

Interreg Europe – Policy Learning Platform – Research and Innovation

Policy Brief Enabling synergies through coordination between H2020 and ESIF

Creating synergies between Horizon 2020 and Structural Funds is a current challenge for European Managing Authorities. Enabling these synergies requires work to maximise the quantity and quality of investments, by pulling together research and business communities with the relevant national and regional policy makers and implementing bodies.

The European Commission directly manages a number of programmes including Horizon 2020, COSME, Erasmus+, Creative Europe, the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI")¹ and the Connecting Europe Facility². Regulations from these EU programmes, and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF³), set the rules for coordination, synergies and complementarities⁴.

For the successful implementation of such synergies it is crucial that strategies and intervention modalities are aligned. The relationship between cohesion policies and quality, which are at the core of any Smart Specialisation Strategy, should also be taken into account.

On 23 November 2016, at the "[Spreading Excellence and Crossing the Innovation Divide](#)" conference in Brussels, the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Mr. Carlos Moedas, announced that with the further uptake of synergies, the European Commission will continue its work to enable a greater number of researchers to develop and market innovative ideas.



We are all aware that, so far, the investment in R&D at EU, national and regional level has not had the expected impact on our economies. Activating synergies will facilitate the use of R&D results by creating the most effective support value chains and ecosystems. Synergies will encourage SMEs to find innovative, disruptive solutions, and ambitious researchers to become knowledge-intensive entrepreneurs.

ERDF, ESF and H2020 synergies have been introduced as a response to overcome the deepening gap between raising the level of European competitiveness and new job creation. For the synergies to be successful, several instruments endorsed by the European Commission shall be utilised.

¹ http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/Guide_to_Social_Innovation.pdf/88aac14c-bb15-4232-88f1-24b844900a66

² <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/84453/ENHANCING+ACCESS+TO%2C+AND+THE+USE+AND+QUALITY+OF+ICT/70c4a2b7-7025-482a-bb99-7f7d9f6a6482>

³ ESIF refers to: ERDF – European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, ESF - European Social Fund, EAFRD - European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and EMFF – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

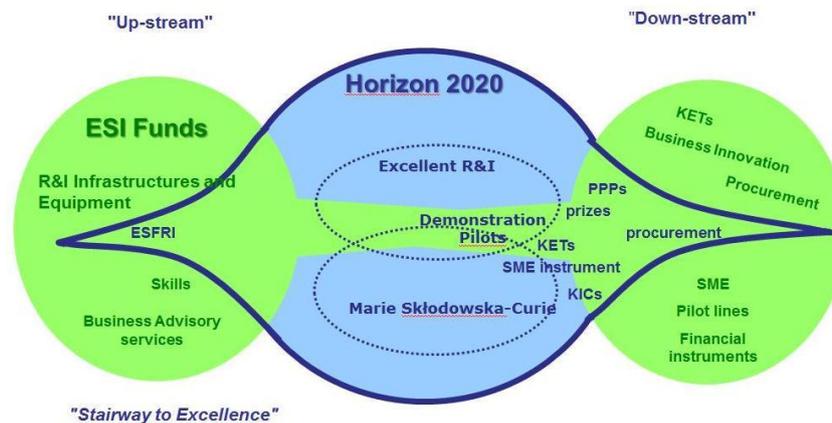
⁴ Regulation 1303/2013 laying down common provisions of the ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF; Regulation 1299/2013 on specific provisions for the support from the ERDF; Regulation 1300/2013 on the Cohesion Fund; Regulation 1304/2013 on the ESF and Regulation 1302/2013 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)

Use of these instruments requires a clear view of 'synergistic integration' within the 'knowledge to market' value chain, as shown in Figure 1. Upstream synergies, compared with actual research activity, build on infrastructure excellence and on its capacity to create global research leadership. The main challenge is to ensure sustainability of the running costs.

Downstream synergies aim at facilitating and accelerating the uptake of the R&D results and the creation of value for local and regional economies. The challenge for Managing Authorities is to ensure the most effective use of private resources and the mobilisation of the market. The market should avoid the 'solution looking for a problem' approach typical of many technology-driven initiatives.

The 'Entrepreneurial Discovery Process,' that characterises the shaping of the Smart Specialisation Strategies is one of the most important tools for ensuring synergies.

Figure 1: Synergy pipeline



Source: European Commission, Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes, Guidance for policy-makers and implementing bodies

The European Commission has put forward a set of recommendations for the Member States and their respective Managing Authorities to support them in the process of programming and implementing synergies:

- The entrepreneurial discovery process will be utilised as a first step towards identifying synergies in terms of capacity building in between the relevant target groups. As well as H2020/ESIF and RIS 3 actors, international research and business network will be consulted. The needs of industry procurers will be an integral part of the RIS3;
- RIS3 will be looked at from an economic transformation of the country/region perspective, by strengthening research and innovation capacity-building, through R&D infrastructure and skills. The new Teaming, Twinning and ERA chairs H2020 actions can be leveraged to attract research and market excellence within the R&D infrastructure. COFUND, under Marie Skłodowska-Curie, can support the internationalisation of human resources;

- Public-public partnerships (EUREKA-Eurostars) and public-private partnerships (Joint Technology initiatives) should be supported;
- Exchange of experience and mutual learning should be supported through participation in the joint proposals of H2020 and European Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG) calls for transnational cooperation;
- 'Reach to market support' actions should be supported, not just for Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4-7, which aims at industrial research development, but also for TRL 8-9, i.e. market introduction. Expansion of productive capacities, early product validation and first production actions should also be supported, along with certain innovation infrastructures (e.g. LivingLabs, FabLabs, Creative Factories);
- Capacities for bringing research to the market should be strengthened, access to finance for FP7/Horizon 2020 and CIP/COSME projects should be supported, and Proof of Concept co-investment funds, and schemes to facilitate demonstration activities and access to first client, should be supported.

So far the [Seal of Excellence](#), the quality certificate issued by the Commission to first class R&I projects, has helped companies get financing from alternative public and private sources if their projects were not funded due to budget constraints in the H2020 calls for SMEs. As of today, the scope of the Seal is extended to projects competing in other Horizon 2020 calls.

References:

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