HIGHER PROJECT'S

Better Policy Instruments for High Innovation Projects in the European Regions

ACTION PLAN

ASSOCIATION OF URBAN MUNICIPALITIES OF SLOVENIA

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PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

PROJECT: HIGHER - Better Policy Instruments for High Innovation Projects in the European Regions
PARTNER ORGANISATION: Association of urban m unisipalities of Slovenia

OTHER PARTNER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED: -

COUNTRY: Slovenia

NUTS2 REGION: Slovenia

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PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

NAME OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT ADDRESSED:

Slovenian Innovation Hub - Developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centers (Operational programme: axis/priority 1: supports strengthening of links and synergies in the innovation system and reinforce cooperation between the knowledge institutions (Universities and research institutes) and economy.

While preparing the Operational programme 2014-2020 for Slovenia and Slovenian Smart Specialisation strategy, Slovenia already had strong innovation ecosystem that was supporting clusters, centres of excellence and other synergies between businesses and research. While Slovenia was doing well in terms of increasing the number of patents and scientific articles, the use of new knowledge and its commercialisation was lacking behind. The share of innovation-active enterprises in Slovenia has been falling and the lag behind the EU average has grown. Also, innovation activity in small enterprises has decreased, and the same trend has also been observed in service sector enterprises. The processes of enterprise creation and technological transfers were weak. The technological structure of exports lagged behind the EU average and investment in non-technological innovation has decreased.

In order to increase the share of innovation-active enterprises, a combination of measures were planned to be carried out that will contribute to building a critical mass required for achieving breakthrough momentum and participation in global value chains. The incentive system will be designed so as to concentrate on the incentives to support innovative enterprises and enterprises which operate at the low end of the added value chain and which will be encouraged to develop new products and services and seek new synergies.

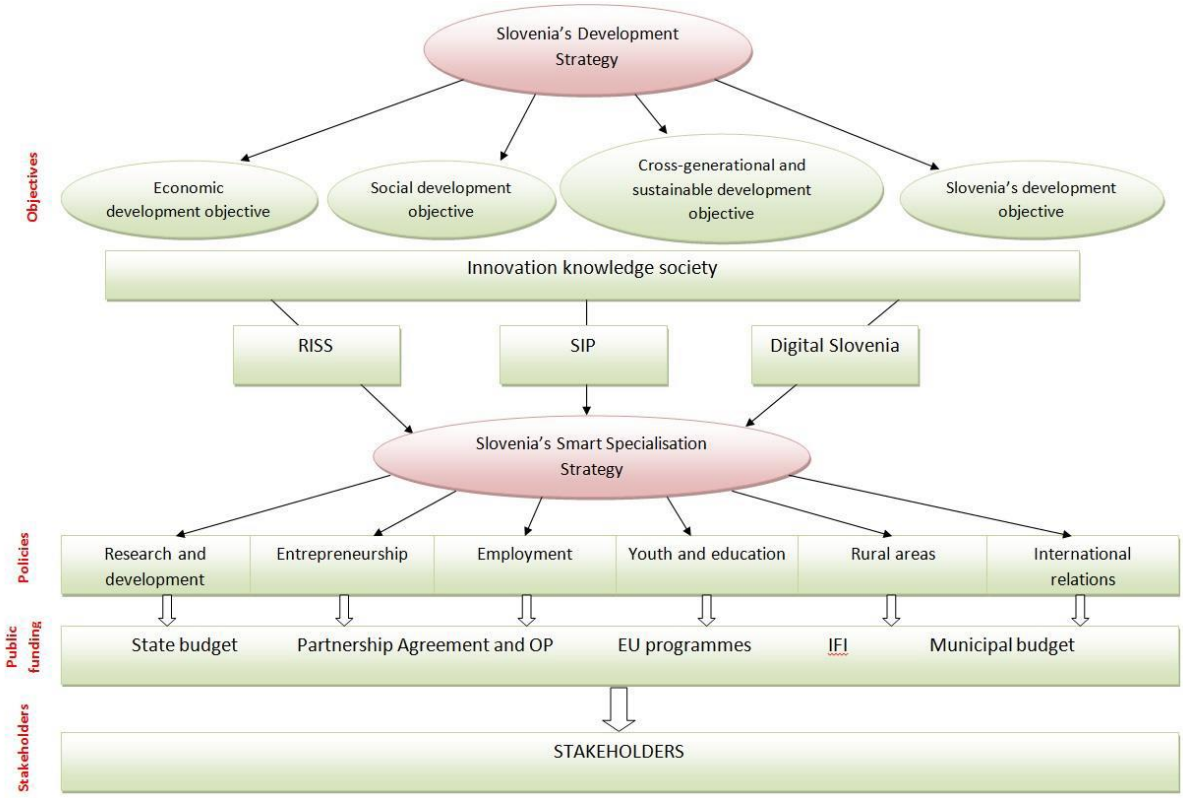
The expected results of **developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres**, as planed in the Operational programme are:

