

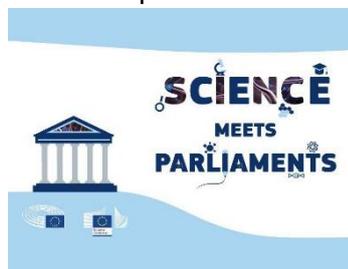
Policy Brief

The triple helix challenge: Bridging the gap between science and policy making

One of the challenges for Europe is ensuring the engagement and commitment of all stakeholder groups working together. Successful collaborative working helps to create an environment where new knowledge is effectively integrated in the policy-making process. Nowadays, the word 'gap' is mentioned almost in every context, and nowhere is it more often heard than when talking about linking academia with policy making. The [MEP-Scientist Pairing scheme](#) was launched as a response to this gap, enhancing the policy making-process by bringing scientists and Members of European Parliament Members (MEPs) closer together through their everyday working and operational environment.



The first edition of the MEP-Scientist Pairing scheme was launched in 2007 and 2008 and was organised by the [European Parliament's Science and Technology Options Assessment \(STOA\)](#) and the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission. In 2011, STOA took the lead in further engaging scientists and the MEPs. A new version of the scheme was launched and gathered the 13 MEPs that had an interest and/or experience in science, due to their active participation in the Committees of the European Parliament such as Industry, Research and Energy Committee ([ITRE](#)) and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee ([ENVI](#)). In addition, 12 scientists joined the scheme and expressed their interest in learning more about policy making in the European Parliament.



The 2016 edition of '[Science meets Parliament](#)' was organised in cooperation with the European Commission's [Joint Research Centre \(JRC\)](#) to promote science-based policy making. A pilot event titled '[Science meets Regions](#)' was organised in cooperation with the European Commission's Committee of Regions (CoR) on November 7th. The event gathered representatives of EU regional authorities to exchange views on the evidence-informed decision-making process at regional level.

Policy makers often receive criticism for ineffective legislation and regulations, due to their lack of subject-matter experience and knowledge, especially in the field of science. Policy makers encounter difficulties understanding the language of scientists and incorporating scientific advice into the legislative process. Cooperation and understanding the interests of both groups is essential for the outcome of the policy making process.



STOA has recognised the necessity of finding a practical way to bridge this gap and the MEP-Scientist Pairing scheme has become a good practice. The growing interest after each edition is evidence that the scheme is working and moreover, that it is important to learn about the working and operational environment of your counterparts to understand and contribute to the process. The scheme capitalised on good practices based on successful similar initiatives in the UK, France and Australia.

The engagement of the regional authorities in the 2016 edition indicates the growing role of regions in sustaining and promoting research. The regional authorities' involvement represented the first step towards widening the initiative and broadening the scope to the regional level. Regional authorities and scientific experts from EU-umbrella science organisations were invited to contribute to this pilot initiative. Prior to the event at the Committee of the Regions, several national and regional events took place, in Karlsruhe (DE), Hessen (DE), Friuli-Venezia (IT), Bratislava (SK), Sofia (BG) and Espoo (FI). The outcomes of discussions at these events fed into the high-level panel debate 'Science for Better European Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Importance of the International, National and Regional Dimension,' at the Science meets Parliaments 2016 event.

The regional perspective of such an initiative is to also be framed in the perspective of Smart Specialisation. As JRC highlighted, there is a very small number of researchers capable of responding to today's societal challenges and to deal with smart specialisation.

The MEP-Scientist Pairing scheme shall also contribute to the identification of different systems used in the policy-making process, in daily research activities for the avoidance of duplications and for complementarities to be fostered.

Moreover, the activities carried out under the scheme will help to overcome the gap between society and emerging technologies and foster the engagement of industry, which panel members highlighted as being currently very weak.

The MEP-Scientist Pairing scheme shall also promote open R&D programmes and contribute to the development of initiatives and projects built on synergies between H2020 and ESIF.

