

EN
ANNEX

PREPARATORY ACTION:

SUPPORT FOR GROWTH AND GOVERNANCE IN LAGGING REGIONS

1. Introduction

1.1. *Budget line: 13 03 77 19*

1.2. *Basic Act: preparatory action as referring to in Article 54(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.*

1.3. *Policy context: this preparatory action is framed within the Lagging Regions initiative*

Regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) are well embedded in regional policy and it is a real driver for the prioritisation of investments, structural changes in the regions and the positioning of Cohesion Policy in the EU growth and investment strategy. The support for their implementation is now in great need.

1.4. *General objectives of the Preparatory Action:*

Operating under the auspices of the S3 activity of Joint Research Centre (JRC), and, in particular, building on the specific support activities and consequent positive outcomes of the European Parliament Preparatory Action on refinement and implementation of a RIS3 strategy in the Greek region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (REMTh), the main aims of this activity are:

- to support selected regions in the identification of economic competitive advantages and in the exploitation of the innovation potential, building on a process of entrepreneurial discovery;
- to provide appropriate and specific support to the development, refinement and ongoing implementation of smart specialisation strategies and related activities in selected lagging regions;
- to ensure a coherent, coordinated and sustainable approach, to secure, develop and enhance engagement of all relevant stakeholders (business, academia, research organisations and civil society);
- to develop and enhance the linkages between RIS3 at regional and national levels, in particular in coordination with similar type of Decision with 'the economic competitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania';
- to develop and implement a cross cutting approach to key issues in the growth and governance of lagging regions;
- to improve the understanding of links between slow and limited growth in certain EU regions and prevailing macro-economic framework conditions;
- use RIS3 as an entry point to understanding broader structural problems (e.g. in governance, transnational cooperation, Research Development and Innovation (RDI), education, and the business environment), also taking advantage of links with the wider 'lagging regions initiative' of the European Commission;

- to contribute to further refinement of the RIS3 model and advancing understanding of (implementation issues of) smart specialisation by codifying hands-on experiences in different contexts;
- to develop and disseminate lessons relevant for other regions in the EU.

Initially focused on a limited number of lagging regions and national contexts, this approach is also intended to form the basis of a more widely applicable support activity.

2. Actions/ Type of financial intervention

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 indicative duration of this Preparatory Action shall be 24 months.

The regions under consideration are:

PL Warminsko Masurskie, HU Észak-Alföld (Debrecen), IT Puglia, EL Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, ES Extremadura, PT Centro and BG Severen Tsentralen.

These actions will be conducted in alignment and, where relevant and possible, in close coordination with the activities foreseen under the similar Decision for 'the economic competitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania'.

WORK PACKAGE 1: Stocktaking and assessment

This work package provides the basis for the work to be carried out over the duration of the project. In addition to aligning the overall study with the current European policy context for lagging regions, and with other relevant cross-cutting analyses undertaken on core issues, the central aim of WP1 is to develop comparable profiles for each of the regions under consideration.

The work on the lagging regions shall be complementary to the activities foreseen under the JRC RIS3 project for the economic competitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania.

WORK PACKAGE 2 – Specific Support in selected lagging regions

Building on the work in Work Package 1, this work package centres on the provision of dedicated support on critical aspects for implementing the RIS3 in each of the selected regions. This takes into account the need for different approaches in different regions and flexibility in implementation. However, in general, three types of activities are proposed for each region, which can be tailored to the specific needs of countries/ regions.

- A mutual learning event focused on specific bottlenecks or issues for each region. The topics of this event would be proposed by the region, related to the main bottlenecks they face in refining and implementing the RIS3. Other regions, including, but not restricted to, the others covered by the study, facing similar bottlenecks will be invited to join. The mutual learning event could also be more specific, with a focus on one specific topic, such as cross-border cooperation, monitoring, or IPR issues.
- A stakeholder event as part of the activities aimed at sustaining the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) process throughout the programming cycle. Following the model of the REMTh PA EDP Focus Groups and Project Development Labs, the event will bring together regional

stakeholders in industry, research, academia, government and civil society, as well as a small number of international stakeholders, in a highly interactive workshop setting. Maximum use will be made of appropriate actors in each country and region, e.g. through involvement of National Contact Points, stakeholder organisations, etc. The event could also take the shape of an interregional or even an international EDP focus group.

- Tailored technical support: This support relates to the development of an RDI guide, legal support (e.g. in the context of state aid), support in fostering sectoral/international mobility, in preparing calls for proposals (for Managing Authorities), in analysis and proposal for optimising the RIS governance system, in proposal writing (for stakeholders), in improving stakeholders engagement (universities, large firms, NGOs, etc.), in establishing monitoring and evaluation practices, in adapting the policy mix to the RIS3 strategy, in reinforcing the role of Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) in RIS3, etc.

WORK PACKAGE 3: – Horizontal Support ([link to technical Annex to AA for 'economiccompetitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania'](#))

Working closely with regions in the countries involved, with clear commonalities as well as very significant differences, provides a valuable basis for exploring various horizontal issues. These would have implications for:

- further development of practical support for lagging regions across Europe;
- evidence based support for policy development and implementation at EU, national and European levels; and
- analytical work to further inform policy debates.

Based on the REMTh experience and experiences from the S3 Platform, the following ex ante topics appear interesting for the purpose of this work package:

- Governance
- Transnational cooperation
- Implementation of RIS3
- Relation to the R&I system and the design of the policy mix

The precise focus will be determined in line with the development of the work, and with the emerging issues and outcomes of the other work packages. ([link to technical Annex to AA for 'economiccompetitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania'](#))

WORK PACKAGE 4: – Policy Support, Analysis and Dissemination

The lessons from the above activities (WP 1-2-3) will be codified in a series of dedicated lagging regions policy briefs, as well as technical reports and scientific papers. A list of likely topics for policy briefs include:

- Key challenges for RIS3 implementation in lagging regions;
- RIS3 governance in lagging regions: hands-on lessons from low-growth and underdeveloped regions in Europe;
- Interregional Cooperation and capacities to build networks and interactions for RIS3 development;
- Policy instruments for RIS3 implementation.

WORK PACKAGE 5: – Coordination, cooperation, and communication ((link to technical Annex to AA for 'economic competitive advantages and potential for smart specialisation at regional level in Romania')

An advisory group of seven "Critical friends" was established to support the REMTh Preparatory Action. This board comprised representatives of government and stakeholders from other parts of Europe that have already faced the challenge of setting up a RIS3 strategy and who were willing and able to participate in regional events and to offer valuable advice to REMTh. Given the valuable contributions of the REMTh "Board of Critical Friends," it is proposed to establish a similar body for this activity, with the remit and membership adapted appropriately.

A wider "community of practice" of peers and experts developed through the mutual learning activity of the S3 Platform since 2012 can be effectively mobilised for this purpose. Synergies can also be explored with the "Peer2Peer" capacity building instrument recently launched by DG REGIO for short-term technical assistance needs.

3. Total budget: EUR 1 000 000

Given the duration of the project, the necessary procurement procedures would be initiated in the 2nd semester of 2016.

4. Indicative calendar for implementation procedures

The Union contribution to the procedures described in the work programme will be covered by commitment appropriations for 2016 for which an amount of EUR 1 000 000 is to be made available. Most of the actions will start on the 2nd semester of 2016.