- increased share of innovation-active enterprises launching technological and non-technological innovations;
- increased share of enterprises integrated into global supply chains and consortia;
- increased share of high-tech exports among total exports;
- increased investment in RDI by the private sector.

One of the measures carried out by Slovenian government was to create a Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs). Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships are long-term

partnerships between (1) business community, (2) research organisations, (3) state and municipalities, and (4) facilitators, innovation users and NGOs – so-called quadruple helix - to pool investment and intellectual potentials of Slovenian stakeholders, and help the stakeholders set up a comprehensive innovation ecosystem with the aim of entering global markets and improving the position in priority areas of Slovenian Smart Specialisation Strategy (S4).

The Slovenian Smart Specialisation Strategy addresses all four objectives set under the existing Slovenia's Development Strategy for the 2006-2013 period, which pertain to establish an "innovative knowledge society" for which Slovenia has already identified three key field-specific strategies, namely the Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020 (RISS), Slovenian Industry Policy (SIP) and Digital Agenda, as well as other specific and relevant strategies in the field of nature protection, energy, education, etc. Slovenia's guidelines are thus integrated and outlined in a more concrete manner within a single and a consistent framework facilitating the implementation of focused and synergistic measures.



The key target variable of Slovenian Smart Specialisation Strategy is raising the value added per employee which is to be measured at the level of the individual areas of application. Overall S4 implementation performance (by 2023) will result in:

1. increased share of high-tech intensive products in export (increase from 22.3% to EU-15 average of 26.5%);
2. increased share of export of knowledge-intensive services in total export (increase from 21.4% to 33% which will reduce Slovenia's below-EU-average rate by a half);
3. increased overall entrepreneurial activity (increase from the current 11% to at least the EU average of 12.8%).

S4 identified nine priority areas where Slovenia will implement their development goals and invest.

These priority areas are grouped in three axes:

PRIORITY AREA		VERTICAL VALUE CHAINS
HEALTHY WORKING AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT	Smart cities and communities	Mobility and energy, Health, Security
	Smart Buildings and Home with Wood Chain	Advanced Housing Units, Smart & Energy efficient Appliances; Advanced construction materials & products
NATURAL AND TRADITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE	Networks towards circular economy	Celluloses & Paper; Polymers & Bioplastics; Production, conservation, distribution and storage of energy; construction materials; biomass
	Sustainable food	Meat; Milk; Grains; Fruit; Vegetables; Wine
	Sustainable tourism	
INDUSTRY 4.0	Factories of the future	Smart Industrial mechatronic systems; Smart Machines and Appliances; Robotics; Nanotechnologies; Modern production technologies for materials, plasma; Photonics; Advanced control technologies
	Health - Medicine	Bio pharmacy; Natural pharmacy and cosmetics; Translational medicine: diagnostics & therapeutics
	Mobility	
	Materials as products	

In the project application we focused on part of the Operation Programme goals, that aims to strengthen and further develop links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres. Initially the name of the policy instrument was called the Slovenian Innovation Hub, however during the implementation of the project we widened the focus on Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships, Slovenian Innovation Hub being just one of them, focused on health.

One of the main tools/policy instruments for implementing the objectives are Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships. Strategic partnerships are the main institutional form established at the level of the areas of application. A limited number of partnerships deriving from the entrepreneurial discovery process were planned to be established. The internal management structure is tailored to the technology- and market-specific characteristics of each area of application. Some of the partnerships will be horizontal relating to more than just one area.

End of 2016 Slovenian Ministry of Economy published a call for SRIPs.