EU programmes connected to Research and Innovation

COSME: Horizon 2020 funds R&I activities leading to the development of new products and services, for example through the SME Instrument. The COSME programme also offers funding to support the creation and expansion of companies, particularly with a view to expanding the firms' R&I activities, complementing Horizon 2020.

The Enterprise Europe Network (**EEN**), financed by COSME, plays a key role in sharing information about European programmes and their funding opportunities, in spreading best practices and in gathering information on the administrative framework for companies in different Member States. The EEN is also involved in the implementation of the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument to identify local experts.

Erasmus+: The Erasmus+ programme encourages Europeans to relocate in pursuit of education, higher education and training opportunities. Connections exist with research activities, such as support for doctoral researchers to gain international experience in the early years of their career. Erasmus+ also funds the Jean Monnet programme, which aims to promote teaching and research activities on European integration worldwide, via, for example, the European University Institute of Florence.

Third Health Programme: The Third Health Programme aims at preventing disease, protecting EU citizens from cross-border health threats, contributing to innovative health systems, and facilitating better access to healthcare. The programme funds joint actions and exchanges of experience and best practice between Member States and actions aimed at harmonising methodologies in health care. The programme does not directly fund research activities in health, but supports health policies and the framework of healthcare practices, including, potentially, research institutions such as university hospitals.

Life Programme: The Life Programme supports actions in the areas of the environment, biodiversity and climate change. The general objective of the programme is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation, by co-financing projects with European added value. The Life Programme

encourages the uptake of results from research activities undertaken through Horizon 2020, in order to better inform environmental and climate policies in the EU.

Connecting Europe Facility (CEF): The Connecting Europe Facility programme provides funds to improve trans-European infrastructure in the fields of transport, energy and telecommunications. This last field, with a budget of €1.14 billion, provides support for connections with research and innovation activities. The development of an extensive broadband infrastructure and the implementation of digital services infrastructures rely on research activities and pilot programmes in this field, funded by Horizon 2020. Synergies between the CEF in telecommunication and the development of e-infrastructures supported by Horizon 2020 and the ESI Funds are also significant.

Research and Innovation within ERDF and ESF

Four out of the five **European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds)** support research and innovation activities: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The implementation of these funds is delegated to a managing authority at the local level and is conditional upon the adoption of a national or regional smart specialisation strategy. This strategy sets the priority fields for investment and use of the funds in connection to local capacities. For example: Midi-Pyrénées in France, Andalucía in Spain, and Podkarpackie in Poland selected Aeronautics and Space as a priority in their strategies, given their local industrial capacity in this field.

The **ESF** Regulation states that the funds can be used for the training of researchers and to support networking between research institutions.

It is estimated that around €40 billion from **ERDF** and **ESF** will be dedicated to the strengthening of R&D&I.

The Regulations on the ESI Funds requires the exploration of funding synergies with other EU programmes, like Horizon 2020. A guidance document from the Commission explains how these synergies can be implemented by national and regional actors.

References:

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing, September 2015

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), Briefing, October 2016

European Parliament, Science and Technology Options Assessment, MEP-Scientist Pairing Scheme

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/cms/home/panel_meetings/mepschemist

*#InterregEurope #policylearning #research #innovation #EuropeanPolicy #STOA #JRC
#H2020 #COSME #ERDF #ERASMUS+ #ConnectingEuropeFacility*

6 December 2016

Interreg Europe

Policy Learning Research & Innovation

Thematic Manager: Andrea Di Anselmo

T: + 39 335 1098 254

E: a.dianselmo@policylearning.eu

W: www.interregeurope.eu

Thematic Experts: **Luigi Amati**, Financial Instruments, Spin-off creation
Alessia Melasecche, Exploitation of R&D, entrepreneurship
Kirsten Petersen, Regional and innovation strategies
Marc Pattinson, Clusters and sectoral approaches