

POLICY BRIEF ON THE POTENTIAL
COORDINATION BETWEEN EUROPEAN
STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS (ESIF)
AND TRANSNATIONAL P2P



Information

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Executive Summary

Close synergies and complementarities between European Funds are needed to enable the European Union to maximize the impact and efficiency on the ever-increasing competitive pressure of global markets on regional development, on growth, on job creation and to tackle societal challenges.

To this end, ERA-LEARN wants to help to bring about the conditions for more synergistic use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in order to support national participation in the next European Partnerships.

In particular, we intend to support all relevant stakeholders, especially Managing Authorities, in addressing the issue of synergies between ESIF and the next European Partnership by providing advice and concrete tools for the drafting of future operational programmes.

Considering the status of play at regulation level, this document has been issued as Deliverable 2.4 – “Policy brief on the potential coordination between European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and transnational P2P” with the scope of reporting the main findings of the on-line desk research carried out in the frame of the Task 2.2 – “Utilising European Structural Funds (ESIF) to support national P2P participation” and outlining the next steps to be taken for planning usable tools and for starting a sound dissemination. The content of this deliverable will serve as a basis for the realisation of a report addressed to Stakeholders and Managing Authorities entitled “Tools for Synergies”. This report has been conceived as a living document, subject to a continuous up to date up to the beginning of the next Multi-annual Financial Framework, 2021/2027. As the key regulations will be finalized, the synergies possibilities among European Commission programmes will become clearer and the related tools for Managing Authorities will be defined for being operational.

The methodological approach adopted in this document take into account two different levels: a policy level and an operational level. The first one aimed at identifying the new elements in the European Commission proposals for the European programmes, in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021/2027, by following documents and information circulated and currently under discussion. The other level focused on seeking practical solutions for optimal combination of funding realised or addressed to Partnership Instruments in the current programming period.

1. Synergies between ERDF and Horizon 2020: basic approach and state of play

1.1. Regional development and Cohesion Policy

Regional policy is the EU's main investment policy and represents more than one third of the EU's budget. It targets all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens' quality of life.

Regional policy is delivered through three main funds:

- **European regional development fund (ERDF):** provides financial support for the development of regional economies, aims at reinforcing economic, social and territorial cohesion in EU regions, contributes to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, enhanced competitiveness as well as territorial cooperation
- **European social fund (ESF):** supports employment-related projects throughout Europe and invests in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job;
- **Cohesion fund (CF):** funds transport networks, infrastructure and energy efficiency projects for environmental protection in countries where the gross national income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average.

Regional development is addressed also through the **European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD)** and the **European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF)** which, along the above-mentioned funds, constitute **the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds**.

ESI Funds are the main financial instruments used by the European Union for the implementation of Cohesion Policy, whose objective is to try to rebalance the considerable existing gaps - in terms of economic development and living standards - between the different regions or EU social categories, thus strengthening economic and social cohesion among the Member States and the objectives defined in the EU's founding treaty.

They are managed "indirectly" by the EU Commission, by means of **partnership agreements**. Each country defines funding programs and measures in agreement with the Commission and within strategic frameworks defined at European and national level, in order to set out how the funds will be used during the programming period.

On the 29th of May 2018, the European Commission presented the proposals for regulations governing regional development and cohesion policy in the context of a new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027:

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the **European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument** COM/2018/375 final - 2018/0196 (COD);
- Proposal for a of the European Parliament and of the Council on the **European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund** COM/2018/372 final - 2018/0197 (COD)
- Proposal for a of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the **European territorial cooperation goal** (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments COM/2018/374 final - 2018/0199 (COD)

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission proposes to modernise Cohesion Policy. **Five** main objectives will drive EU investments in 2021-2027¹.

Investments in regional development will focus especially on objectives 1 and 2. Between 65 % and 85 % of ERDF and Cohesion Fund will be assigned to these priorities, depending on the relative wealth of the Member States:

1. Smarter Europe, through innovation, digitalization, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses;
2. a Greener, carbon free Europe, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change;
3. a more Connected Europe, with strategic transport and digital networks;
4. a more Social Europe, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare;
5. a Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

The main features of the Commission's proposal for a modernized Cohesion Policy are:

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/

1. A focus on key investment priorities in order to promote innovation, support to small businesses, digital technologies and industrial modernization.
2. A Cohesion Policy for all regions and a more tailored approach to regional development. To reduce disparities and help low-income and low-growth regions catch up, GDP per capita remains the predominant criterion for allocating funds. The 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy stands for a Europe that empowers, by supporting locally-led development strategies. Local, urban and territorial authorities will be more involved in the management of EU funds, while increased co-financing rates will improve ownership of EU-funded projects in regions and cities.
3. The Commission proposes fewer, clearer, shorter rules and a more flexible framework in the next long-term EU budget with a one single rulebook for 7 EU funds implemented in partnership with Member States ('shared management'). New provisions also allow for simpler synergies with other instruments from the **EU budget toolbox**, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and LIFE. The new framework also combines the stability necessary for long-term investment planning with the right level of flexibility in order to cope with unforeseen events. A mid-term review will determine if changes in the programs are needed for the last 2 years of the programming period, and limited transfers of resources within EU funds programs will be possible.
4. A strengthened link with the European Semester to create a growth- and business-friendly environment in Europe, so that both EU and national investments can deliver their full potential. This stronger Cohesion Policy support to structural reforms will ensure full complementarity and coordination with the new, enhanced Reform Support Programme. The 'enabling conditions' continue the approach of the ex-ante conditionalities introduced for the 2014-2020 programming period. There are some 20 conditions proposed that cover similar thematic areas as in 2014-2020 and still include Smart specialization Strategies to guide investments in research and innovation.

1.2. *European Partnerships*

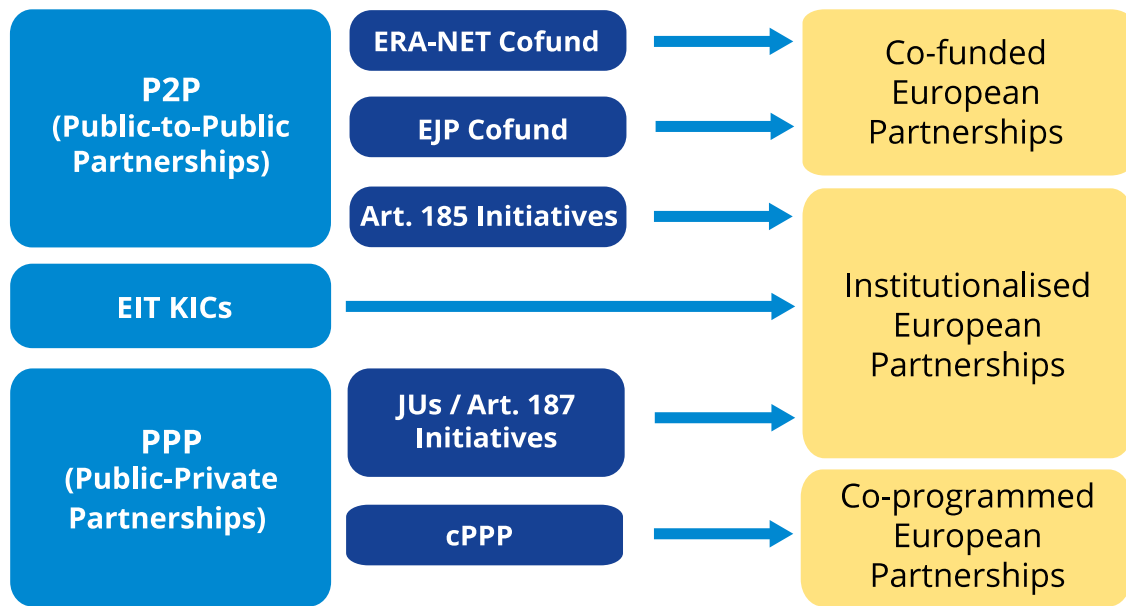
The adopted proposal for Horizon Europe revised significantly the future 'European Partnerships'. At the time being, all the partnerships, from ERA-NETs to JTI, FET Flagships and even the EIT/KICs have been developed and uniformly labelled 'European Partnerships' but all the implementation rules are still lacking.

The current HE proposal for regulation the art. 8 sets the new fashion for the European Partnership:

- Co-programmed European Partnerships (based on cPPPs in Horizon 2020): involve the participation of the European Commission and private and / or public partners (such as industry, universities, research organizations, bodies with public service functions at local, regional, national or international level or civil society organizations including foundations and NGOs), based on memoranda of understanding and / or contractual agreements that specify the objectives of the partnership, the commitments of all the parties involved to define the financial contributions and / or in kind of each, key performance and impact indicators, results and reporting methods;
- Co-founded European Partnerships (based on ERA-NETs, EJPs, FET Flagships in Horizon 2020): provide for the financial participation of European and national public actors and / or other sources of R&I funding. The co-financed research and innovation program must specify the objectives, key performance, impact indicators and results to be achieved, based on the commitment of the partners in terms of financial contributions and / or in kind and the integration of their relevant activities using a co-fund program action;
- Institutionalized European Partnerships (based on Art.185 or 187 of the TFEU, and on the EIT regulation for the KICs): provide for participation and financial contribution to research and innovation programs implemented by different Member States in compliance.

Horizon 2020

Horizon Europe



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Figure 1 - European Partnership Initiatives - ERA-LEARN

1.3. The importance of Smart Specialization Strategies

Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS3) focus on the discovery and interconnection of various regional and national eco-systems and their Quadruple Helix actors (local authorities, academia, companies and the civil society) for the identification of their leading-edge sectors.

Through the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), regions and countries continuously explore and understand their regional capacities, potential and opportunities that can represent a competitive advantage in leading sectors of the regional/national economy and more specifically in particular areas of the value chain. The entrepreneurial discovery process aims at mapping formal and informal networks, positioning their capabilities within European and global value chains (E/GVCs), mapping flows of goods and services and cooperation in R&I projects.

Over the years, RIS3 became an ex-ante conditionality for ERDF investments in Research and Innovation²: RIS3 shall be defined before Operational Programmes supporting R&I investments are approved. The S3 Platform since 2011 supports regions and countries with advices on implementing S3 and providing mutual learning and networking opportunities for 182 EU regions and 19 EU countries. Furthermore, 7 Non-EU countries and 18 Non-EU Regions also joined the platform and started the S3 definition. As a first result of the “S3 Pilot Action: Interregional partnerships for innovative projects” launched in September 2017, 30 interregional partnerships have been created and clustered in 3 Thematic platforms (Industrial Modernization, Agri Food, Energy), through the alignment of regional S3 priority domains. Main goals of Interregional partnerships are the creation of Interregional Value Chains and the alignment of strategic investments (public and private).

The key role of the RIS3 identification and implementation in ERDF operational programs has opened the way for in-depth interregional cooperation based on similar strengths and weaknesses of different territories, reinforcing the results of the cohesion policy.

For the new programming period 2021/2027, the Working Party on Structural Measures on the 16th October 2018 submitted to the Council a proposal concerning **the Interreg Regulation "Interregional innovation investments - Articles 3(5), 9(2), 16(1) and 61 Interreg proposal"** in which a new instrument has been introduced in order to boost the smart specialization collaboration with new funding for innovation projects.

The aim of the new instrument is to accelerate the market uptake and scale up of innovation solutions in shared smart specialization priorities and, on the other hand, to fill the gap between advanced regions and less developed ones by supporting cooperation in specific value chains.

This “**Interregional Innovation Investments**” measure will give the possibility to Regions to cooperate at different territorial levels in exploiting their smart specialization priorities through two different strands: 1) develop, connect or make complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities; 2) capacity-building projects helping less developed regions to integrate in and move up the existing or emerging EU value chains.

The novelty introduced by European Territorial Cooperation opens the way to innovation investments funded through ERDF at different cooperation levels and will be aligned to EU priorities and missions set out in Horizon Europe. It would allow to build up on other Programmes such as Horizon 2020 (H2020) and KIC as well.

² Guidance on ex-ante Conditionalities for the European Structural and Investment Funds - 13 February 2014

This proposal represents an important element to build synergic bridges between EU funds when defining the regional operational programs. The Cohesion Policy through the European Territorial Cooperation establish a strong collaboration pattern on the top of S3, which, thanks to their living and evolving definition, may represents a flexible tool for identifying synergies, collaborative development paths and common goals among regions.

The S3 becomes very relevant with regard to research infrastructures. The Commission's Communication on the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020³ provided a set of recommendations for HE framework programme and in particular to better involve research infrastructures financed by the Union - especially from ERDF - into the HE Program's projects with the aim of strengthening the European Research Area.

In this landscape, it becomes natural to imagine multiple ways to pool different funding programs on the same project which starts with infrastructural investments, grows through research funding and "ends" with technological and knowledge transfer actions for a certain region which cooperates with other regions on the basis of multiple funding schemes (such as Interregional Innovation Investments, Cross border and transregional programs, Horizon Europe, National and Regional ERDF and ESF).

1.4. Synergies: desk research, publication and guideline

In order to gather all the useful information, a desk research was conducted as part of the activities of ERA-LEARN project. The desk research has been considered the most effective methodology as compared to field research to gather basic information usable as a benchmark in the research process. Furthermore, it is important to underline that on-line desk research has been carried out during a transition period between the closure of the current EU programming period (2014/2020) and the upcoming one (2021/2027): this condition is affecting the practical definition of EP tools for synergies.

In order to align the strategies, implement the procedures, integrate the existing and future roadmaps as well as support R&I initiatives and maximize their impact and efficiency, the online desk research has been substantially focused on different types of funding sources. Specifically, the analysis focused on the funding sources made available for the combination at strategy, programming (from the point of view of the EU

³ (COM(2018) 2 final) and the European Parliament's report on the assessment of the implementation of Horizon 2020 in view of its interim evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal (2016/2147(INI))

and of the managing authorities of the ESI funds) and project level (from the point of view of applicants / grant beneficiaries).

The analysis was carried out on the documents currently available, which concern the H2020 programming. Since all the regulatory legislations relating to Horizon Europe have not been completed yet, at the moment it was only possible to outline a strategy without being able to identify and define specific interventions. However, in the next paragraphs, the main regulatory references currently available for Horizon Europe will be identified.

The desk research was mainly focused on identify the following issues:

- the synergies implemented during the current multiannual financial framework;
- the barriers to the coordination between ESIF and Partnership Instruments (i.e. regulatory barriers, organisational barriers, attitudinal barriers).

A wide literature on synergies including best practices, surveys, position papers and regulations (current legislation and proposals for upcoming regulations) coming from actors working with different scope and in different EU programmes (see ANNEX 1) has been analysed.

The study, in particular, focused on the following texts:

- Results of the ERA-LEARN 2020 Workshop on ESIF and P2Ps.
- Results from "Stairway to Excellence" project.
- "EC report on Synergies between Framework Programs for Research and ESIF (Contribution to the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020)".
- "Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union Programs - Guidance for policy-makers and implementing bodies".

Synergies overview

The European Commission and the Member States have the responsibility to ensure the coordination, synergies and complementarities among the European Structural and Investment Funds, the current and next R&I framework program and other Union programs relating to research, innovation and competitiveness. In consistency with the Regulations of 2014/2020 EU programmes, both European Commission and the Member States have already made efforts to find solutions for a synergistic use of the EU funds and many documents are available that present guidelines, analysis and studies as well as reports from working groups and workshops ⁴.

⁴https://www.era-learn.eu/documents/images/era-learn_european-partnership-initiatives_graphic_web.jpg/view

As described in the Guide “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” “... *It is of utmost importance to ensure optimal synergies between the funds to face the ever-increasing competitive pressure from global markets and maximise impact and efficiency of public funding*”. In the current programming period, financial synergies between ERDF and H2020 can be achieved through 5 different kind of funding:

- **Upstream sequential combination:** ESIF investments that enables Horizon 2020 participation (funds for research infrastructure investments improve the success rate in H2020 projects)
- **Downstream sequential combination:** Horizon 2020 or FP project results are used or further developed with subsequent ESIF investments (for example: market deployment or training projects)
- **Alternative funding (through ESIF):** reorientation of FP7/Horizon 2020 projects that were positively evaluated, shortlisted, but not funded given the limited budget, towards ESIF (Seal of Excellence)
- **Parallel funding (Parallel use of funds in separate projects):** ESIF and Horizon 2020 funding are running in parallel, are mutually supportive and complement each other;
- **Simultaneous/cumulative** funding that brings together Horizon2020 and ESIF funds in the same project aiming at achieving greater impact and efficiency (i.e. ESIF used for costs non-eligible under Horizon 2020. This combination is possible under the Horizon 2020 Art. 37 Rules for Participation, provided that the grants do not cover the same cost items.

That means that synergies already exist between H2020 and other EU programmes, such as ESIF, but they should be further strengthened and made more efficient and effective, building (among the other) on synergies with ESIF and smart specialisation strategies.

Thanks to smart specialization and the entrepreneurial discovery process, significant progress has been made, paving the way for synergies on the ERDF/regional side, including, among the others, better innovation governance, through university-enterprise cooperation and improved support for R&I in countries and regions, and better interregional collaboration around the relevant S3 priorities.

As described in the NCP Academy webinar on “Synergies of funds” held on the 24th of October 2019, in the 2021/2027 programming period it is envisaged to favour synergies mainly on the following 3 levels:

- Strategic level
- Financial level
- Management level

At the **strategic level**, there is the intention to create a closer link between the Cohesion Policy and the European Semester through a strategic planning process, and to strengthen the complementarity of the ERDF with Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and other programme set out in every single Regulation. In this perspective, the strategic planning phase for both ERDF and Horizon Europe is considered a key point for synergies.

Regarding the Smart Specialisation Strategies, they are considered a key point to synergies with Horizon Europe and other EU smart growth-related instruments. The "Entrepreneurial Discovery Process" should also bring together the industry and research "communities" (and other relevant stakeholders).

At the **financial level**, synergies can be achieved through:

- Sequential funding
- Alternative funding (Seal of Excellence)
- Cumulative funding
- Voluntary transfer (5%)

When we talk about the proposed bridges and links between EU Funds, we can underline that there is a proposal of the Commission of a voluntary transfer from any CPR Funds to any other EU fund covered by the CPR, any Fund under the shared management or any instrument under direct or indirect management. Member States may request transfer of up to 5 % of their programme resources of Cohesion Policy and the transferred ERDF budgets will be implemented under HE rules. Nonetheless this proposal has not been agreed upon in the current HE proposal.

In order to promote synergies at the management level, various actions have been planned. Among the others, the new HE regulations provide for Co-fund partnerships that group the HE and FESR / FSE + funds in a "*programme-like manner*"⁵ and it requires that Horizon Europe programme committee to be regularly informed on the progress of the implementation of Horizon Europe, as well as on the synergies with other relevant Union programmes. The Managing Authorities are also expected to identify Horizon implementing bodies as intermediate bodies for the implementation of ERDF funds based on CPR rules. It is expected also the alignment of the funding conditions with simplified cost options in order to allow to replicate the funding settings of other programmes.

On the 12th of November 2019, an informal workshop was held on the synergies between the European Regional Development Fund and Horizon Europe. The Presidency confirmed the need for strengthening links between these two programmes

⁵ NCP Academy webinar: Synergies complementarities between ERDF and HEU - Katja Reppel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCo43ihG0hk>

and promoting synergies also as part of the Strategic Planning that will be prepared in co-creation between the Commission, the Member States and interested stakeholders. The Smart Specialisation Strategies proposed by the Member States will be examined for their coherence with EU priorities. There are three main "blocks" of possible synergies between the two Funds:

- the Seal of Excellence (SoE): in the proposed revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), SoE projects awarded under Horizon Europe would be exempted from the notification requirement. The applicable funding rules are those of the Programme providing funds
- the transfer of funds: up to 5% of the ERDF could be transferred and implemented via Horizon Europe calls. Eligibility and reporting rules of the Programme receiving funds will apply.
- the European partnerships: all types of European partnerships and programme co-fund actions should be able to use ERDF as programme-level contributions (as opposed to action-level cumulative funding). In this case, the funding to partnerships would be composed of Horizon Europe contribution, ERDF (both EU and national support) and where relevant any other national or private contributions.

The Presidency concluded that it is essential for the Commission to create a simple and flexible menu of options, concerning in particular the combination of funds, and to create a "narrative" for national authorities regarding the implications, benefits and risks.

Barriers and obstacle in current Legal Framework

In order to implement all the synergies described in the previous chapters, it is necessary to face the barriers identified and detailed below. In any case it is important to highlight that, at the moment, there are few best-practices in public-public partnerships.

The analysis conducted revealed barriers that can be grouped on three different levels:

- Regulatory barriers
- Organisational barriers
- Attitudinal barriers

a. **Regulatory barriers** are technical and not typical of the organization. The MAs and funders are not able to overcome them, that are exogenous factors.

Regarding this kind of barriers is important to highlight that an overlap of different regulatory references exist. This implies a difficulty in finding the elements of interest in the regulations.

In fact, the MAs and funders do not have specific tools for the creation of synergies.

Legislation is complex and the concern of MAs and funders to incur in cases of “*double funding*” is often an obstacle.

Several bottleneck between Regional and National Operational Programmes calls and H2020 calls exist. They are not synchronized (the right type of funding is not always available when needed). This implies that there may be a thematic misalignment between Partnership Instruments and national and regional smart specialization strategies.

Furthermore, the same state aid rules do not apply to projects positively evaluated in EU-wide competition.

b. Organisational barriers are mainly represented by the distrust of organizations. First of all, we must consider that different administrative support structures are committed and responsible to manage some project (or even just part of the same project), without guarantee an overview of all initiatives.

The lack of strategy regarding synergies means that the responsibility to “create” synergies falls on the beneficiary. Considering that the beneficiaries do not have a deep information and knowledge about legal framework, this must be considered an important obstacle (Researchers don’t always “see” potential synergies).

In not easy to synchronize different initiatives, this is due to a lack of knowledge regarding the incoming calls and future programming (inability to forecast). For this reason, beneficiaries have many difficulties to manage synchronisation of their projects, the related partnerships, budgets and management procedures.

c. Attitudinal barriers

Research from 2007-13 noted a “*silo*” mentality in implementing EU funds in Member States that made it difficult to pursue synergies: EU objectives were often divided according to traditional ministerial or departmental portfolios or political bargaining rather than synergistic logic. The division of different Funds and instruments between national and regional administrative levels could also constrain the scope to pursue synergies.⁶

This mentality persists up to today, and the policies are often fragmented into different organisations and offices. In general, organisations have a lack of attitude to develop synergies, which can be due to several factors.

⁶ Ferry M (2015) Cohesion Policy and its Components: Past, Present and Future, GRINCOH FP7 project, WP8 SummaryReport
<http://www.grincoh.eu/working-papers?filter%5B%5D=&filter%5B%5D=&filter%5B%5D=&wp=8&task=2&product=&institution>

An important element is certainly the lack of appropriate information on this issue. As we have already said, many publications exist on this subject, but they hardly reach the right stakeholders. In addition, the information divulged describes many possibilities without providing practical tools and clear references, leaving the responsibility to those who would improve synergies.

The language barriers should also be considered as a negative element.

Regarding the participation in framework programme by the “Mutual learning exercise (MLE) on national practices in widening participation and strengthening synergies.”, the topic report *Skills development, information, communication and training* mentions that: “National authorities are aware of the above barriers and have implemented support activities to reduce the costs of acquiring and exploiting relevant information for FP participation. Providing information is the first level of support; the second level involves delivering advice; and the third level necessitates in-depth support in the form of (tailored) guidance.”⁷

The Desk research we conducted shows that there is still a long way to go, and that only a few regional and national authorities have started to undertake it.

⁷ <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/mle-national-practices-widening-participation-and-strengthening-synergies-thematic-report-0>

2. Current Synergies with Partnership Instruments': best practices

The long debate and wide literature around synergies, developed since the very first H2020 proposal discussions, shows many classifications and best practices in finding and deploying strategies about the harmonization of EU funds.⁸

The study and desk research results about identification of synergies brought to collection of a long reference list, but for what concern the specific research field of this living document, an objective limit had arisen: the lack of best practices and synergies' examples about Partnership Instruments in H2020 indicates the need to intervene in this field and on the other side the difficulties faced by the Managing Authorities in coping with legislative and organizational constraints.

This chapter will focus on synergies between Partnership Instruments and ESIF, rationalising the taxonomy adopted in literature and publication.

2.1. Synergies between Partnership Instruments and ESIF

For the purpose of this document, the main classification and distinction which simplify the discussion is the differentiation between synergies at “programme level” and synergies at “project level”⁹.

This new classification does not aim at adding new definition on the top of those already explored in the literature through the desk research, but it helps in clarify the twofold role Managing Authorities assume concerning the Partnership instruments. Synergies at **Programme Level** imply a strong strategical and planning effort in management of Eu funding programmes, considering the MAs as the main actors in decision-making process. Synergies at **Project Level** mainly refers to beneficiaries, therefore both to MAs when acting as beneficiary of EU funds (Partnership as funding authority, ESIF,

⁸ MLE Widening Participation and Strengthening Synergies: Summary Report – EU 2018 “*The rules governing the serial and parallel use of ESIF and H2020 funding are clearly specified at both a general level and at the level of specific initiatives that allow for co-funding. Implementation guidelines prepared by the European Commission are also generally clear and helpful. The devil lies in the detail, however, and there is still ample scope for misinterpretation. Better mechanisms are needed to facilitate a dialogue between Member States and the Commission to resolve ambiguities in a speedy and effective manner. There is also scope for national and regional authorities to take the initiative by strengthening strategic intelligence capabilities and investing in staff training relevant to the implementation of synergies.*”

⁹ EraLearn 2020 “P2Ps as drivers of linking European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds and European, transnational and national Research and Innovation (R&I) Funds”

ETC funds, etc.) and to call for proposals' applicants, such as: Research Centres, Companies, Associations and so on.

Synergies at the **program level** refers the combination and involvement of different programmes and different Managing Authorities which work in close coordination in order to create bridges and arrangements for harmonizing different programme ratio.

This goal implies an intensive effort for complying with different rules, which characterize programs, such as:

- Eligibility rules
- State aid intensity
- Nature of the incentive (grant, subsidies loan, prize, etc.)
- Territorial spill-over effects
- Evaluation criteria
- Administrative procedures
- Audits.

At this level, it becomes of primary importance to deploy strategic planning capacity for all involved in the ESIF management and planning at an early stage of the planning phase.

The discussion about creating synergies among Eu Programmes has reached a considerable depth within the EU debate on future programming period 2021/2027. As reported in Chapter 3 – Regulatory Reference, several proposals and amendments have been discussed so far in order to seed in Horizon Europe regulation the appropriate arrangements for bridging different programmes.

Many studies have been realized and several valuable reports have been issued over the past years about the synergies between H2020 and ESI Funds. Unfortunately, there are still many points to be clarified and there is no clear and simple path for MA's who want to achieve synergies.

The creation of synergies at **project level** implies first of all a sound analysis of funding opportunities and a consequent analysis of budget headings during the proposal drafting. This allows to combine funding in four different ways for a single project:

- Sequential: different funds and programmes support different project phases: infrastructural condition, R&D phase, Market deployment;
- Alternative: alternative resources intervene for project initially draft under the scope of a different programme;
- Parallel: different funds in parallel complementary aspects of a project;
- Cumulative: different funds in the same project for different budget items.

For avoiding any double financing for the same items, it is extremely important for the Managing Authorities to draft programmes with a foresight of the whole life cycle and

further evolution of a potential project, considering the entire value chain on which the S3 is focused as well.

H2020 Partnership Instruments differ significantly for what concerns the possibility to use ERDF funds in synergic way.

ERA NET Cofund and European Joint Programme Cofund (EJP Cofund) schemes allow the pooling of ESIF in principle but the exclusion of the ESIF contribution as eligible costs for calculating the EU contribution (top-up of 33%) hampered the use of ESIF for the implementation of the joint calls.

The ERA NET Cofund is a networking scheme which allows two different operating modalities. The first one is the most known and usual scheme supporting public-public partnerships, including joint programming initiatives between Member States, in their preparation, establishment of networking structures, design, implementation and coordination of joint activities. Through this scheme, EU funds the network with a top up grant up to 33% of total eligible costs (i.e. the value of the joint trans-national call for proposal). Consortia may implement other joint activities including other joint calls without EU co-funding.

The second operating modality is rarely applied (only on the basis of specific H2020 call for proposal). In this case, the co-funded joint call will be based on in-kind contributions, i.e. from partners' resources coming from institutional funding. The beneficiaries (the partners of the Era Net) carry out the transnational projects, resulting from their call, fully or partially themselves. The in-kind contributions are the resources allocated as direct expenditure in the selected transnational projects that are not reimbursed by the EU contribution but follow the H2020 rules. This second modality has been implemented very seldom (only two cases in FP6 and FP7¹⁰). In these kinds of projects, RTOs¹¹ received dedicated programme funding (so called "core funding") from their governments for the purpose of fulfilling strategic national objectives. In H2020 we can mention two relevant examples: ERA – Planet and ER4ACS¹²

Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI) scheme on the other side allowed the use of ESIF without any particular constraint but the provision that Joint Calls applicants observe the rules for ESIF funding and that an ESIF programme foresees such competitive award of research grants.

¹⁰ AERTOs - <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/88507/factsheet/en>;

iMERA - <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/16220>

¹¹ Organization mandated by their national government to undertake strategic research in support of societal development including economic competitiveness and innovation.

¹² H2020 Era Planet - <http://www.era-planet.eu/> ; H2020 ER4ACS – <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/ERA4CS.activities/jointcall>

The Art. 185 initiatives have as main objective the integration of national public research funding and therefore the scheme precludes any possibility to use ESIF.

A different case is the JTI/JU schemes. Projects awarding grants can receive funding from combined programmes, both in simultaneous and parallel ways, avoiding anyway the double funding (different cost items funded by different grants).

Valuable examples of such synergies have been reported¹³ for the Flanders within the Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant, CleanSky2 Czech Republic and Art. 185 BONUS.

This short overview explains the reason why very few synergies have been identified for Partnership Instruments in the current programming period so far. The most relevant for the scope of this document are reported below.

2.2. Case Studies 2014/2020

In this section, we aim at selecting few best practices realized in the current programming period between Horizon 2020 and ESI Funds that underline positive actions undertaken by the **Managing Authorities** when acting as **Programme Designers** and, on the other side, when acting as **Beneficiaries**.

The following synergy's examples refer to the first and more common ERA NET Cofund action in which National/Regional funding bodies converge own resources into joint calls for funding transnational projects.

The case studies presented below do not regard all possible synergy typologies, but they do help us to show many good practice examples of deliberate attempts to break down barriers and create dialogues between MAs and other national and regional R&I authorities.

ERA NET Cofund: M-ERA.NET and Manunet

M-ERA.NET is an ERA NET Cofund established in 2012 with the aim to support and increase the coordination of European research and innovation programmes and related funding in materials science and engineering with a consortium of 43 public funding organisations from 32 European and non-European countries. The Calabria region's experience has been cited in many studies about synergies between H2020-ERD funds. In the scope of this Living Document, an interview¹⁴ was necessary to clearly understand the details and the modalities of initiation and implementation of such

¹³ MLE - Widening participation and strengthening synergies: Synthetic Synergies Paper – October 2018

¹⁴ Calabria Region Scientific Research Manager Mr. Menotti Lucchetta.

best practice. In principle the Calabria's ROP did not foresee any specific measure to allow the participation to Era Net.

Within the M-ERA.NET, the Calabria Region participated since 2016 co-funding projects through ESIF¹⁵, likewise other partners.

In the Regional OP the M-ERA.NET funding was allocated from the Axis 1 Research and Innovation, measure 1.1.4 – R&D activities (R&D project, intangible services, IPR, dissemination of results, support and mentoring) Call for applicants Innovation Clusters”.

The participation of Calabria Region to M-ERA.NET was born substantially from good collaboration relationships among internal departments. The M-ERA.NET Consortium Agreement was signed by the Economic Development Department initially interested in fostering projects in the field of energy/materials. The Regional S3 were compatible with the ERA NET Topics and this condition opened the possibility to fund Calabrian projects with ERDF. Beside this potential possibility, the key for finally disclosing ERDF resources was found by including a note in the Selection Criteria of the Measure 1.1.4. **“Support to collaborative R&D activities for the development of new sustainable technologies, products and services”**. The note to Selection criteria foresaw the direct fundability of projects evaluated under the H2020 selection criteria. The Monitoring Committee by approving the note (with a decision on its programmatic consistency) during the ex-ante evaluation opened the way to finally allocate ERDF resources as financial availability to M-ERA.NET projects. The ROP Measure 1.1.4 had a total financial allocation about 35 M euro, out of which 500K were devoted to M-ERA.NET while 2 M euro were devoted to other H2020 related activities (including SoE).

This solution was effective also for the Calabria Region's participation to another ERA NET “Eramin” replicating the allocation of ERDF resources to the purpose of the P2P.

During the interview, several impressions and hints arose around the synergy theme but also about different aspects of such an action. The discussion about synergies are often too vague, a wide literature and many presentations have been given in conferences and ad-hoc meetings, but the main questions about the implementation remain: **how to practically implement synergies, which kind of legal solutions can be effectively implemented**. Practical tools and solutions are lacking at the moment for Public Authorities in order to manage synergically the available EU funds.

¹⁵ In the 2016 call the Calabria Region allocated 0,5 M euro of regional funding; in the call 2017 were allocated 105.000€ regional funding, in the call 2018 Calabria funded 3 projects with a total allocation of 1.3 M€ of regional funding

For what concern the participation to ERA NET Cofund, out of the practical experience some useful hints and impression came into light. First of all, the awareness about the synergies establishment among EU funds is not enough mature: many public authorities managing funds do not have adequate awareness about the practical opportunities linked to S3. A possible solution is to create tools for facilitating the identification of Smart specialization convergence and related Partnership topics.

Another constraint for Regional Authorities is represented by the **Interim and final evaluation of funded projects**. While in ERA NET scheme, the funding decision comes from an evaluation procedure held at centralized level by several international evaluators, currently the interim and final evaluation of funded projects' progresses is operated by each funding organization for their own beneficiaries. This procedure is considerably heavy in terms of efforts mainly because the Funding Organisation needs to identify scientific experts in order to evaluate projects; this effort is therefore replicated for the number of participants in the same transnational project. In order to overcome this effort and resource consuming procedure, it's advisable to create a centralized procedure for evaluating projects under scientific and technical point of views, while MAs and FOBs will keep take care about administrative procedures and certification of costs.

The possibility to add some top-up funding when using ERDF is now forbidden. The possibility to calculate TOP-UP funding or finding another way to calculate H2020 contribution would be helpful for fostering the participation in European Partnerships.

In this case, it is possible to identify synergies at Programme Level and synergy at Project Level.

At **Programme Level**, the focus on RIS3 enabled the joining of the Regional Authority in the ERA NET Cofund and the selection of research topics for joint call in compliance with those already established in RIS3.

At **Project Level**, where the Regional Authority was acting as Beneficiary, another synergy was possible, i.e. the transfer of ERDF allocation from the Regional scope to a European scope.

The same practice has been implemented in the **Manunet ERANET**¹⁶ which is a Cofund action supporting innovation-driven, close-to-market research and development projects in manufacturing. Many Regional Authorities since 2006 are working together for deploying joint calls. The Piemonte Region, similarly to Calabria Region, activated the ROP ERDF Axis 1 Research and Innovation, Action I.1b.1.2, devoting 1.500.000 euros for funding Manunet projects.

¹⁶https://bandi.regione.piemonte.it/system/files/dgr_40_8094_14122018_approvaz%20scheda%20tecnica%20di%20misura%20e%20dotaz%20finanz.pdf

Joint Technology Initiatives: “JU Clean Sky 2” case.

Public-Private Partnerships with the industry are established in the form of Article 187 Joint Undertakings (JUs) in strategic areas of research and innovation. JTIs aim at creating a relevant critical mass for overcoming market failure and aggregate stronger commitments from industry, including substantial financial commitments at least commensurate with the EU budget contribution. JTIs are legal entities which set up a research agenda and a work plan for the uptake of certain technologies and in general for the qualitative improvements to the sectors where the JUs operate.

Each JU has its own rules for governance and operations: they receive Contributions from EU which are generally devoted to call for proposals; in most of the cases JUs receive resources from private members in terms of contribution to operational and functioning costs. In some cases, private members can participate to JUs through the allocation of in-kind contribution in projects. The private members contribution in some cases come from the costs of funding projects resulting from the calls launched through the JTI and which are not fully reimbursed from the EU contribution. In addition, the industry partners will make commitments beyond these normal co-funding arrangements, where they will bring in activities and investments that will not receive any reimbursement from Horizon 2020.

In Horizon 2020 there are seven public – private partnerships set up by the Commission.

In Horizon Europe JUs will flow into the “**Institutionalised partnerships**” (based on Art. 185 or 187 TFEU, and EIT regulation for KICs)¹⁷. Under Horizon Europe, the Institutionalised European Partnerships shall secure as financial and/or in-kind contribution a total share of at least 50% up to 75% of the aggregated European Partnership budgetary commitments.

This provision requires partners to secure own funding from different sources and in-kind contribution. For National/Regional Funding Bodies and Managing Authorities is important to identify strategies for converging different funds.

Clean Sky 2 is one of the seven JTIs funded by the EU’s Horizon 2020 programme, with the aim of strengthening European aero-industry collaboration.

The JU Clean Sky 2 (CS2) represents a best practice under several points of view and at different synergy level. The JU CS2 implemented a set of remarkable actions combining H2020 and ESIF funds in a structured way.

¹⁷ “Provisions related to European Partnerships in the Horizon Europe Common Understanding” ERAC Plenary in Brussels on 6 December 2018 - Item 5.2 - ERAC Ad-hoc Working Group on partnerships - Final report

JU CS2 established a set of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Regional Authorities in order to align CS thematic objectives with regional strategies and RIS3 in order to activate the applicable ESIF regional instruments.

Through bilateral meetings with ESIF Managing authorities, JU CS2 promotes a cooperation with Managing Authorities that brings both sides of the table into a shared position about the R&I priorities in the aeronautic field. The Memoranda are based on the following items:

- Mutual commitment for identifying synergies;
- Identification of MA's policy framework supporting aeronautics R&I. For joining CS2, RIS3 shall not necessarily relate to aeronautics but can refer also to relevant areas such as: R&I, transport, mobility, materials, CO2 reduction, etc.;
- Identification of ESIF measures and funding schemes which can be activated for facilitating JU CS2 goals through either a specific call in aeronautics, or a call with thematic areas.

The MoUs create long lasting dialogue between the JU CS2 and Regional Authorities aiming at continuously cooperate for the benefit of the Aeronautic sector, included as a priority in the RIS 3 of the signing Authorities. The goal of this dialogue is twofold: the cooperation benefits JU CS2' awareness about the regional R&I priorities so that the research topics can be updated and addressed over the time; on the other side the Regional Managing Authorities receive feedback from JU CS2 and stakeholders for the implementation of tasks under the MoU and at the level of regional calls.

The twofold way of Interaction for the creation of following synergies at Programme Level:

- Regional Managing Authorities makes decision for activating specific ERDF funding measures planned in the ROP. Some Authorities have also included a specific action devoted to supporting projects in synergies with H2020 or specifically with JTIs.
- JU CS2 can stimulate decisions for adapting the strategic agenda and the work plan according to RIS3

This example represents an interesting good practice which can be applied during the new programming period negotiation. Managing Authorities can consider these solutions for drafting the next 2021/2027 ROP and include specific R&I measures fostering the participation in the EP on the basis of the RIS3.

JU CS2 also suggests interesting best practices for complementary actions promoted within the project proposals submitted under JU CS2 calls.

Applicant to JU CS2 calls may propose a complementary and separate set of activities which may be granted through ESIF support. These activities are included in an ESIF Work package explaining synergies, eligible costs and ESIF funding value. This ESIF WP will be separately evaluated and may be granted with a '**synergy label**' which can

be taken up or be considered by the relevant Managing Authorities when activating appropriate funding schemes.

In the ESIF WP, the applicants may propose different kind of actions:

- Alternative tech/solution to the same requirement of JU CS2 Topics but not matching with the CS2 schedule requirements;
- Parallel R&I activities complementing the proposal, going beyond the requirement, having a strategic content for the applicant and increasing the impact or the market take up.

With this solution, applicants may seek for synergies at project level already at the drafting stage, realizing in this way complementary synergies.

H2020 and ESIF: The Estonian case “Mobilitas Pluss Programme”

The Mobilitas Pluss is the R&D Estonian Programme which funds research and innovation projects in complementary way or alternative way with respect to H2020 and it is to it strictly linked. The programme is funded by national resources and 83.5% of them covered by the European Regional Development Fund.

Programme activities are carried out by the Estonian Research Council (ETAg) in accordance with Decree No. 1.1-2/15/481 of the Minister of Education and Research of 30 December 2015. It lays down the conditions for the provision of grants under the ‘Internationalisation of research and support for mobility and the next generation’ or Mobilitas Pluss programme. The Programme is hinged on the ‘Operational Program for the Cohesion Policy Funds 2014-2020 ‘Priority axis 4’ Growth-capable entrepreneurship and internationally

Competitive R&D, “Objective 2.4.2.1 “R&D and higher education are of a high level, and Estonia is active and visible in international RDI cooperation” - Measure 4.1.3. of the Action “Increasing the International Competitiveness of Estonian R&D and Participation in the European Research Initiatives”. “Internationalization of science, mobility and succession support for the implementation of Mobilitas Pluss.

The Mobilitas Pluss Programme intervenes in different kind of modality depending on the H2020 scheme to be reinforced:

- For ERA NET: the programme support final beneficiaries in the ERA-NET projects, which are not funded by the European Commission, and reimburse expenses required for project implementation (only ERA-NETs with no additional EC co-fund are supported).
- For EIT: the programme reimburses the costs of those partners who have ongoing Horizon 2020 EIT projects. Reimbursement is provided for costs related to participation in the work of a KIC consortium for which a partner is not reimbursed in any other manner and which in particular include **travel and staff costs**.

- For ERA Chair: **research costs are reimbursed**, since no funds have been allocated for them under the Horizon 2020 project. Salaries of the head of the chair and her/his team, travel costs, costs of organizing events, including conferences and seminars and costs of invited guests and speakers, participation fees, costs related to publication and taking out a patent, training costs and communication costs are reimbursed out of the funds of Horizon 2020.
- For ERC Grant: the programme reimburses research costs related to an ERC grant and the costs of the preparation of a new ERC grant application, including travel to R&D institutions in foreign countries where there are successful holders of ERC grants. Main condition is that a researcher employed by a partner has to participate in an ERC grant competition and gain the **mark of A or B during evaluation** (whilst not **actually being funded**).

Seal of Excellence, Synergy Label in BBI and CleanSky2

The Seal of Excellence represent the quality label awarded by Horizon 2020 proposals which reached quality excellence but get not granted because of funding exhaustion. The Seal of Excellence can be awarded by proposal submitted under the following funding schemes:

- EIC Accelerator Pilot (former SME Instrument)
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) individual fellowships
- Teaming

And over the years, several Managing Authorities established alternative measures for funding SoE Projects, mainly using ERDF for EIC Accelerator Pilot¹⁸.

The synergy's tool is the first operation tools for Managing Authorities in order to give alternative funding opportunities to Researchers and SMEs also activating ERDF through National / Regional Operative Programmes.

This tool is extremely important because simplify the evaluation and selection of projects competing under National or Regional calls. In order to give support to Managing Authorities in dealing with different rules and procedures applicable to H2020 and ESI Funds, the European Commission published an Explanatory Notes¹⁹ on the state aid rule application to SoE proposals under SME Instrument.

The SoE is mentioned in this document because of its relevance in funding individual proposals (by sole researcher and sole company) and therefore represents a best practice to foster when considering synergies among EU direct and indirect funds.

¹⁸ Full list about national implementation of SoE : https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en

¹⁹ Brussels, 4.1.2017 SWD(2017) 11 final

For the purpose of this living document, the SoE, because of its nature, is not directly applicable to multi-partners proposals. The concept is nonetheless relevant in order to draft alternative solutions.

As for **Quality and Excellence Labels**, a different kind of best practices have been realized by the above-mentioned JUs Clean Sky and Bio Based Industry. JUs' "synergy label" are drafted in a way that leaves to applicants the responsibilities and burden to take advantage out of the label without ensuring any other supporting actions. While the CS3 JU' Sinergy label ensure the correspondence of the ERDF's work package to RIS3, the BBI JU's one is linked to the JU commitment in establishing Memorandum of Understanding with Managing Authorities and support "labelled" proposal in searching for alternative funding. The both solutions do not overcome the main limit represented by the synchronization of opportunities for multi-partners proposals.

Cross Regional Common Pot: SCREEN CSA

SCREEN²⁰ is a H2020 CSA where 16 European regions from 12 different European countries, plus 1 UK national body are involved, included Lombardy, Central Portugal, Flanders and Friesland regions. It aims at developing an EU reference framework for establishing operational synergies between H2020 and ESIF related to circular economy. In particular in order to tackle the problem of non-selected H2020 proposals (esp. important for less developed regions experiencing their ESIF budgets underspent due to their lower absorption capacity), SCREEN is developing an idea of a "cross-regional common pot" that could fund such projects by contributions from the respective ESIF budgets' residues.

This idea, based on Art. 70 of the Common Provisions Regulation of the ESI Funds, is generally possible for many sorts of projects, and it will be tested (beside the SCREEN project lifespan) by the interested regions from the consortium. Article 70 of the ESIF regulation allow operations implemented outside the programme area, but within the EU, up to 15% of the priority axis' allocated funds. The project developed a specific Memorandum of Understanding, open to further adhesion, in which it is clearly required to Regions joining the initiative to establish a specific measure under their structural funds dealing with "international circular economy projects".

In this case, beside the SCREEN CSA didn't implement real synergies, it put in place strategic planning tools which merge alternative funding solution and 15% flexibility out of the programme areas.

²⁰ <http://www.screen-lab.eu/Step3.html>

3. Regulatory reference

In this chapter, we analyse the current legislation and the proposals that encourages and enhances the implementation of synergies between different Union programs.

This chapter begins with a brief presentation of the main normative references that have favoured the synergies between H2020 and ESIF in the current programming period before the introduction of additional facilities introduced with the OMNIBUS in 2018.

Then, the main novelties of the Regulation “*The enabling conditions introduced in the Regulation 2018/1046 - OMNIBUS*” are illustrated. This Regulation presents modifications introduced to close the current framework in line with the new strategies of the Commission, in consideration of how the future programming should be. These changes have already been amended and therefore effective, and they govern programmes adopted in the 2014/2020 period.

The next two documents presented are proposals submitted to the Commission for future planning.

- The first proposal for a Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) sets out common provisions for seven shared management funds and updates EU cohesion policy with a new set of rules reducing fragmentation, fostering administrative simplification and delivering a common set of basic regulations.
- The second proposal concerns the possibility of enabling the converging of multiple funding programmes.

Finally, the last document presented amends the rules regarding the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to certain categories of horizontal State aid. These amendments do not change with the different programming.

To summarize, the following tables show all the normative references identified. Since this is a living document, it will be necessary to verify whether they will be confirmed or modified as soon as the new legislation concerning the programming 2021/2027 will be officially published.

It should be noted that the blue tables summarize the normative references still under proposal and, therefore, will be object of attention in order to verify their implementation.

3.1. ESIF rules enabling synergies in the current programme period 2014-2020

The possibility to combine the H2020 and ESIF funds in the same project is a novelty that only exists for H2020 and in the future the European Commission intends to extend this opportunity to other funds.

This is currently possible via a derogation to the non-cumulative principle of art. 129 Fin. Regulation that prohibits a beneficiary from receiving 2 EU grants for a project (Art. 65(11) CPR (Regulation EU No 1303/2013 Common Provisions for all European Structural and Investment Funds))

ESIF Art. 65(11) CPR	Horizon 2020 Article 37 Rules for Participation Cumulative funding
An operation may receive support from one or more ESI Funds or from one or more programmes and from other Union instruments, provided that the expenditure item included in a request for payment for reimbursement by one of the ESI Funds does not receive support from another Fund or Union instrument, or support from the same Fund under another programme.	An action for which a grant from the Union budget has been awarded may also give rise to the award of a grant on the basis of Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 [Horizon2020], provided that the grants do not cover the same cost items.

A project in the synergy's context is an operation with several components or actions with several grant agreements / contracts. The Article 70 (2) of the CPR enables synergies allowing to spend ERDF funds outside the territory of the operational program outside the region of the Member States for the benefit of the program area.

Article 70 (2) CPR
<p>The managing authority may accept that an operation is implemented outside the programme area but within the Union, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:</p> <p>(a) the operation is for the benefit of the programme area;</p> <p>(b) the total amount allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed 15 % of the support from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund and</p>

EMFF at the level of the priority, or 5 % of the support from the EAFRD at the level of the programme;

(c) the monitoring committee has given its agreement to the operation or types of operations concerned;

(d) the obligations of the authorities for the programme in relation to management, control and audit concerning the operation are fulfilled by the authorities responsible for the programme under which that operation is supported or they enter into agreements with authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented.

The Article 96(3)d of the CPR reinforces the obligation to work with innovator actors in other regions and Member States beyond INTERREG projects

Art 96 (3)d CPR - Content, adoption and amendment of operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal

Taking into account its content and objectives, an operational programme shall describe the integrated approach to territorial development, having regard to the Partnership Agreement, and showing how that operational programme contributes to the accomplishment of its objectives and expected results, specifying, where appropriate, the following:

(d) the arrangements for interregional and transnational actions, within the operational programmes, with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State;

Articles 67(5)b and 68 of the CPR allow the alignment of similar cost options for an easier combination of ERDF and H2020 funds; in particular, lump sums, flat rates, standard scales of unit costs within the ESI funds may use the H2020 rules applicable for similar types of operations and beneficiaries

Art 67(5)b CPR - Forms of grants and repayable assistance

The amounts referred to in points (b), (c) and (d) of the first subparagraph of paragraph 1 shall be established in one of the following ways:

(b) in accordance with the rules for application of corresponding scales of unit costs, lump sums and flat rates applicable in Union policies for a similar type of operation and beneficiary;

Art 68 CPR - Flat rate financing for indirect costs and staff costs concerning grants and repayable assistance

1. Where the implementation of an operation gives rise to indirect costs, they may be calculated at a flat rate in one of the following ways:

(a) a flat rate of up to 25 % of eligible direct costs, provided that the rate is calculated on the

basis of a fair, equitable and verifiable calculation method or a method applied under schemes for grants funded entirely by the Member State for a similar type of operation and beneficiary;

(b) a flat rate of up to 15 % of eligible direct staff costs without there being a requirement for the Member State to perform a calculation to determine the applicable rate;

(c) a flat rate applied to eligible direct costs based on existing methods and corresponding rates, applicable in Union policies for a similar type of operation and beneficiary.

The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 149 concerning the definition of the flat rate and the related methods referred to in point (c) of the first subparagraph of this paragraph.

2. For the purposes of determining staff costs relating to the implementation of an operation, the hourly rate applicable may be calculated by dividing the latest documented annual gross employment costs by 1720 hours

There is the obligation to develop Smart Specialization Strategies, including seeking synergies and complementarity with H2020 and other centrally managed EU programmes and involvement of H2020 stakeholders in RIS3 development process and obligation to foresee up-stream / down-stream measures to H2020 in RIS3

Annex 1 CPR

4. COORDINATION AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN ESI FUNDS AND OTHER UNION POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS

4.3 Horizon 2020 and other centrally managed Union programmes in the areas of research and innovation

1. Member States and the Commission shall have due regard to strengthening coordination, synergies and complementarities between the ESI Funds and Horizon 2020, the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (1), and other relevant centrally managed Union funding programmes while also establishing a clear division of areas of intervention between them.

2. Member States shall develop national and/or regional 'smart specialisation' strategies in line with the National Reform Programme, where appropriate. Such strategies may take the form of or be included in a national or a regional research and innovation strategic policy framework for 'smart specialisation'. Smart specialisation strategies shall be developed through involving national or regional managing authorities and stakeholders such as universities and other higher education institutions, industry and social partners in an entrepreneurial discovery process. The authorities directly concerned by Horizon 2020 shall

be closely associated with that process. Smart specialisation strategies shall include:

(a) "Upstream actions" to prepare regional R&I players to participate in Horizon 2020 ("stairways to excellence") to be developed, where necessary, through capacity- building. Communication and cooperation between Horizon 2020 national contact points and managing authorities of the ESI Funds shall be strengthened.

(b) "Downstream actions" to provide the means to exploit and diffuse R&I results, stemming from Horizon 2020 and preceding programmes, into the market with particular emphasis on creating an innovation-friendly environment for business and industry, including SMEs and in line with the priorities identified for the territories in the relevant smart specialization strategy.

3.2. *The enabling conditions introduced in the Regulation 2018/1046 – OMNIBUS*

The **OMNIBUS Regulation** (Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 entered into force on 2 August 2018) amends, among others, the Common Provisions **regulation** (CPR), ERDF **regulation**, and the Financial **regulation**. It aims to make the EU's financial **rules** simpler, more flexible and more focused on results, and to remove some bottlenecks.

With regards to fostering the creation of synergies between the ESI funds and other Union instruments, some facilitations have been introduced and some constraints have been released, breaking down barriers on territorial and bureaucratic level.

Additional option for cumulating funds from different EU sources

Article 65(11) CPR Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013	Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 - OMNIBUS
An operation may receive support from one or more ESI Funds or from one or more programmes and from other Union instruments, provided that the expenditure item included in a request for payment for reimbursement by one of the ESI Funds does not receive support from another Fund or Union instrument, or support from the same Fund under another programme.	An operation may receive support from one or more ESI Funds or from one or more programmes and from other Union instruments, provided that the expenditure declared in a payment application for one of the ESI Funds is not declared for support from another Fund or Union instrument, or for support from the same Fund under another programme. The amount of expenditure to be entered into a payment application of an ESI Fund may be calculated for each ESI Fund and for the programme or programmes concerned on a pro

	rata basis in accordance with the document setting out the conditions for support.
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Under the CPR Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, ESIF and Horizon 2020 resources could be cumulated in the same project, provided that each expenditure / cost item receives funding from only one EU fund (Article 37 H2020 Rules for Participation mirrors Art. 65(11) CPR). Following the introduction of the OMNIBUS Regulation, this option is still possible and additional one is offered: expenditure can be reimbursed from different ESI Funds and Union instruments on a pro rata basis in accordance with the document setting out the conditions of support (while respecting co-financing obligations under ESIF and H2020 respectively).

Clarifications and simplification for R&I operations outside the Operational Programme area

Article 70(2) CPR Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013	Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 - OMNIBUS
<p>The managing authority may accept that an operation is implemented outside the programme area but within the Union, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the operation is for the benefit of the programme area; b) the total amount allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed 15 % of the support from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund and EMFF at the level of the priority, or 5 % of the support from the EAFRD at the level of the programme; c) the monitoring committee has given its agreement to the operation or types of operations concerned; d) the obligations of the authorities for the programme in relation to management, control and audit 	<p>The managing authority may accept that an operation is implemented outside the programme area but within the Union, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the operation is for the benefit of the programme area; b) the total amount from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD or EMFF allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed 15 % of the support from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD or EMFF at the level of the priority at the time of adoption of the programme; c) the monitoring committee has given its agreement to the operation or types of operations concerned; d) the obligations of the authorities for the programme in relation to management, control and audit concerning the operation are fulfilled by the authorities responsible for the programme under which that operation is supported or they enter into agreements with authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented.

<p>concerning the operation are fulfilled by the authorities responsible for the programme under which that operation is supported or they enter into agreements with authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented.</p>	<p>Where operations financed from the Funds and the EMFF are implemented outside the programme area in accordance with this paragraph and have benefits both outside and within the programme area, such expenditure shall be allocated to those areas on a pro rata basis based on objective criteria.</p> <p>Where operations concern the thematic objective referred to in point (1) of the first paragraph of Article 9 and are implemented outside the Member State but within the Union, only points (b) and (d) of the first subparagraph of this paragraph shall apply.</p>
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The main simplifications for research and innovation aim at improving transparency and increasing legal clarity, differentiating between operation in EU but outside OP area and operation outside EU.

1. Regarding operations within EU but outside the Member State, only two criteria apply:

- max.15% of a priority axis at the time of adoption of the OP may be outside OP area
- management, control and audit by funding MA or agreements with authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented

Points a) and c) have been amended. These points concern, respectively, the effects on the territorial area (allowing to promote actions in synergy with European partners with interventions on several program areas that do not necessarily fall on the programme territory) and by simplifying the activities of the monitoring committee which lengthened the bureaucratic times and created constraints as linked to local partnership.

2. Operations outside EU: R&I operations are allowed, if the expenditure is necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation.

Improved Simplified Cost Options (SCO)

The amendments to articles 67, 68, 68a and 68b of the CPR do not directly promote synergies, however they have important repercussions on the simplification of financial rules that are also reflected in the scope of simplified cost options. This topic is extremely varied and widely discussed in several studies.

The Simplified Costs Options see a strong improvement in the new OMNIBUS aiming at making financial rules simpler and more result-oriented. OMNIBUS modifications on article 67,68,68a and 68b CPR also include:

- No upper limit for lump sums (before limited to €100.000);
- Compulsory use of SCO for ERDF and ESF where public support does not exceed € 100.000 for operations not implemented exclusively through public procurement;
- Flat rate of up to 20% of the direct costs other than staff costs (from ETC Regulation) (Art.68(a)CPR).
- Article 68(1) CPR Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 New off-the-shelf SCOs : possibility for EU Commission to adopt delegated acts for the definition of standard scales of unit costs and flat rates and related methods (Art. 67(5a) CPR)
- extended flat rate options by the introduction of a 7% of total direct costs without justification at programme/project levels;
- extended inclusion of volunteers work and in particular the time of SME owners;
- extended application of the “single audit principle” that could mean reduction of overlapping controls and limitation of controls for small beneficiaries.

3.3. The enabling conditions introduced by proposal for Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

The proposal for a Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) sets out common provisions for seven shared management funds: the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument.

The CPR proposal aims, amongst other things, to simplify and improve synergies between the different EU policy tools, reducing the administrative burden for programme authorities and beneficiaries.

For instance, Seal of Excellence projects can be reinforced: a managing authority can take the decision to support a Seal of Excellence project with structural funds. In this case, no state aid rules would apply.

The proposal also sets the possibility of transferring money from one priority to the other within an EU funding programme, without the need for formal Commission approval. The threshold for such transfer is set at 5 % of a priority's budget. In addition, it will be possible to combine financial instruments with grants in a single operation.

EU Member States can also redirect up to 5 % of the Structural Funds allocation through the InvestEU programme. These redirected sums will still need to serve

cohesion policy objectives but will follow InvestEU rules which are generally more flexible.

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT OF THE REGULATION -29.05.18

Title II: Strategic approach

Synergies between different EU instruments will be encouraged through the strategic planning process, which will identify common objectives and common areas for activities across different programmes,

Title III: Programming

The content of programmes will be more streamlined and strategic.

To harmonise and speed up the programming process and implementation at the beginning of the period, a common programme template for the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund, ESF+ and EMFF programmes and a separate one for the AMIF, BMVI and ISF are annexed to this Regulation.

Article 21 Transfer of resources

Member States may request the transfer of up to 5 % of programme financial allocations from any of the Funds to any other Fund under shared management or to any instrument under direct or indirect management.

Article 11 Complementary and combined funding

Actions awarded a “Seal of excellence” certification, or which comply with the following cumulative, comparative, conditions:

- (a) they have been assessed in a call for proposals under the Programme;
- (b) they comply with the minimum quality requirements of that call for proposals;
- (c) they may not be financed under that call for proposals due to budgetary constraints, may receive support from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund+ or the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, (...)Fund providing support shall apply.

Article 67(5) Selection of operations by the Managing Authority

MA may decide to grant support from ERFD to seals DIRECTLY.

CO-FINANCING RATE of the instrument providing the seal shall apply.

3.4. The enabling conditions introduced by proposal for regulation of Horizon Europe

The possibility to converge multiple funding programmes can be enabled by several statements introduced in the HE proposal for regulation²¹ and that need to be specified in other EU programmes as well with adequate bridges and arrangements.

²¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/38902/st07942-en19.pdf>

Under the current regulation, for Partnership Instruments, the ESIF resources have been added as National resources for running joint calls, but with the avoidance to constitute eligible costs for EU contribution calculation and above all without constituting part of the co-funding principle.

For the next programming period, the main reference article for the purpose of this study is the Art. 8. It establishes the new configuration of European Partnership. The Co-programmed, Co-funded and institutionalised European Partnerships' features received a consolidate agreement. Nonetheless, the most interesting provision related to the assumption of ESIF as national contribution has not been agreed upon yet and it is still under negotiation.

Article 8

European Partnership

[Financial contributions stemming from ESIF shall be allowed and considered as a national contribution.]

Art. 9 refers to HE programme Budget and it is still under next negotiation phase. At the current status, the draft of the article establishes a bridge with the future CPR regulation about the Voluntary Transfer

Article 9

Budget

[8. Resources allocated to Member States under shared management and transferrable in accordance with Article 21 of Regulation (EU) XX [...Common Provisions Regulation] may, at their request, be transferred to the Programme. The Commission shall implement those resources directly in accordance with point (a) of Article 62(1) of the Financial Regulation or indirectly in accordance with point (c) of that Article. Where possible, those resources shall be used for the benefit of the Member State concerned.]

The Article 11 of the Regulation “Complementary funding” establishes, at the current state, that SoE awarded projects“(...)may receive support from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund+ or the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (..). This article confirms the alternative synergies already implemented in the previous programming period. Nonetheless this article at the time being is not fully consolidated.

Article 11

Complementary funding

Actions awarded a Seal of Excellence certification, or which comply with the following cumulative, comparative, conditions: (a) they have been assessed in a call for proposals under the Programme; (b) they comply with the minimum quality requirements of that call for proposals; (c) they may not be financed under that call for proposals only due to budgetary constraints, may receive support from the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund+ or the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, in accordance with paragraph 5 of Article [67] of Regulation (EU) XX [Common Provisions Regulation] and Article [8] or Regulation (EU) XX [Financing, management and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy], provided that such actions are consistent with the objectives of the programme concerned. The rules of the Fund providing support shall apply.]

The non-cumulative principle of art. 129 Financial Regulation has been derogated by Art. 65 CPR and Art. 37 H2020 Regulation (holding the ban to any double financing of cost items). Under the current EU regulation is possible therefore to pool different funding (from H2020 and ESIF) on the same project but covering different costs items.

The HE proposed Article 23 confirm the possibility that two different EU programmes intervene in the same project, provided that contributions do not cover the same costs. The text is not consolidated yet and may be subject to changes.

Article 23

Cumulative funding

[Subject to the outcome of negotiations on the respective legal acts.]

An action that has received a contribution from another Union programme may also receive a contribution under the Programme, provided that the contributions do not cover the same costs. The rules of each contributing Union programme shall apply to its respective contribution to the action. The cumulative funding shall not exceed the total eligible costs of the action and the support from different Union programmes may be calculated on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the documents setting out the conditions for support.]

Horizon Europe shall be implemented in synergy with other Union funding programmes while seeking maximal administrative simplification. The list of synergies with other funding programmes is included in Annex IV where all the possible synergistic combinations are specified. For what concerns ERDF, the point 3 specifies that “arrangements for combined funding from ERDF and *Horizon Europe* are used to support activities providing a bridge between *regional Operational Programmes*, smart specializations strategies and international excellence in research and innovation, including joint trans-regional/trans-national programmes and pan European Research Infrastructures, with the aim of strengthening the European Research Area”.

Annex IV Synergies with other programmes

3. Synergies with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will ensure that:

(a) arrangements for combined funding from ERDF and Programme are used to support activities providing a bridge between smart specialisations strategies and international excellence in research and innovation, including joint trans-regional/trans-national programmes and pan European Research Infrastructures, with the aim of strengthening the European Research Area;

(b) the ERDF focuses amongst others on the development and strengthening of regional and local research and innovation ecosystems and industrial transformation, including support to the take-up of results and the rolling out of novel technologies and innovative solutions from the Framework Programmes for research and innovation through the ERDF.

4. Synergies with the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) will ensure that:

(a) the ESF+ can mainstream and scale up innovative curricula supported by the Programme, through national or regional programmes, in order to equip people with the skills and competences needed for the jobs of the future;

(b) arrangements for complementary funding from ESF+ can be used to support activities promoting human capital development in research and innovation with the aim of strengthening the European Research Area;

(c) the Health strand of the European Social Fund+ mainstreams innovative technologies and new business models and solutions, in particular those resulting from the Programmes, so to contribute to innovative, efficient and sustainable health systems of the Member States and facilitate access to better and safer healthcare for European citizens.

The current HE regulation proposal is actually more limited in term of synergies' possibilities and arrangements than the previous ones. It is needed to monitor the future negotiation for evaluating the rise of new key provisions.

3.5. Regulation amending the application of Art. 107 and 108 TFUE

To ensure that national and EU funds can be combined seamlessly under the new Multiannual Financial Framework without undermining competition in the internal market, the Commission aims, with the present targeted review of the GBER, at improving the interplay between EU funding rules and State aid rules²² and streamline

²² COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) 2018/1911 of 26 November 2018 amending Regulation (EU) 2015/1588 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to certain categories of horizontal State aid

State aid control of national funds, including EU shared management funds, combined with EU programmes managed centrally by the Commission.

To this end, the European Commission has launched the targeted review of the General Block Exemption Regulation (the GBER) which extends the GBER to national funds, including EU shared management funds, combined with EU programmes managed centrally by the Commission in the following three areas:

- Financing and investment operations supported by the InvestEU Fund;
- RD&I projects having received a Seal of Excellence under Horizon2020 or Horizon Europe as well as co-funded projects independently evaluated and selected following transnational calls under the Horizon Europe programme including under Teaming actions independently evaluated and selected following transnational calls under Horizon 2020 or the Horizon Europe programme;
- European Territorial Cooperation projects (ETC, also called Interreg).

In particular for “Research, development and innovation”, the Commission presented its proposal for Horizon Europe. Under that proposal, certain research projects by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can be awarded the ‘Seal of Excellence’ label. This requires that they are evaluated by the Commission as being “excellent” and that they are eligible under the strict requirements under EU rules for EU funding, with the only reason they cannot actually be funded being budget constraints of the EU fund. Such projects could be allowed to secure their whole funding from Member States (including from structural funds) without requiring the Commission’s prior approval. The design of the Commission's Horizon Europe proposal as regards 'Seal of Excellence' projects and the relatively limited size of financial support remove any competition concerns. Similarly, R&D projects evaluated and selected in line with the rules applicable to Horizon Europe and jointly funded by Horizon Europe and Member States (including resources from structural funds), where at least three Member States participate, could be allowed to be implemented without an additional State aid assessment for the Member States' part of the funding. This would be possible because the rules for projects to qualify for support from Horizon Europe – as designed in the Commission's proposal – remove any competition concerns, in particular by requiring projects to meet common EU interest objectives and to address well-defined market failures. The proposal is currently under consultation²³.

²³ https://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2019_gber/index_en.html

4. Improving synergies: next steps

4.1. Drafting practical solution

In the previous chapters we have outlined the elements to consider for achieving synergies between IP and ERDF.

As we could understand studying these synergies, there are few examples of good practice, while many barriers are present, and also a lack of knowledge of the subject.

In order to provide practical solutions to improve the capacity of the research and innovation system to adopt synergies, at this time we must to gather the opportunities offered by the proposals in the regulations for the next programming period and better inform those interlocutors who may be more decisive in improving synergies.

4.2. Timing and Target

The results of the desk research allowed us to identify three different phases of the process of implementing synergistic actions between the Programs. These phases correspond to the three main stakeholder groups: (i) managing authorities, (ii) national contact Point and (iii) beneficiaries.

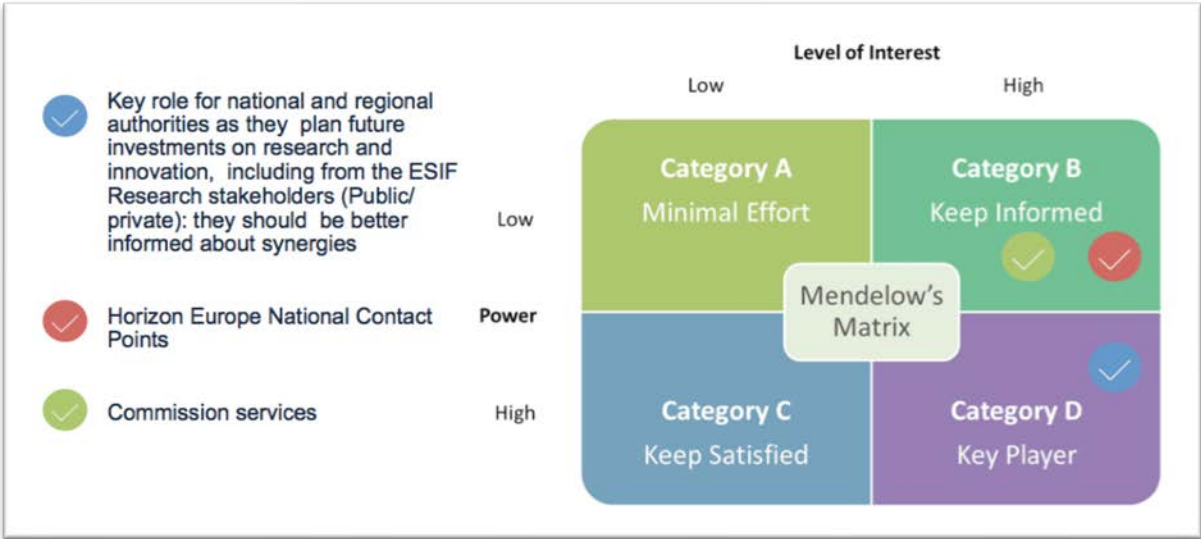
How to deal with stakeholders and their perspective depends on the level of influence and power they have. One way of analysing the importance of stakeholders is through the Mendelow matrix.

This approach suggests analysing the stakeholders in terms of Power (the ability to influence organization strategy or project resources) and Interest (how interested they are in the organization or project succeeding) and then to elaborate an *action plan*.

The Mendelow's analysis in creating a *grid map* of stakeholders and an *action plan*.

In particular, it classifies stakeholders on a *grid* whose axes identifies stakeholder expectations and power and it allows us to identify which stakeholders are the major

drivers or key player, with High Power and High Interest that we need to manage closely, investing a lot of time and resource.



The position allocated to a stakeholder on the grid shows the necessary actions to take with them.

The **Manging Authorities** level is of crucial importance to secure continuity in policy, a long-term vision and effective implementation of the strategy. In developing synergies, the stimulation of strategic cooperation between public authorities responsible for the design of programmes is crucial, as well as is the coordinated investment in research and innovation to support competitiveness and growth in the common priorities.

The **beneficiary's** and NCP's point of view and role should not be ignored. In setting up the implementation plans of their research and innovation activities they share, with the other levels, the responsibility of finding opportunities for synergies by combining funds of different programme and initiatives.

It was therefore decided to focus on MA's, since those with the highest level of interest and power to guide policies and documentation related to POs.

4.3. Tools for synergies: practical instruments for MAs

This section is supposed to be a specimen of the practical tools that the document “Tools for synergies” will provide the Managing Authorities in order to accompanying them into the practical implementation of synergies among EU funds. The information here reported are addressed to Managing Authorities during the drafting and revision phase of their Operative programmes.

Since the regulatory framework is not finalized yet, as exposed in the previous paragraphs, and since the Managing Authorities are currently preparing the negotiation of their OP drafts, the involvement of MAs is a necessary step to include in the finalization of the practical instruments meant to be detailed in this section.

This “living document” is therefore a common exercise between Era Learn and MAs which will be finalized after the realization of a Workshop (planned to take place in the first months of the 2020) which will be organized in “working tables” in order to explore, discuss and identify regulatory and organizational constraints and solutions to be taken into account for the best planning of Operative Programmes.

Finally, the following sub-paragraphs represent a first tentative, based on the information available so far, of the practical instruments we will provide with this document and shall be taken, at the moment in time, for information purpose only.

TO BE FINALIZED AFTER THE WORKSHOP in March/April 2020

Please note that the details contained in this section are for information purposes only and will be finalized as follow up of the co-design workshop.

TOOL Synergies at Programme Level - «Top-down»

Description

Synergies at the **program level** refers to the combination and involvement of different programs and different Managing Authorities which work in close coordination in order to create bridges and arrangements for harmonizing different programs ratio.

The implementation of synergies at this level entails an intensive effort when drafting ERDF National/Regional OP in order to:

- Identify/Update the local RIS3
- Identify the existing and/or potential European Partnerships accordingly
- Include in National/Regional OPs adequate measure for dedicating and pooling ESI Funds for European Partnership participation.

- Take into account during the next programming period the opportunities provided by EP for implementing synergies.

How to implement this tool

This possibility could apply to Co-fund and Institutionalized European Partnership when a Managing Authority participates in a call launched by a consortium of National/Regional Funding Bodies. The Managing Authority participate to the EP on the basis of specific programme/priorities which is already co-financed by ERDF under national/regional OPs.

The consistency between EP topics and national/regional OPs' priorities are essential for the involvement of ERDF funds (built on RIS3) and HE schemes.

The composition of funds available from the European Partnership participation would differ according to the ERDF funding percentage.

For example, if a priority which ERDF funding coverage up to 50% is involved, the composition of the project funded by EP (funding related to the beneficiary applying by the concerned country/region) would be:

- 30% Union funding from Horizon Europe;
- 35% national funding;
- 35% Union funding from ERDF.

For the same EP, it could happen that another beneficiary of the same project would receive a funding composed differently according to his country's ERDF funding intensity. For example, the priority is funded by Regional OP with an intensity of 25%, therefore the EP project funding composition will be:

- 30% Union funding from Horizon Europe;
- 45% national funding;
- 25% Union funding from ERDF.

In the first case, the Managing Authority reports the costs of providing financial support with a value of 100 to Horizon Europe, and received a funding of 30 from Horizon Europe, the remaining 70 would be payed out of the cohesion programme/priority. On the other side, the beneficiary (the funding recipient after EP funding decision) receives a grant agreement from the National/Regional Funding Authority for a contribution of 100 for a project with total eligible costs of 200, according to OP intensity applicable under that priority (50% national/regional contribution – 50% ERDF).

Relevant regulation in current Framework

In Horizon 2020 the ERD funds brought as contribution in ERA-NET by a Managing Authority cannot be considered as eligible costs for calculating EU contribution.

Nonetheless “Structural funds are compatible with ERA-NET funds. According to the H2020 Rules for Participation, H2020 funding can be cumulated with any grant from the Union budget, provided that the grant does not cover the same cost items. The total budget of the joint call may include additional call contributions including ESIF funds (outside the grant agreement), however caution is required to ensure that they are not declared as eligible costs and are not topped-up by H2020 grants (this allows MS to fund additional projects/beneficiaries in the call.”²⁴

EXAMPLES/Best Practices (in current Framework)

In the current legal framework is not possible to cumulate ERDF with National /Regional resources for calculating the total National Contribution. The examples of Managing Authorities which pooled ERDF resources into ERA NET Cofund actions has been described in the paragraph: ERA NET Cofund – M-ERA.NET and Manunet cases

Legal references in the next Framework

The current HE proposal for regulation introduces a novelty for what concern the cumulating of ERDF and National/Regional Contributions. The HE article 8 *contains a provision, which* whether approved, will open the way to Managing Authorities to pool ESI Funds as a part of national contributions in European Partnership Schemes. This provision shall be monitor for verification.

TOOL «Synergy Label»

Description

This tool represents a kind of hybrid solution between the Seal of Excellence and the Synergy Labels adopted by JU Clean Sky and Bio Based Industry.

The main limit of SoE, despite it represents a successful instrument for synergy, is its applicability to proposals which foresees a sole partner applying.

In the case of Transnational Projects, the added value is mainly represented by the R&D collaboration established by multi-beneficiaries proposals, which enrich participants through knowledge sharing and mutual learning benefits.

²⁴ (H2020 online manual : https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/era-net_en.htm)

How to implement this tool

Managing Authorities willing to establish synergies for transnational proposals competing in EPs' calls should carefully plan, along with their participation to EPs as partner/beneficiary, a parallel measure in NOP/ROP for funding through ESI funds transnational projects "synergy labelled" in successive and alternatives calls.

The NOP/ROP planning phase is extremely important in order to synchronize RIS3 and eventually timing for activating measures.

Relevant regulation in current Framework

REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC

EXAMPLES/Best Practices (in current Framework)

- Seal of Excellence ²⁵
- Clean Sky 2 "Synergy label" ²⁶
- Bio Based Industry "Synergy label" ²⁷

Legal references in the next Framework

Many references has been included in the current HE proposal for Regulation. Shortly we can remind here:

- HE Article 11 - Complementary funding;
- HE Article 23 – Cumulative Funding

²⁵ Full list about national implementation of SoE : https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en

²⁶ <https://www.cleansky.eu/structural-funds-and-regions>

²⁷ <https://www.bbi-europe.eu/participate/bbi-synergy-label>

TOOL Synergies at Project Level - «Bottom-Up»

The synergies at **project level** implies the convergence of multiple funding (Direct and Indirectly managed funding) in the same project. In this case, synergies allow to combine funding in three different ways for a single project:

- Simultaneous: actions that foster projects which strengthen ecosystem with those funded by EPs;
- Complementary (parallel): different funds in parallel complementary projects;
- Sequential: different funds in successive projects;
- Cumulative: different funds in the same project for different budget items.

For avoiding any double financing for the same items, it is extremely important for the Managing Authorities to draft programs with a foresight of the whole life cycle and further evolution of a potential project, considering the entire value chain on which the S3 is focused as well.

As a tool for Managing Authorities dealing with European Partnerships and partners, we identified two possible synergies:

- ETC – Interregional Innovation Investments (see 1.3 The importance of Smart Specialization Strategies)
- EP for RTOs with In-Kind contribution

Description - ETC – Interregional Innovation Investments.

This “Interregional Innovation Investments” measure will give the possibility to Regions to cooperate in exploiting their smart specialization priorities through two different strands: 1) develop, connect or make complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities; 2) capacity-building projects helping less developed regions to integrate in and move up the existing or emerging EU value chains.

At the project level, EP partners can access to ERDF resources from the European Territorial Cooperation for taking advantage of demonstration facilities on the basis of RIS3 identification or for drafting capacity-building projects.

How to implement this tool

While EPs allow to run and fund Research and Innovation networks with competitive joint calls, the interregional innovation investment can improve research and development facilities for the benefit of industries, SME, and Research centres involved in competitive calls.

In this case we can talk about Simultaneous and Parallel synergies.

For implementing this tool is necessary to build partnership and networks on the specific RIS3 priorities, which constitute the common denominator for enabling ESI Funds.

Relevant regulation in current Framework

This is a new instrument of the European Territorial Cooperation

EXAMPLES/Best Practices (in current Framework)

No examples available

Legal references in the next Framework

For the new programming period 2021/2027, the Working Party on Structural Measures on the 16th October 2018 submitted to the Council a proposal concerning the Interreg Regulation "Interregional innovation investments - Articles 3(5), 9(2), 16(1) and 61 Interreg proposal" in which a new instrument has been introduced in order to boost the smart specialization collaboration with new funding for innovation projects.

Description - EP with In-Kind contribution

This tool can be supposed to work as the final provision about European Partnership and more in general HE provision will be confirmed and approved, since at the time being no detailed information are available for the final EPs schemes.

Following RIS3, Managing Authorities through a strategic programming can allocate ESI Funds for Research Centres and Research Organizations operating in related territories in order to join/establish EPs with "In-Kind Contributions". Part of R&DI funding coming from ERDF can be devoted to research activities carried out by RTOs

How to implement this tool

Managing Authorities activate ERDF measure to fund in parallel research projects proposed by RTOs on their own territories in the frame of a European Partnership. National and Regional research programmes shall have a view on implementing a joint transnational call for proposals and on the other side shall identify Research Organizations with the suitable capability to implement complex projects and manage public funding.

Relevant regulation in current Framework

The current In-Kind ERA-NET Cofund targets governmental research organisations which will contribute to projects selected by the joint calls with

"in-kind contributions" from their institutional funding. The in-kind contributions are the resources allocated as direct expenditure in the selected trans-national projects that are not reimbursed by the Union contribution. The possibility to establish a "In Kind Era Net Cofund" is subject to three main conditions: 1) a specific call text specifying the scheme is based on in-kind contribution instead of cash contribution ; 2) National (or regional)

research programmes shall have a view on implementing a joint transnational call for proposals ; 3) Target beneficiaries are publicly-funded research performing organizations mandated by the national/regional authorities in charge of the programme (normally the responsible Ministry).

EXAMPLES/Best Practices (in current Framework)

The In-Kind Era Net Cofund has been implemented very seldom (only two cases in FP6 and FP7 ²⁸). In these projects, RTOs²⁹ received dedicated programme funding (so called “core funding”) from their governments/ministries for the purpose of fulfilling strategic national objectives. In H2020 we can mention two relevant examples: Era – Planet and ER4ACS³⁰

In Horizon Europe the ERA NET Cofund scheme will flow into the “Co-funded European Partnerships” along with other funding scheme such as EJP, FET Flagships model. In the new Framework Programme the scheme will maintain a blended composition of EU and national public and/or other R&I funding sources, as well as with the possibility to participate with In-Kind contribution.

Legal references in the next Framework

The possibility to have cumulative funding in the same project (see page 34 HE Art. 23) combining ERDF and HE resources open the way to synergies consisting in the activation of National / Regional OP resources for funding Research Organizations contributing in EP with “in-kind contributions”.

²⁸ AERTOs - <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/88507/factsheet/en>; iMERA - <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/75497/factsheet/en>

²⁹ Organization mandated by their national government to undertake strategic research in support of societal development including economic competitiveness and innovation.

³⁰ H2020 Era Planet - <http://www.era-planet.eu/>; H2020 ER4ACS – <http://www.jpi-climate.eu/ERA4CS.activities/jointcall>

4.4. *Workshop: objectives, organization and outcomes*

The Workshop is fundamental for the implementation and conclusion of the previous chapter concerning the formulation of “Tools”.

This phase of the project must be carried out in order to provide to the different participants an overview of the different tools set up, giving the opportunity to shape them. By the end of the day the tools will be more effective and responsive to the specific needs of the stakeholders involved setting the ground for specific guidelines to be potentially drafted by the EC to be shared with all parties involved in the funds management Objectives of the Workshop can be therefore summarized as follows:

- Stimulate debate on the new Regulations for the upcoming programming Period
- Raise awareness about the current and future possibilities to combine EU Funds
- Collect feedback from MAs.

The workshop will involve different stakeholders such as Regions, Managing Authorities, Funding Organization Bodies, project coordinators, experts. The

Based on the above considerations, the workshop will be organized as following the most advanced techniques of group facilitation

The workshop will be divided in three different sessions:

- A first session, in which the whole Project ERA-LEARN and the task 2.2 will be introduced;
- A second one, more interactive, in which participants are involved in order to better shape the “**Tools for Synergies**” presented in the previous one;
- A third and a final session acting as a wrap up session.

During the workshop practical “Tools” proposals will be presented as described in the previous chapter, with details on their implementation and the regulatory reference. As long as the regulatory framework will evolve, it will be possible to fine tuning the above-mentioned tools and possibly to formulate new ones. All the available tools drafted at the time of the workshop will be disclosed for discussion.

These “Tools” proposals will then be discussed by the MAs and FOBs, the Experts and all the participants, who will be able to develop and propose new solutions. These outcomes will be revised and described in the living document in its final and complete version.

The participants invited will be: Regions, Managing Authorities, Funding Organization Bodies, Experts.

The discussion will be moderated by ERA-LEARN Facilitators.

We will propose to organize the discussion in 4 different tables:

- 3 relating to the three different “Tools” proposed
- a general one on the methodologies for the dissemination of results and to identify solutions for maximizing impact

Each topic table will have a facilitator to guide the discussion, which will last about an hour.

Representatives of all the identified categories participate simultaneously in each table and will be divided into groups.

All participants rotate through the 4 discussion tables, in order to get everyone’s contribution, capitalizing on the diversity of outlooks to deepen the participant’s understanding, identify new ideas, and collectively advance new solutions.

The wrap-up session will try to summarize and cluster all the best practices and potential solutions to fine tune the “tools” in order to be more usable by the MAs.

As final results we expect to achieve with the workshop is a strengthening of the MAs’ awareness on synergies through the provision of a wide spectrum of possibilities and shared solutions, to be potentially implemented and included with proper bridges in the Regional and National Operative Programmes.

4.5. Conclusion

This deliverable is meant to describe the work done so far in the Task 2.2 and to outline the effort that will be deployed in the next months.

The on-line desk research allowed the collection of a waste literature on best practices and case studies which in any case will not be fully replicable in the future. The work done will anyway generate the living document “Tools for synergies”, whose main feature have been described in the previous paragraphs, and it will evolve as long as the EU Funds regulations will be definitely approved and enter into force.

The “living” feature of this document will enable ERA LEARN to draft synergies’ tools according to the regulatory changes and innovations in close cooperation with the MAs through the planned workshop. The main expected results of this debate are the inclusion in the living document of a Recommendations’ chapter, addressed to MAs and

written with them in order to highlight the key synergy models and tools for the drafting of Operative Programs for the next programming period.

The EU funds regulations are undergoing a deep revision and substantially a strong innovation and, it is extremely difficult at the time being, to draft practical tools for fostering synergies in the new programming period.

This “living” document with its tools is a guide direct to the different stakeholders dealing with funds management, it targets public authorities at EU, national and/or regional levels with the objective of shading some lights on all the regulatory framework in which synergies are involved, supporting the regions and Member States in making strategic choices and planning, to foster excellence in the smart specialization areas and in addressing the issue of coordination between ESIF and the next European Partnerships.

As well-known, synergies amongst funds is a rather complicated issue and their success is linked to many variables therefore translating this into a reality will be a long learning process. The work done within this deliverable, will support this process and this enabling document, thanks also to the co-design workshop, will identify the aspects where the red lines are, and those instruments that can be implemented to make synergies operationally feasible. This instrument provided by the ERA-LEARN project will be one of many put in place by the EU in order to accomplish the big and complex puzzle known as Synergies.

ANNEX 1

Synergies and compatibility of ESI Funds with other EU Funds A selection of useful publications		
Title - Description	Year	Link
<i>EU budget for the future Regional development and cohesion: more opportunities for synergies inside the EU budget</i>	2018	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/894e27b2-88a2-11e8-ac6a-01aa75ed71a1
<i>Synergies between Interreg Europe and smart specialisation - A methodological proposal to enhance policy learning</i>	2018	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1099118b-e18f-11e8-b690-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-81447362
<i>Synergies between Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation and European Structural and Investment Funds - Contributing to the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020: final report - Study</i>	2018	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d5e5627a-32fb-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-81447428
<i>Cooperation, complementarities and alignment of different funding sources for a more efficient use of resources - A policy brief from the Policy Learning Platform on research and innovation - July 2017</i>	2017	https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/plp_uploads/policy_briefs/T01_Policy_Brief_Art70_front__3_files_merged_-2.pdf
<i>The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds (Final Report) (esp. Chapter 3.15 – Coordination between the ESI Funds and other Union and national funding instruments and with the EIB, pages 144-151) - European Commission, DG for Regional and Urban Policy</i>	2017	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/de/information/publications/studies/2016/the-use-of-new-provisions-during-the-programming-phase-of-the-european-structural-and-investment-funds
<i>EFSI and ESI Funds, Complementarity or contradiction? - European Parliament</i>	2017	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2017)595869
<i>EU funds working together for jobs & growth - Examples of synergies between the framework programmes for research and innovation (Horizon 2020) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)</i>	2016	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/debc435e-2304-11e6-86d0-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search
<i>Research for REGI Committee - Maximisation of synergies between European structural and investment funds and other EU instruments to attain Europe 2020 goals - Study</i>	2016	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/99de1988-44ce-11e6-9c64-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-81447513
<i>European Structural and Investment FUNDS and</i>	2016	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/thefunds

<i>European Fund for Strategic Investments complementarities, Ensuring coordination, synergies and complementarity</i>		/fin_inst/pdf/efsi_esif_compl_en.pdf
<i>Coordinated efforts to safeguard funding Boost for EU investment - pages 8- 10, EC</i>	2016	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/panorama/pdf/mag56/mag56_en.pdf
<i>Research for REGI Committee – Maximisation of synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds and other EU instruments to attain Europe 2020 Goals (Study) - European Parliament, DG for Internal Policies, Policy Department B Structural and Cohesion Policies</i>	2016	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU%282016%29585872
<i>Research for REGI Committee – Review of adopted European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (Study), Chapter 3 (pages 51-62) “Synergies between ETC Programmes and other planning instruments”</i>	2016	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU%282016%29585872
<i>Key enabling technologies for regional growth - Synergies between Horizon 2020 and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) : proceedings from the EC workshop Brussels, 6 May 2015</i>	2015	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/eaaddabe-b47d-439a-b099-dfea8817eada/language-en/format-PDF/source-81447603
<i>Legislation and guidance on European Structural and Investment Funds Regulations :DG REGIO offers links to Legislation and Guidance documents, incl. related to: Programming, Implementing, Ex Ante Conditionality, Community-led Local Development, Simplified Cost Options, Financial Instruments, Management and Control, each Thematic Objective and Cross-cutting thematic guidance.</i>	2015	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/regulations/
<i>Cooperation methods and tools applied by European Structural and Investment Funds programmes for 2014-2020 to support implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – Final Report</i>	2015	http://www.balticsea-region.eu/attachments/article/590702/Final%20Report%20-%20Cooperation%20methods%20and%20tools%20to%20support%20the%20EUSBSR.pdf
<i>Strategic Coherence of Cohesion Policy: Comparison of the 2007-2013 and the 2014- 2020 programming periods (esp. Chapter 3.2.1 Member State experiences with Partnership Agreements – Institutional arrangements for coordination, pages 34-44) - European Parliament, DG for Internal Policies, Policy Department B Structural and Cohesion Policies</i>	2015	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540354/IPOL_STU%282015%29540354_EN.pdf
<i>Synergies between EU R&I funding programmes -</i>	2014	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-

<i>Policy suggestions from the launching event of the stairway to excellence project report</i>		/publication/3e09f372-bc77-4437-9e26-aa6a7c019158/language-en/format-PDF/source-81447571
<i>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</i>	2014	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e39e8352-3553-49ac-aef4-5760ac246ba6/language-en/format-PDF/source-search
<i>Workshop on Synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and Horizon 2020, for Public- Public Partnerships (ERA-NETs, Joint Programming Initiatives, Article 185 initiatives), Brussels, 13 February 2014</i>	2014	https://era.gv.at/object/document/1297/attach/WS_ESIF_HORIZON_2020_13_Feb_2014.pdf
<i>Combining BBI (H2020) and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) to deploy the European bioeconomy - Guiding principles</i>	2014	https://www.bbi-europe.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Guidelines_BBI-ESIF-Final.pdf
<i>Interactions between EU Funds: Coordination and competition - 2014-EC</i>	2014	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/informing/dialog/2014/3_guidance_beneficiaries.pdf
<i>Implementation of Cohesion Policy 2014- 2020: Preparations and Administrative Capacity of Member States</i>	2014	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201410/20141028ATT92010/20141028ATT92010EN.pdf
<i>Guidance for Beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds and related EU instruments: - Guide on how to effectively access and use the European Structural and Investment Funds and on how to exploit complementarities with other instruments of relevant Union policies</i>	2014	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/synergy/synergies_beneficiaries.pdf
<i>Guidance for Beneficiaries of European Structural and Investment Funds and related EU instruments: - Guide on how to effectively access and use the European Structural and Investment Funds and on how to exploit complementarities with other instruments of relevant Union policies and - Online check-list to identify the most appropriate funding sources</i>	2015	https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/checklist/
<i>Practical Guide to accessing EU funds for European Regional Authorities and SMEs:- EU funding for Dual Use - Guide for Regions and SMEs</i>	2015	http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/12601
<i>Analysis to improve exploitation of transport research and innovation funding opportunities: - Synergies between the Transport component of Horizon 2020 and the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020</i>	2015	http://ec.europa.eu/research/transport/publications/items/synergies_transport_component_and_cohesion_policy_en.htm
<i>Mutual Learning Exercise Alignment and</i>	2017	https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-

<i>Interoperability of National Research Programmes - Directorate-General for Research and Innovation</i>		/publication/016aac69-9ea5-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
<i>MLE on National Practices in Widening Participation and Strengthening Synergies</i>	2018	https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-support-facility/mle-national-practices-widening-participation-and-strengthening-synergies

Acronym

AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
BBI - Bio Based Industry
BMVI - Integrated Border Management Fund
COSME - Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
CPPP - Contractual Public-Private Partnership
CPR - Common Provisions Regulation
EAFRD - European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC - European Commission
EDP - Entrepreneurial Discovery Process
EIC - European Innovation Council
EIT - European Institute of Innovation & Technology
E/GVCs - European and global value chains
EJP - European Joint Programme
EMFF - European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EP - European Partnership
ERDF - European Regional Development Fund
ESI - European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF - European Social Fund
ESIF - European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC - European Territorial Cooperation
EU - European Union
FET - Future and Emerging Technologies
FP6 - Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development
FP7 - Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development
GBER - General Block Exemption Regulation
H2020 - Horizon 2020
HE - Horizon Europe
IPR - Intellectual Property Rights
ISF - Internal Security Fund
JTI - Joint Technology Initiative
JU - Joint Undertaking
JU CS - Clean Sky Joint Undertaking
KIC - Knowledge and Innovation Community
MA - Managing Authorities
MFF - Multiannual Financial Framework
MoU - Memorandum of Understanding
MSCA - Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions
NCP - National Contact Point
NOP - National Operative Programmes
OP - Operative Programmes
P2P - Public-Public Partnership
PPP - Public-Private Partnership
R&D – Research and Development
R&I – Research and Innovation
ROP - Regional Operative Programmes
RTO – Research and Technological Organization
RIS3 – Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization Strategies
S3 - Smart Specialization Strategies
SME - Small and Medium-sized Enterprise

SoE - Seal of Excellence
TFEU - Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
WP – Work Package

Imprint

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