The budget of the call was 10,490,783.75 EUR and the money will be transferred in three phases in the amounts of 810,000.00 EUR (phase 1), 4,840,000.00 EUR (phase 2) and 4,840,783.75 EUR (phase 3). Projects will be evaluated before each new phase.

Criteria for the selection in the first phase were:

- Sustainability of business model (design of business model, financing of business model, clarity, measurability and credibility of long term goals);
- Capacity of beneficiary;
- Level of connectivity between knowledge, competences and technology to the market;
- Relativity regarding the S3 priorities and coverage of the priority area.

The Slovenian Ministry of Economy did a lot of communication and dissemination before the call was published in order to assure that as many businesses, research organisations and other organisations from each of the 9 priority areas were connected to one of the 9 SRIPs. The objective was to have only one application for each of the 9 priority areas and to avoid fragmentation.

Selection criteria of the second phase:

1. The justification of the focus areas of S4 (these are defined differently in various fields of application, which means that the flexibility from the point of view of the organization of the chain of values is different in different areas);
2. A clear definition of the market for final or intermediate products according to the comparative advantages of stakeholders in Slovenia;
3. Existence of complementarity in RRI (linking multiple technologies and product lines), marketing and / or business. This involves the participation of at least three economic operators;
4. Readiness to co-finance the activities of each value chain;
5. Justification of the need to provide a new manager or justification why this would not / will not lead to an unjustified fragmentation of the innovation support environment.

Strategic partnerships will facilitate promoting system-wide and long-term cooperation of stakeholders within an individual area, namely cooperation between stakeholders, cooperation of stakeholders with other entities, and cooperation with the state. The key functions of strategic partnerships thus pertain to internationalisation, integration and development of joint RDI initiatives, including the concentration of research capacities, human resources development and representing common interest with the state (e.g. innovative public procurement initiatives, required amendments of sectoral legislation, economic diplomacy and priority treatment in terms of issuing investment-related permits).

Following their establishment the partnerships design action plans (roadmaps) which will, inter alia, enhance further concentration of focus areas and coordination of development policies with the state. In addition to the existence of the critical mass of capacities and competences, further concretisation of focus areas and technologies, where development investments shall be concentrated, shall pay specific attention to the analysis of market opportunities and the impact on competitiveness, resulting from joint and coordinated acting of stakeholders, the identification of comparative advantages of

stakeholders in Slovenia in terms of the competition and the willingness of the private sector to invest in these areas

The main objective of SRIPs is to strengthen Slovenian position in international value chains (access to global market) through provision of comprehensive support environment for research and innovation for each of priority areas.

Two years after their establishment, SRIPs have a total of 783 members of which 83% are enterprises, large enterprises accounting for 21% of these, with a balanced structure in both cohesion regions (for statistical data see here).

As SRIPs are and have to be open platforms of cooperation, new members and initiatives are always welcome (the number of members grew by 24 % since their establishment in 2016).

After two years of the establishment, nine selected SRIPs have prepared their business plans and started to prepare concrete cooperation projects between research centres and businesses on their specific thematic areas. One of the parts of the SRIP action plans were activities for internationalisation, which include identification of potential foreign markets, preparation of export strategies, attracting foreign direct investment and entering European and world value chains.

Activities of internationalisation of SRIPs differ according to the particular sector, but they could be grouped to the following activities:

- Activities for the internationalisation of SRIPs as platforms;
- Activities to support internationalisation of individual members of SRIPs;
- Activities of institutions supporting the operation of SRIPs and their members;
- Activities aimed at attracting foreign investors, partners from abroad for joint appearances in third markets and / or joint development of products / services / technological processes and integration into global value chains.

PART III: DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

1. BACKGROUND (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Even though Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs) were not yes established when HIGHER project started, there was already a decision by the AUSM that the main political instrument that we wanted to focus on were exactly those platforms. During the implementation of the HIGHER project we learned from other regions through analysis of the policy instruments, benchmarking report, presentations at the project events and bilateral meetings about policy instruments and good practices from the partner regions. From the early stages of the project we realised that we want to take a direction towards the internationalisation strategies and efforts to internationalise development and marketing activities of SRIPs. Therefore Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (AUMS) chose three good practices from partner regions, that were also oriented to some sort of internationalisation activities of clusters, international cooperation and governance and that we could be inspired by. We took parts from all three examples, mixed and combined them and used them to prepare actions in the area of the internationalisation of Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs). It is important to underline that these three practices could not be used entirely or even partially and that they were used for an inspiration in our future efforts to promote internationalisation activities of SRIPs.

