



# **Synergies between Horizon Europe and the European Regional Development Fund programmes Update and novelties**

8/06/2023

Karolina Tilman DG REGIO.G1  
Peter Schenk DG RTD.A1

# Horizon Europe and Cohesion Policy: Working for Innovation

## Pillar 1 Excellent Science

European Research Council

Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
Actions

Research Infrastructures

## Pillar 2 Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness

- Clusters
- Health
  - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society
  - Civil Security for Society
  - Digital, Industry and Space
  - Climate, Energy and Mobility
  - Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

Joint Research Centre

## Pillar 3 Innovative Europe

European Innovation Council

European innovation  
ecosystems

European Institute of Innovation  
and Technology

## Policy Objective 1

A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, incl. by productive investments

Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship

Enhancing digital connectivity

## Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area

Widening participation and spreading excellence

Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I system



## Synergies between Horizon Europe and Cohesion Policy programmes – Preconditions

- **Alignment of strategies**
  - ✓ Horizon Europe strategic planning and Work Programmes
  - ✓ ERDF/ESF+ programmes
- **Alignment of legal provisions**
  - ✓ Horizon Europe/Annex IV
  - ✓ Common Provision Regulation ('CPR')
  - ✓ EU State aid rules – the General Block Exemption Regulation ('GBER')
- **Joint support initiatives**
  - Seal of Excellence Community of Practice (regular meetings & IT platform)
  - COMMISSION NOTICE - GUIDANCE ON SYNERGIES (OJ C 421 of 4/11/2022)
  - Upcoming joint network research & cohesion community

# Synergies – support for ‘Seal-of-Excellence’



## Seal of Excellence

Pipeline of excellent R&I projects identified for funding

Leverage of Horizon Europe mechanisms and visibility + economic impact at regional level

- ‘Seal of Excellence’ for ‘excellent’ Horizon Europe proposals – not funded due to insufficient budget. Possible alternative funding, e.g. from ERDF, ESF+ or EAFRD – up to the national/regional managing authority’s choice
- Projects may receive directly - **without a new qualitative evaluation** – ERDF/ESF+ funding under CPR rules (only check of specific eligibility criteria, contribution to programme objectives, smart specialisation priorities, scope of the fund – i.e. issues not guaranteed by the Seal)
- Managing Authorities may apply to these operations the **Horizon Europe categories, maximum amounts and methods of calculation of eligible costs**
- **‘Synergies-friendly’ State aid rules:** specific conditions facilitate the granting of aid for ‘Seal-of-Excellence’ projects of SMEs (→ Art. 25a and 25b amended General Block Exemption Regulation)

## Synergies – cumulative funding



### **Cumulative funding**

Allows pooling funding from two different instruments in one project

- 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 the relevant Union programme shall apply to the corresponding contribution to the action.
- Cumulative funding makes it possible to spread the financial burden of an operation and to address possible budgetary constraints (e.g. those stemming from an instrument's lower funding rates) because it can allow up to 100% of a synergy project to be funded from the EU's budget, provided relevant State aid rules are complied with.
- It also makes it possible to support national contributions, particularly in less developed Member States and regions.

# 'Synergies' – in European Partnerships



## Support to Partnerships

ERDF as MS contribution in  
Horizon Europe partnerships

major incentive for  
participation of regional  
actors + alignment towards  
common EU priorities

- ✓ 'European Partnership' – Union with private and/or public partners jointly support the development and implementation of an R&I-programme:
  - ✓ 'Co-funded European Partnership': Union provides co-funding to an R&I-programme implemented by national entities
  - ✓ 'Institutionalised European Partnership' (Art. 185/187 TFEU): Union provides co-funding to a joint programme implemented by structures created for that purpose
- ✓ ERDF may be considered as Member State contribution to European Partnerships, provided that the relevant CPR-provisions and fund-specific regulations are complied with.
- ✓ Bodies implementing the partnership must be designated as ERDF intermediate bodies (CPR)
- ✓ MAs may decide to provide support directly to operations selected under the partnership (CPR)
- ✓ **NB: !! specific administrative steps allow to comply with the requirement of avoiding DOUBLE declaration of costs - Check the 'synergy guidance' (cumulative funding)!**



