

NCP Experience report

on promoting synergies between ESIF and HORIZON 2020

**based on a Meet & Exchange workshop “Promoting synergies between
ESIF and HORIZON 2020”, organized in the frame of the NCP-Academy,
29th November 2016, Paris**

includes

- **lessons learnt/recommendations**
- **workshop agenda (Annex1),**
- **list of participants (Annex2)**

1. Introduction: Why this workshop?

“NCPs should at least be aware of opportunities provided by related programmes (eg. COSME, ESIF), and be familiar with the relevant sources of advice in the country concerned (e.g., Managing Authorities).”

This statement from the “Minimum standards and guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points” implies that the NCPs must be familiar with the ESIF funds and possibly be capable of sharing advice with regards to the principle of Synergy between Funds.

Furthermore, the European Commission and the Member States are mandated by the regulations that lay down the rules for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Horizon 2020, and other EU programmes directly managed by the Commission in the areas of research, innovation and competitiveness, to ensure coordination, synergies and complementarities between funds.

Finally, the European Commission has published several guides, has implemented the Seal of Excellence for the SME instrument and plans to expand it to other HORIZON 2020 instruments to try and achieve effective synergies between the funds.

Against this background the NCP-Academy organised a Meet & Exchange Workshop on Promoting synergies between HORIZON 2020 and ESIF in order to discuss both major hurdles as well as good practises leading to

- an increased knowledge about good practises and major implementation hurdles in the promotion of synergies among NCPs
- a better understanding of the country-specific dimension of the issue and different players/target groups in this field
- a clearer picture on how to improve the dialogue between H2020 NCPs and ESIF managing authorities

A crucial element of the event was the exchange with the regional representatives. Representatives from the 3 regions and 2 networks of regions, 16 NCPs and stakeholders from 9 countries (Member states and associated countries) participated. The participants strongly welcomed the opportunity for structured exchange and mutual learning on this issue. The agenda and the list of participants are included in Annexes 1 and 2.

Based on the outcome of this workshop, this report summarises lessons learnt and recommendations so far in order to improve the dialogue between NCPs and managing authorities, dialogue which appears to be essential if synergies are to become a widespread reality. This report aims at sharing these findings the entire NCP community, the EC and the ESIF Managing Authorities.

2. Experiences and lessons learnt (based on the experiences France, Spain, Poland and reflections of all participants)

ESIF and H2020 are run by separate DGs in the European Commission, the same is true at national level, where the funds are managed by separate organisations

- “Challenge”, “complementarity”, “collaboration”, “creativity”, “awareness”, “opportunities”, “future” were amongst the keywords expressed by the participants when asked which word popped to their mind when asked to think of synergies.

- Another word suggested was “acculturation”, defined as “*a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact*”¹, which suggests that this process is a long term one.

- Participants agreed that this process was one of the necessary steps to achieve synergies between funds and that NCPs, as national ambassadors of the HORIZON 2020 programme, could play a lead role in fostering this process. The role to be played by NCP in this context should be decided by each country and adapted to its own characteristics. The Managing authorities should also be granted a dedicated role to promote these synergies.

- This process is all the more important that, in the context of responsible research and innovation policies, we are renewing the links between research and society, and between science and citizens.

- Smart specialization, “*identifying the unique characteristics and assets of each country and region, highlighting each region’s competitive advantages, and rallying regional stakeholders and resources around an excellence-driven vision of their future*”, brings together scientific excellence, economical approaches, societal challenges and territorial development and therefore favours this dialogue.

- The workshop did not specifically limit itself exclusively to the synergies between ESIF and HORIZON 2020, but addressed more broadly the synergies between Regional and HORIZON 2020 funding. ESIF (and/or regional funds) and HORIZON 2020 pursue different goals, however they share common stakeholders and common features.

National contexts play an important role in the strategy to establish a fruitful dialogue between actors

- The communities managing these funds, or “tribes”, managing authorities and NCPs are usually under the supervision of different ministries, they have different ways of thinking, different political cycles and contexts and different responsibilities.

- Several features of the national context can impact the feasibility of establishing a fruitful dialogue between both communities: NCP system organization, centralized vs. decentralized management, level of ESIF funding, territorial reforms, regional elections, etc.

- Whereas NCPs are clearly identified, it is sometimes more challenging to identify the right persons to speak to in the regions. The EC could help by asking each Managing authority to promote a contact person for such a role.

- It is essential to get political backing and a mandate for NCPs and/or Managing authorities to initiate and take part in this long term acculturation process.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acculturation>

Organisation at national level/in the NCP-system

Each country is and should remain responsible for its own organisation. Some countries have established or are in the process of establishing a horizontal NCP-like function for synergies, or a dedicated team (PL, DE) where information and know-how is concentrated and centralized. These activities are carried out outside the NCP activities and require dedicated resources and time. The person or team in charge knows the national ESIF landscape and strategies as well as Horizon 2020. However in most countries there is yet no dedicated person/team to assume this bridging.

Some countries have created a national platform, mapping competencies, which facilitates the development of strategic planning relying on both programmes.