First example we were inspired by was the case of joint Cross-Border Smart Specialisation Strategy of Galicia – Northern Portugal (RIS3), presented by HIGHER partner region Norte, where two neighbouring regions prepared a common smart specialisation strategy. Throughout 2013 and 2014, both Galicia and the Northern Portugal region undertook the definition process for their Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies, following the methodology formulated by the S3 platform in its Guidelines for Developing a Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3). The process of defining the joint Galicia – Northern Portugal Smart Specialisation Strategy followed an adaptation of the methodology proposed by the S3 Platform, taking into account the new territorial scope (supra-regional) and the presence of Strategies in the two regions. Thus, one of the central elements of the process was the establishment of a participative and integrating entrepreneurship discovery process, which involved agents from the innovation systems of Galicia and the Northern Region, with transregional potential and scale. Carrying out a trans-regional entrepreneurship discovery process is a great opportunity to broaden expertise and knowledge of the markets, increase their complexity and discover hidden opportunities.

The simplified methodology consists of 6 steps:

1. *Analysis*: based on an individual diagnosis of the regions: Galicia and Northern Portugal, as well as on the joint area carried out by other prevailing structures such as the Joint Technical Secretariat of the POCTEP Programme and the Galicia - Northern Portugal AECT.

2. *Process and Governance*: creation of governance to define the joint strategy in line with previously established governances that do not imply the creation of new formal structures but the utilisation of pre-existing structures, as well as the definition of the methodology for use in the cross-border entrepreneurship discovery process.
3. *Shared vision*: identification of an overall perspective for the future of the Euro region based on the joint analysis performed at the diagnosis stage;
4. *Selection of strategic collaboration areas*: selection of the common areas within the framework of the individual strategies and studying them in-depth to identify the actions to be prioritised;
5. *Common actions and support measures*: identification of common actions that can be carried out jointly by both regions to achieve a future goal, using the different financing sources available at European level such as the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, Horizon 2020 and other European programmes such as COSME, LIFE Programme, etc., and when appropriate, through the coordination of instruments specific to each region's regional operational programmes, within the eligibility framework of operations financed by the IEE Funds for areas outside the programme, established for the 2014-2020 period;
6. Monitoring and Evaluation: Definition of common indicators for follow-up and evaluation of Strategy.

Similar methodology as used in the Cross-Border Smart Specialisation Strategy of Galicia – Northern Portugal (RIS3T) could be applied in identifying the areas of activities, international partners and internationalisation activities of Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs), especially when it comes to actively participation in the European value chains, like Vanguard Initiative and RIS3 platforms.

Even though Slovenia has no plans to prepare a joint RIS3 strategy with another region in a near future, we were still inspired by these good practice in terms of preparation of joint projects with other regions (through Vanguard initiative and RIS3 platforms) and using similar 6-step methodology, described above, for the identification and preparation of joint demonstration and investment projects and interregional cluster collaboration.

Second good practice that we would like to refer to is the Regional Scientific Council for R&I mission is to support planning and implementing the regional RIS3 strategy and action plan. Region of Central Macedonia in Greece developed a Council next to the regional governor to implement and monitor regional RIS3 strategy address the challenge of developing a support ecosystem, that can guarantee the maximum engagement of the regional stakeholders.

The Council is consisted of eleven members, of which six are coming from the university or research institutes, and the remaining five (5) members are coming from the market and other associations, cultural institutions, and the local government, covering such a great part of the quadruple helix of the innovation ecosystem. All members must hold at least a postgraduate degree or an equivalent title with a recognized status and have a long-term experience on R&D&I issues.

