in the implementation phase of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) with Horizon 2020 and other Community funding programmes. This action will be developed through both capacity mapping and capacity building initiatives. Communication, coordination and cooperation between Horizon 2020 national contact points and managing authorities of ESIF will be ensured.

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

The action aims at reinforcing the support for the implementation and monitoring of the RIS3 across Europe. In order to do so, targeted initiatives will be selected and prioritised along the following dimensions:

- "Synergy-specific" support "Upstream" *versus* "Downstream" actions.
- "Theme-specific" support to regions and Member States which share interest in supporting S3 priorities in line with Horizon 2020 areas;
- "Funding-specific" initiatives where the focus will be on synergies between the implementation of RIS3 and other funding programmes beyond Horizon 2020 (e.g. Creative Europe, Erasmus +, COSME, etc.);
- "Stakeholder-specific" support where the focus of the action will be on enhancing the role that some stakeholders could play for making the implementation of RIS3 more efficient (e.g. private companies, universities, institutional stakeholders such as European Institute of Innovation and Technology and other EU platforms.).

3. TOTAL BUDGET AND INDICATIVE CALENDAR FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION

The total budget for this Preparatory Action is EUR 1 000 000. The administrative agreement with JRC will be signed in 2016 and an anticipated payment of 50% will be paid upon signature.

The action will start in April 2017 and in any case after signature of the administrative arrangement.