Further important lessons learnt

- It is very supporting if regional strategies consider H2020 and if regional and H2020 activities are coordinated, however the timeframes for developing both programmes did not allow regions to take into account the structure of HORIZON when developing the operational programmes.
- The infrastructure programme, which allows regions to build on previous periods' investments, can also serve as a convincing argument to invest efforts in developing synergies.

3. Recommendations

- Both NCPs and Managing authorities can help promoting synergies but to do so they need to be fully convinced that there is an interest in it.
- For the next programming phase the European Commission should provide clear incentives and guidelines for regions to take into account the Framework Programme when preparing their operational programme (ex-ante synergies).
- Regions could be (further) associated in the definition of national H2020 priorities, through their interaction with Programme Committee representatives.
- The Seal of Excellence initiative proves to be a good opportunity to launch a dialogue between both communities, but more can be done at the European level, in particular: alignment of financial rules, revision of state aid rules, and availability of precise data (both H2020 and ESIF). In particular, the issue of state aid rules should be high on the political agenda in order to obtain adaptations for areas of central European interest.
- Support – at national and European level (EC) - should be given to the establishment of NCP (like) role, able to provide general knowledge of the HORIZON 2020 programme and its potential for regions. There is a need to bridge the cultural (/language) barriers between NCPs and MAs. The before mentioned experts can play a role in this. Also the setting up of national and/or regional NCPs –MAs platforms can be of help.
- Synergies should be on all minds (EC, Members states representatives, regional authorities, R&I stakeholders) at the very beginning of the discussion process for the post-2020 programming period, in 2017, with the aim of designing a more consistent and harmonized H2020 and ESIF set of regulations.

Annex 1 – Agenda

09:00 *Registration*

09:30 **Welcome, aim and moderation of the workshop**

Ella Bouquet - Ministry of Education, Higher education and Research

09:45 **Keynote speech**

Richard Tuffs - Director of the ERRIN network

10:15 **Different organization patterns in different countries, some concrete examples and experiences in establishing a dialogue between ESIF and HORIZON 2020 communities : France, Poland and Spain**

Ella Bouquet - Ministry of Education, Higher education and Research

Javier García Serrano - CDTI

Hortense Lutz-Hermellin - Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region

Pascal Newton - Ministry of Education, Higher education and Research

Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk - IPPT PAN

13:00 *Lunch break*

14:30 **World café : how to improve dialogue between Horizon2020 NCPs and EFSI managing authorities**

1 - Are synergies an important topic in your daily work? Why?

2 - What is your experience with speaking to ESIF managing authorities as an NCP? What is your experience with speaking to NCPs as an ESIF managing authority?

3 - What do you consider to be the main hurdles / success factors in establishing dialogue between the communities (NCP-ESIF)?

4 - What do you consider the role of the European Commission should be with respect to synergies?

5 - How can dialog improve synergies at programming level (negotiating operational programmes and H2020 workprogrammes)? Would you like to share any best practices? What should be the role of ministries?

6 - How can dialog improve synergies at implementation level (role of SoE, role of regional funding agencies, regional authorities, etc)? Would you like to share any best practices?

7 - Which communication strategies/tools do you use (Dedicated person, seminars, mapping of S3 wrt. H2020 priorities, dedicated website, brochures covering both programmes in a given field)?

8 - Would you qualify the Seal of Excellence as a success in helping the promotion of the synergies between ESIF and H2020?

9 - Is there an added-value in the Community of Practice? What should it focus on?

10 - What do you think the European Commission could do to help promoting synergies?

11 - NCPs, their role, challenges and opportunities. Should NCPs be given a wider mandate wrt. synergies?

12 - Are there some initiatives to align ESIF rules with H2020 rules in your regions? Do you have any good practices?

16:15 **Conclusions and next steps:** mid-term, recommendations for the next funding period, synergies and the innovation divide

16:30 *End of the workshop*

Annex 2 – List of Participants

Surname	Name	Organisation
Abdi	Sabrina	Conseil régional d’Ile-de-France
Alvarez-Bolado	Elisa	CDTI - International Programmes Directorate
Backer-Meurke	Tony	Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth
Bahar Gogus Dogan	Burcu	TUBITAK National Coordination Office for Framework Programmes
Baumgartner	Martin	FFG
Bouquet	Ella	Ministry of Education Higher education and Research
Bülbülolu	Tolga	TUBITAK
Dubarry	Christian	Bpifrance
Duval	David	Régions de France
Evroux	Clément	Ministry of Education Higher education and Research
García Serrano	Javier	CDTI
Kieffer	Antoine	ACTIA – BioHorizon network
Lagier	Friedelinde	Ministry of Education Higher education and Research
Lutz-Hermellin	Hortense	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region
Marco	Olivier	MENESR
Marques	Alexandre	GPPq FCT/ANI
Heynen	John	Netherlands Enterprise Agency RVO
Newton	Pascal	Ministry of Education Higher education and Research
Tuffs	Richard	ERRIN network
Vallee	Mélanie	Région Hauts-de France
Walczyk-Matuszyk	Katarzyna	IPPT PAN