The Council support provided through expert opinions, field studies, innovation assessments, and available human resources in R&D&I sectors regarding the perspective development of clusters, innovative collaborations, start-up funding, joint ventures and any activity to promote the development of public-private partnerships and the creation of conditions and prospects for the successful participation in transnational R&D&I projects. In particular, the content of the Council proposals, suggestions and support concern:

- The networking of the regional stakeholders involved in R&D&I, such as research organizations, technology institutions, enterprises and other bodies;
- In cooperation with the R&T National General Secretariat for planning and implementing R&D&I regional strategies of coordinated National - Regional actions;
- Defining criteria and conditions for the evaluation of research and innovation proposals submitted to regional authorities;
- Enhancing the access of beneficiaries in various funding sources, as well as the integration and interconnection of research organizations in regional economies;
- Making full use of the research potential of the Regions and enhancing the employment of young graduates at national, EU or international level through measures such as: Supporting public research organizations to acquire appropriate research infrastructure enabling efficient exploitation of the available research potential, providing aid for research infrastructures under a transparent, and a non-discriminatory basis, and Supporting the organization of workshops and conferences to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, developing promotional activities as well as initiatives to disseminate and transfer research results to the market in the country, and international markets.

During the project implementation AUMS met with the stakeholders in Slovenia, members of SRIPs (one of them in particular, Slovenian Innovation Hub, SRIP in the area of Health) and discussed the needs for internationalisation. There are meetings of members within each SRIP and also meetings among coordinators of SRIPs and managing authorities. However, coordinators of SRIPs could be given a bigger role in communicating their expectations. AUMS will use this good practice and promote the organisation of such council on internationalisation of SRIPs in Slovenia, firstly with SRIPs where we are the most active in and later also with others. Such inter-SRIP council, composed of SRIP managers and external experts on internationalisation will support SRIPs with expert opinions on internationalisation and provide feedback and input to ministry of economy. SRIP managers will meet once per semester in order to discuss cross-SRIP internationalisation activities and seek synergies in the international promotion of their development and innovation achievements.

One example, in November 2017, Slovenia joined the Vanguard Initiative and the opportunity was given to SRIPs and members of SRIPs to start connection with concrete pilot projects and demo cases. Some of the organisations joined, however there is a lack of information about the opportunities of Vanguard Initiative for SMEs and other stakeholders. Therefore, more events, individual meetings and promotion are needed in Slovenia.

Since the SRIPs are the most relevant platform for the implementation of the S3 in Slovenia, SRIP managers could be organised into the similar council as the Central Macedonia's the Regional Scientific Council and would provide feedback to the managing authority.

Third good practice example that we could learn from was the case of Cross cluster collaboration, that Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) presented at the HIGHER Innovation Policy Summit in Stockholm. As smart specialization was presented as an ex-ante condition for the ERDF-program, regional prioritizations were made by the 8 NUTS2-regions. However, there was no national coordinating S3. To spur innovation in Swedish areas of strength, there was a need for increased interregional collaboration, as well as for developed links between the regional and national level. In many cases, regional S3 priorities were driven by regional cluster organizations. However, many of these organizations were small, had limited resources for collaboration and lacked an overview of priorities in other regions. To further develop Swedish areas of strength and stimulate the collaborative processes relating to them, more interregional collaborations were needed.

In the fall of 2016, the national ERDF program introduced a call for proposal for regional cluster organizations to apply for funding for interregional collaboration in Sweden. The ambition was to coordinate regional priorities in constellations of a minimum of three clusters (or RDI-platforms) from at least two Swedish regions, working within a sectorial or thematic area.

In 2017, a decision was taken to allocate €3 million to six projects in different sectors; health care, aerospace, life science, textiles/architecture, foodstuff and offshore. Each project involves at least three regional clusters or RDI-platforms, representing different types of stakeholders e.g. cluster organizations, research institutes, universities, public actors and companies.

Part of the activities proposed in this action plan will be the instrument “SRIPs to SRIPs”. Aim is to establish an instrument that will provide a greater flow of information on the internationalisation activities among SRIPI where there is a big potential for synergies (for example, the events of one SRIP can be complementary and interesting for another SRIP eg health tourism, tourism-mobility , health-materials, health-nutrition, health-smart cities, mobility-materials, mobility-smart buildings, mobility-smart communities, etc.). SPIRIT can assume the role of an intermediary in the field of internationalization activities between SRIPs and internationalization activities of support institutions.

2. ACTION (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

ACTION: SUPPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS

Internationalisation is important part of the activities of the action plans, prepared by each of the nine SRIPs and approved by the working group of state secretaries in 2017. SRIPs could enter internationalisation processes and European partnerships through their coordinators of through individual members of the SRIPs and their marketing and R&D achievements.