# Synergies – support for Horizon ‘Teaming’ actions

- ‘Teaming’ supports Centres of Excellence in eligible countries (‘Widening’) in partnership with an “advanced” partner from another Member State.
- Beneficiaries are mostly universities and research organisations, sometimes also regional authorities and SMEs
- Two separate projects ‘integrated’ under the same chapeau. Single evaluation of both parts (HE and complementary funding) under HE
- Possibility to apply HE rules on eligible costs and funding rates, no need for another technical evaluation (similar as Seal of Excellence)
- ‘Synergies-friendly’ State aid rules: specific conditions facilitate the granting of aid to co-finance a Teaming action together with the EU, and investment aid for related infrastructure, e.g. research infrastructure  
(→ Art. 25d amended General Block Exemption Regulation)

## Synergies – transfer to Horizon Europe



### Transfer possibility

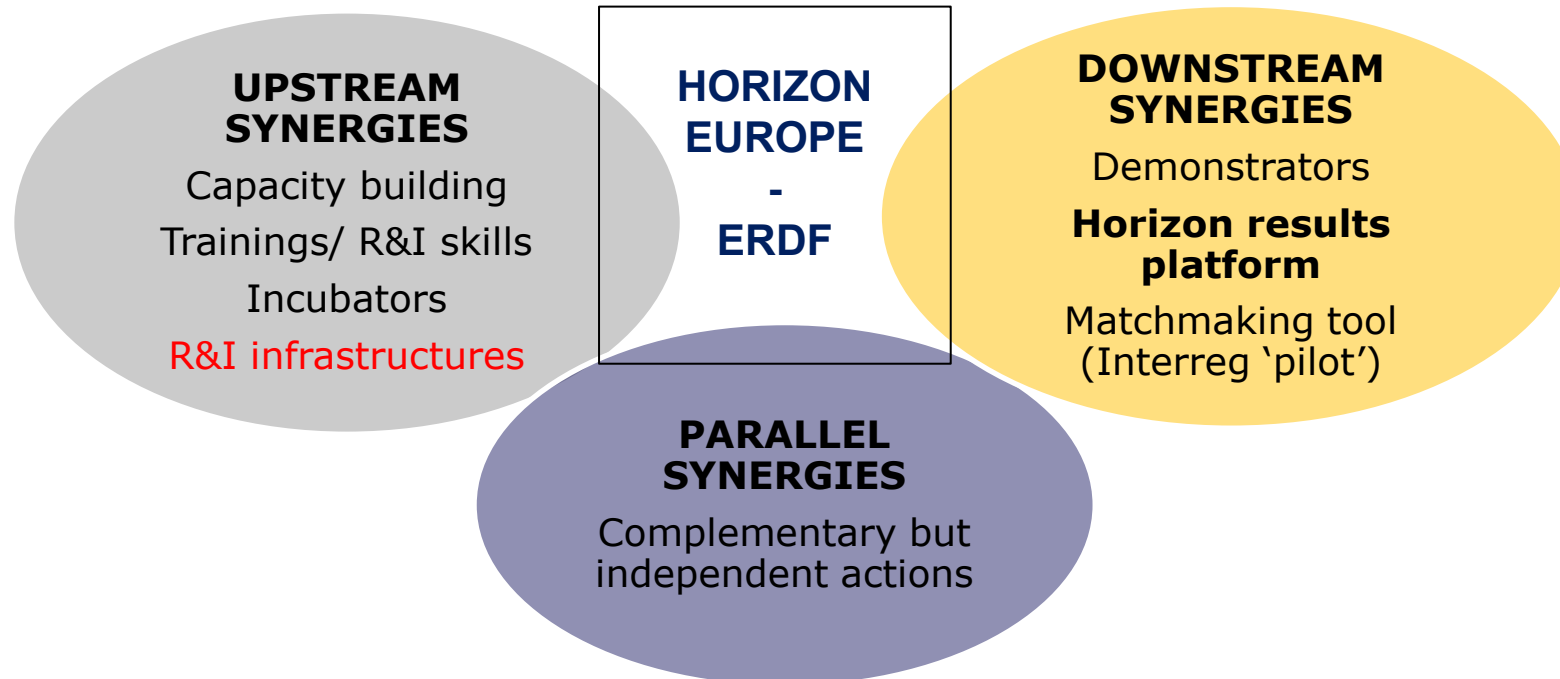
Strengthen participation in  
HE for low success rate MS

Preserves administrative  
capacity at national/regional  
level

- Member State may request a **voluntary** transfer of up to 5 % of their national allocation (e.g. ERDF) to Horizon Europe
- Transfer may only concern **future budgetary commitments**. ERDF programme has to be amended, incl. its financing plan
- Investments for the benefit of the transferring Member State/region.
- Commission may object to a transfer request if achievement of ERDF programme's objectives would be undermined
- **Rules of the receiving EU Fund/instrument apply** to the transferred amounts
- **Transfer-back:** Where the Commission has not entered into a legal commitment under Horizon Europe by 31 August of n+1, the corresponding uncommitted resources may be transferred back to the respective programmes covered by the CPR.



## Synergies: Wide range of opportunities





## Dissemination and Exploitation tools R&I programmes and beyond

Identifying EU funded results and boosting them onto the path to the market deployment:

[Horizon Results Platform](#) – EU funded results register!

[Horizon Results Booster](#) – support for beneficiaries!

[H2020- Interreg Synergies Mapping Tool](#) – interoperation of EU programmes and matching on potential synergies!

'Kohesio' – Online platform on cohesion policy projects data

'Widening': Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility call (new)



# Recent developments

## Enhanced dialogues with Member States

- A bilateral, bottom-up, systematic channel of closer cooperation between Member States and the European Commission towards a joint European R&I agenda that includes the key European and national actions in the field
  - At the service of the Member States, on the topics that they choose, including ERA, the new European Innovation Agenda or synergies with structural funds;
  - A recurrent process kicked-off by a high-level political meeting and followed-up by operational meetings.
- Already 8 Member States participated since its launch in 2022 (Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain) and the **majority included a discussion on synergies** between Horizon Europe and cohesion policy funds.



## **'R&I AND COHESION MANAGING AUTHORITIES' NETWORK (RIMA)**

New ERA subgroup 'Access to excellence' (joint network of Member States research & cohesion representatives):

- Tasks: opinions/recommendations; exchange of experience and good practices; exchange on policy developments on R&I and cohesion, and on strategic reforms of R&I systems; supporting coordination in MS/regions; encouraging similar networks at national level
- Call for nominations, 2 per Member State + observers
- Co-chaired by RTD/REGIO/Member State
- First meeting: 7 June

## New framework for S3

- **Smart specialisation strategies** – key requirement for Cohesion Policy support to research and innovation and organising principle for synergies
- **185 smart strategies developed**
- Same approach in 2021-2027 period but **S3 scope enlarged** to reflect new challenges: increased focus on **core principles of S3 + new elements** (innovation diffusion, industrial transition and interregional cooperation)
- New European Innovation Agenda: **S3 as a coordination principle to strengthen innovation ecosystems across EU** and support key EU priorities

# Smart Specialisation Strategies Community of Practice (S3 CoP)

Flagship initiative of DG Regio:  
strategic services to S3 practitioners:

Assessing needs  
and co-design  
solutions

Analytical  
approach to policy  
dialogue

Hands-on support  
to regions

# S3 CoP Services



Policy advice

S3 Expert Group

Working Groups

Support

Thematic Platform and Partnerships

Targeted support to regions

Community engagement

S3 CoP Website

S3 CoP events



# Improve cooperation between bodies involved in the management of the ESIF and the framework programmes

- a) Set up of structural dialogue (REGIO/RTD)
- b) Work with MS level to foster cooperation(REGIO/RTD)

# Exploit the potential of data to foster synergies

- a) Use of databases (RTD/REGIO)
- b) Use of existing tools to improve monitoring of synergies (RTD/REGIO)

# Foster use of downstream synergies

- a) Support MAs in designing actions to create downstream synergies with HE (REGIO/RTD)
- (b) promote public procurement for innovation based on the results of research projects financed by the framework programme among national and regional authorities (managing authorities and others) (REGIO/RTD)
- c) promote among Horizon Europe beneficiaries the European Regional Development Fund's potential (RTD)

## Improve the information flow about projects that have received the Seal of Excellence (RTD)



## USEFUL LINKS

- Synergy guidance notice: OJ C 421 of 4 November 2022 [EUR-Lex - 52022XC1104\(02\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)
- ECA report on H2020-ESIF synergies, <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=62446>
- Cohesion policy programmes 'in your country': [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/in-your-country\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country_en)
- 'Kohesio' database: <https://kohesio.ec.europa.eu/en/>
- European Innovation Agenda: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/new-european-innovation-agenda\\_en#documents](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/new-european-innovation-agenda_en#documents)
- European Research Area: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/european-research-area\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/european-research-area_en)