Work of SRIPs in the area of the internationalisation is described in their action plans, every SRIP has taken into account the specific areas, the maturity of the partnership, the market positioning of members and the most appropriate content that will yield the appropriate results.

The objective of the action plan is to propose concrete actions for managing authority (Ministry of Economy of Slovenia) and directly for SRIPs that will lead to better involvement of SRIPs in European and international value chains and partnerships in EU funding project, which will not only help SRIPs and their members in gaining the additional funding for research and innovation activities and development of new products, but also in finding new collaborations with the best partners from their specific field.

In this action plan AUMS decided to emphasise only one action, which is focused on the part of internationalisation activities, related to inclusion to European value chains, networks and initiatives, like RIS3 platforms, synergies with similar partnership organisations from other regions and co-financing the research and innovation activities of SRIPs from EU research and development funds (Horizon 2020, Eureka, Erasmus +, Interreg and other programmes).

In order to increase the awareness on the opportunities for internationalisation and better involvement of SRIPs in internationalisation activities, AUMS will undertake the following concrete actions:

Activity 1: Contribution to the SRIPs guidelines for the internationalisation

Up to three group meetings will be organised with the project coordinators of SRIPs and representatives of the Ministry of Economy (managing authority) for the discussion on offering better support to SRIPs and SMEs/members of SRIPs in their cooperation and inclusion in European value chains and networks. Together with Ministry of Economy and Chamber of Commerce and Industry we will support SRIPs in preparation of the common internationalisation strategy. The feedback from SRIPs will serve as an input for the preparation of the call for proposal for the internationalisation of the SMEs in the nine areas of the S4 priorities.

AUMS will promote better cooperation between SRIPs in the area of internationalisation by proposing the establishment the above described instrument for finding synergies between internationalisation activities of SRIPs.

Activity 2: Mapping of EU networks and Associations for SRIPs to join

SRIPs need to create strong international networks with the aim of promoting their own RDI and RDI of their members. With the active networking SRIPs are forming new opportunities for:

- Creating joint projects on the international level;
- Exchange of good practices;
- Disseminating knowledge and contacts that can benefit both SRIP project offices and members;
- New markets and sales channels, and;
- Exchange and (co)use of expensive research and other developmental infrastructures (ICT, laboratory equipment, special rooms like clean rooms, fab lab, test beds etc.).

European professional associations and technology platforms are a meeting point for partners in the preparation of strategic documents that define the strategies of the area and provide strategic development policies. Membership in international business, professional, scientific associations requires payment of membership fees and meaningful active participation of members (i.e. SRIPs) at meetings of associations.

The advantage of joining EU associations is in:

- Intensive networking;
- Active promotion of the SRIP and its members and representing the interests of Slovenia in the members of the association;
- Obtaining information on development strategies at the European level and global trends in SRIP areas;
- Participation in joint projects of members of associations through tenders, etc. association instruments in associations;
- Active participation and co-shaping of development strategies, including the interests of Slovenia in strategic documents at the European level.

The overview of European networks, technology platforms, European (sectoral) associations, innovation platforms, knowledge innovation communities and other initiatives will be created for SRIPs in order to map different opportunities and options.

Activity 3: Overview of funding opportunities for research and innovation activities of SRIPs and integration in international research and development partnerships

With its active involvement in international projects and associations (Horizon 2020, COSME, Interreg, Horizon Europe, European associations in various fields such as EuroNanoMed, EUnetHealth, etc.), SRIPs can gain connections and competences that are important for the functioning of the SRIP as an

institution and at the same time provide members with the necessary participation in the framework of public tenders of European, global financial instruments and associations). Integration into international consortia is also an opportunity for establishing partnerships that lead to further joint activities, development of projects and services, and joint appearance on third markets. AUSM will prepare the overview of the EU funded programmes for Research and innovation and present it at a conference organised for SRIPs.

Activity 4: Active involvement in Vanguard Initiative

Vanguard Initiative is an initiative of political leaders of regions that commit to the future for industry in Europe supported by smart specialisation, via the development of multi-level European investment and cluster initiatives for emerging and transforming industries. Members of Vanguard are regions with strong industrial ambitions and smart specialisation strategies for their structural renewal (beyond the ex-ante conditionality). The Vanguard Initiative seeks to lead by example in developing interregional cooperation and multi-level governance for supporting clusters and regional eco-systems to focus on smart specialisations in priority areas for transforming and emerging industries. Vanguard regions want to build the synergies and complementarities in smart specialisation strategies to boost world-class clusters and cluster networks, in particular through pilots and large-scale demonstrators. These investments will strengthen Europe's competitive capacity to lead in new industries in the future and develop lead markets that offer solutions to our common challenges.

Political engagement to position the smart specialisation agenda at the centre of the EU's drive for new growth is based on a firm belief that entrepreneurship and common policy goals will provide the stimulus for revitalising European industrial growth.

The objective of the Vanguard is:

- Supporting the setting up of interregional networks;
- Facilitating access to combined funding for co-investment projects;
- Exploring solutions to leverage public-private investments, in particular to support demonstration and piloting of new value chains in European industry clusters;
- Working on implementation of smart specialisation strategies to foster better alignment between the regions, bottom-up cluster platforms and top-down European partnering initiatives;
- Contributing to the European Cluster Strategy for New Growth, with smart specialisation at its core;
- Developing the Vanguard Initiative as a valued, focused partnership to stimulate and support a strategic dialogue among our members and with the European Commission to counter bottlenecks and create opportunities for new growth through smart specialisation.

Vanguard is an important initiative of more than 30 EU regions to promote cluster and industrial cooperation in building new value chains. Slovenia saw in Vanguard initiative great opportunity to foster internationalisation activities of SRIPs, promote their development and innovation efforts and include them in the interregional value chains. Therefore three Slovenian ministries joined the Vanguard Initiative in November 2017. After almost one year there are still only few individual

institutions / SMEs actively involved in Vanguard. In order to increase the participation of SRIPS and members of SRIPs in Vanguard Initiative, AUMS will organise two workshops with the presentation of individual pilot actions and demo cases.

Activity 5: Presentation of European industrial infrastructure

HIGHER project is dealing with the improvement of policy instruments for high innovation projects. Slovenian policy instrument for generating innovative projects through cooperation between businesses and knowledge institutions are SRIPs that among others provide also facilities and services for SMEs and start-ups for access to new (digital) technologies, and facilitate testing, validation and certification of new innovative products and services. Such facilities can be supported also by the European Commission.

Therefore, in order to present the initiatives of the European Commission for support to innovation ecosystem, we will co-organise a big conference where different directorate-generals (DGs) of the European Commission will present their instruments for supporting innovation and business. The instruments presented will be Digital Innovation Hubs, Open Innovation Test Beds, Pilot Actions on Industrial Transition, Pilot Actions for Interregional Innovation Projects, investment instruments of industrial policy, access to research infrastructure and similar initiatives. The objective of the event is to present European Commission initiatives for industrial infrastructure and provide a feedback from SRIPs. Conference will be followed by a regional match-making event, co-organised by Vanguard Initiative.

3. PLAYERS INVOLVED (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

Apart from the Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (project's partner) the following players were involved in the development of the action:

- Ministry of Economy (managing authority);
- Ministry of Education and Science;
- External experts from Slovenian Business and research Association, with whom AUMS already cooperated during the first phase of the HIGHER project implementation;
- Representatives of SRIP management, especially from Slovenian Innovation Hub as SRIP for Health and Wellbeing, SRIP for Circular Economy, SRIP for Factories of the Future and SRIP for Smart Cities and Communities;
- Members of SRIPs;
- Slovenian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

4. TIMEFRAME

01.10.2018 – 31.12.2020

5. COSTS

With the exception of the "Activity 5: Presentation of European industrial infrastructure" we are expecting only several minor costs for renting of meeting rooms and catering. For the conference "Activity 5: Presentation of European industrial infrastructure" the expected costs will be around 20.000 EUR.

6. FUNDING SOURCES

AUMS will use its own sources from its membership. For the conference in activity 5: Presentation of European industrial infrastructure, we intend so find partners to share the costs, such as University of Ljubljana, Chamber of Commerce, possibly Ministry of Economy and sponsorships. The breakdown of costs and funding sources are not yet defined.

DATE: **24/09/2018**

NAME: **Matej Arčon**

POSITION: **President of the Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia**

SIGNATURE:

STAMP OF THE ORGANISATION: