



ERA and Innovation Union: transnational cooperation of national programmes in the Danube region

Discussion paper

Preparing the first policy dialogue workshop held on “Innovation Union and ERA in the Danube Region” (Task 2.3), Thursday, 10 July, 2014, Belgrade, Serbia

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1. INTRODUCTION

Danube-INCO.NET¹ as a strategic high-level coordination and support action is founded in the macro-regional approach of the European Union, in particular the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR²) and its Priority Areas for Knowledge Society (PA7) and for Competitiveness (PA8). Based on strong institutionalised links with the PA Coordinators and the PA Steering Groups, it aims at supporting the policy dialogue within the EUSDR, to exchange with other regional policy initiatives and to enhance the bi-regional dialogue with a focus on the implementation of the 'Innovation Union' (IU) and the European Research Area (ERA) Framework.

In order to facilitate the policy dialogue, a series of three workshops is organised on specific IU commitments or ERA priorities, respectively, held in different non-EU Member States, i.e. Serbia, Ukraine and Moldova. Each workshop focuses on a coherent set of topics related to ERA priorities and IU commitments, respectively, that have been identified as priority subject for the partners involved in the task, and that are of particular relevance for the host country.

Based on the outcome of a survey among all Danube-INCO.Net partners on the scope of the dialogue on "Innovation Union and ERA in the Danube Region", the workshop addresses a multifaceted subject area specifically identified as a priority for a dialogue between project partner countries: ***Optimal transnational co-operation and competition: Jointly addressing grand challenges (ERA Priority 2), including through the joint establishment, operation and transnational use of national and European research infrastructures (IU Commitment 5).*** The priority involves efforts to implementing joint research agendas addressing grand challenges, sharing information about activities in common priority areas, and ensuring that adequate national funding is committed and mutually interoperable.

The specific objective of the workshop is to

- analyse the state of progress in both EU countries and in non-EU countries regarding transnational cooperation of national programmes in the Danube region,
- discuss key issues from the national perspectives, focussing on Serbia as the host country and leading on the workshop theme, and
- identifying measures to be recommended for enhancing progress in the Danube region, particularly in the non-EU countries.

¹ <http://danube-inco.net/>

² <http://www.danube-region.eu/>

2. AIM AND SCOPE OF THE DISCUSSION PAPER

The aim of the discussion paper is establish a common point of departure for discussion by creating a level-playing field of information on the topic area. To this end, the paper outlines the wide scope of the policy development in the topic area of joint programming, coordination of national funds and developing research infrastructures of European interest:

The overall aim of the Joint Programming process as described in **priority 2 of the ERA framework** is to pool national research efforts in order to make better use of Europe's precious public R&D resources and to tackle common European challenges more effectively in a few key areas.³ These aims are mirrored in the **Innovation Union (Commitment 4)** by addressing the European Research Area Communication, seeking to improve the cross-border operation of research performing organisations, funding agencies and foundations, including by ensuring simplicity and mutual coherence of funding rules and procedures⁴. This commitment (commitment 4.2) also embraces the objective of opening Member State operated research infrastructures to the full European user community, while **IU commitment 5** construction promotes the construction of the priority European research infrastructures currently identified by the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI); the Member States are invited to review their ESIF Operational Programmes to facilitate the use of cohesion policy money for this purpose.

While there is a wealth of knowledge and information on the state of progress towards the specific priorities of the ERA framework and the Innovation Union – from reports to studies to country- or region-specific recommendations – the challenge is to draw relevant conclusions as to what possible remedies to prioritise by the Danube-INCO.Net partners and to consider whether the benefits outweigh the costs of changing long-lived traditions (i.e. in terms of funding research, cooperating across border, and managing research infrastructures).

To reach meaningful results in this respect, the paper attempts – by proposing **guiding questions for discussion** – to narrow the scope of the ERA and the IU by focusing on the aspects particularly relevant for the Danube region.

Participants are expected to consider the discussion paper and actively contribute to the discussion at the workshop based on the respective country's official opinions or on personal views and experiences, respectively.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/what-joint-programming_en.html

⁴ <http://i3s.ec.europa.eu/commitment/7.html>

3. ERA AND INNOVATION UNION PROGRESS ON TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION OF NATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

3.1. State-of-play and key issues relevant for the policy dialogue in the Danube region context

The **1st ERA Progress Report**⁵ published in September 2013 is a comprehensive snapshot of the progress made by stakeholders of the national research systems - thus research performing and research funding organisations, in the five priority areas of ERA. The report provides, for the first time, comparable data, validated by Member States, to substantiate discussions and direct future policy initiatives. It reveals progress made while highlighting areas where further work is needed. For priority 2 “transnational cooperation / joint programming”⁶, it assesses progress towards the following objectives:

- Ensure mutual recognition of evaluations that conform to international peer-review standards as a basis for national funding decisions;
- Remove legal and other barriers to the cross-border interoperability of national programmes to permit joint financing of actions including cooperation with non-EU countries where relevant;
- Confirm financial commitments for the construction and operation of ESFRI, global, national and regional RIs of pan-European interest, particularly when developing national roadmaps and the next Structural Fund programmes;
- Remove legal and other barriers to cross-border access to Research Infrastructures.

The report is based on and accompanied by **national reports and country-specific recommendations**⁷, while **ERAWATCH**⁸ maintains a large repository of information relating to R&I policies. The 2013 report will be updated and further refined by the ERA Progress Report 2014 due to be released in the autumn 2014.

The advancement of the ERA is meant to be a process that is primarily driven by the Member States themselves. Therefore, ownership for delivering on the aims of the ERA is shared with Member States and the Stakeholder Organisations that have signed up to the ERA Platform. The Stakeholder Organisations⁹ have compiled their own reports on how their members are working towards realising ERA, providing additional insight from key players that fund and perform research in Europe.

Backed by the **Competitiveness Council**, there is a firm basis to advance on ERA. In its **conclusions adopted on 21 February 2014**¹⁰, the Council considered two issues that are relevant for the workshop scope as particularly important for the ERA roadmap at European level (to be developed by mid-2015), namely

- taking account of the progress made by ESFRI to fulfil its new mandate and its continuing efforts in order to prioritise the projects of the ESFRI roadmap;

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/eraprogress_en.htm

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/optimal-transnational-co-operation-and-competition_en.htm

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era_progress_report2013/era_facts_and_figures_new.pdf

⁸ <http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/partnership_en.htm

¹⁰ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/141120.pdf

- aligning, where possible, national strategies and research programmes with the strategic research agendas developed within the Joint Programming Initiatives to cope with major societal challenges and improving the interoperability between national programmes to facilitate transnational cooperation and sharing of information about activities in priority areas.

Joint Priority-setting is a key component for undertaking joint research actions. There are a number of initiatives in the Danube region, on the basis of which common topics can be identified, for example in the context of the aims set out in the action plan for Priority Areas 7 and 8 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the scientific support activities undertaken by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission (the research nexus or clusters identified), the Ulm process (Ulm Communiqué¹¹), or the challenges targeted by Danube-INCO.Net itself (for more details on these initiatives, see section below on “Existing building blocks and lessons from previous initiatives for cooperation in the Danube region”). Promoting topics of common interest through joint research actions requires the deployment of **joint planning, selection, implementation and reporting mechanisms** that allow transnational partnerships to be financed for the benefit of all countries involved. Here, existing models for the **lean administration of joint programmes** or calls, as discussed, for example by **ERAC-GPC** (Group de la programmation conjointe – GPC¹²) could be used or adapted, based on principles such as variable geometry, openness, competition, excellence and transparency. The challenge is to remove barriers for alignment of funds, including, inter alia:

- bottom-up approaches to research funding, making it difficult to identify areas for alignment,
- excellence as THE ultimate priority for funding and other strategic decisions, which does not always lead to alignment,
- lack of coordination at national level on strategic research agenda and funding, and on timing of funding, i.e. if more than one funding agency in one MS is involved,
- incompatible administrative rules, budgeting procedures, eligibility and evaluation criteria, and timing of funding,
- lack of trust and confidence and of building of experience,
- low awareness of the added value of cross-border collaboration.

In 2010, the ERAC-GPC has prepared recommendations in its **Voluntary Guidelines on Framework Conditions for Joint Programming in Research**¹³, on which current work in the

¹¹ http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/BMBF_Konferenz_Kommunique_Ulm_Draft_09_07_2012_EN_clean_final.pdf

¹² The second Biennial Report of the GPC is currently being prepared and will be published in the autumn. It is based on reports prepared by **expert groups on “alignment” and “framework conditions” for Joint Programming** that have been established by the GPC. Aspects covered include **structural constraints** such as incompatibility between national research and innovation systems which may make Member States hesitant about giving firm commitments to team up with other national programmes into “external” schemes, and **organisational constraints** such as the lack of common principles between MS that are needed to assemble national funding and the design, selection and implementation of cross-border projects and programmes. Section 2.2 of the ERA Framework Communication makes specific recommendations regarding structural and organisational constraints.

(http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=2122) The Expert Group agrees with these but considers that **the main constraint remains the lack of will at the level of national administrations** to re-orientate strategies and research programmes significantly in line with the Strategic Research Agendas (SRA) elaborated for Joint Programming Initiatives (JPI).

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/voluntary_guidelines.pdf

expert groups build. **Key issues to be considered during the development and implementation of joint programming** have already been stated by the Council Conclusions “Concerning Joint Programming of Research in Europe in Response to Major Societal Challenges” in 2008¹⁴:

- a coherent approach on the peer review procedures;
- a coherent approach for foresight activities and for evaluation of joint programmes;
- a coherent approach to funding of cross-border research by national or regional authorities;
- effective measures to ensure the optimum dissemination and use of research findings, inter alia via common practices for the protection, management and sharing of intellectual property rights;
- involvement of the various scientific and, where appropriate, industry communities.

3.2. EU opportunities for joint research and innovation activities in the Danube region

Joint Programming Initiatives

The **Joint Programming** process launched by the Commission in 2008 and adopted by the Competitiveness Council is tailored to pool national research efforts in order to make better use of Europe's public R&D resources and to tackle common European challenges more effectively in key areas. The High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC) of the ERAC is mandated to steer the process and identify the themes for possible JPIs.

Danube countries are involved in all 10 currently running JPI's¹⁵. Moldova is the only non-EU Member State that participates in JPI's, namely those supporting research on water and cultural heritage/climate change. Some initiatives have developed their own policy for working with non-EU Member states, i.e. associated countries and third countries.¹⁶ The **Summary Conclusion of the JP Conference Dublin, February/March 2012** highlighted three key words that resulted from the discussions that can enable and support small and less research intensive (LRIs) countries participating in JPIs: Persuasion, positioning of JPIs and organisation. JPIs need to be persuasive through proving the added value of what they do, through being transparent in the process and by considering LRIs concerns. Placing JPIs higher in the priorities of national administrations and national research programming was equally identified as important for motivating LRIs along with the need to offer easy -entry participation mechanisms to the JPIs. For the latter, the concept of the “knowledge hub”¹⁷ was proposed as a cross-cutting platform throughout all JPIs, offering overall information on each JPI's stage of development, strategic research agendas (SRA) and participation schemes (ongoing joint activities, calls etc.) so as to enable LRIs to quickly and easily have access to information on the basis of which strategic

¹⁴ Doc. 16775/08, 3 Dec. 2008

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/joint-programming-initiatives_en.htm

¹⁶ E.g. the Joint Programme on neurodegenerative disease research: http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu/uploads/media/JPND_Policy_on_Engagement_with_Third_Countries_final.pdf

¹⁷ A respective call under Horizon 2020 was opened under the topic Towards joint programming under Horizon 2020 supporting, i.a. the development of a Programming 'Knowledge Hub' (date of closure 29 April 2014): <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2473-inso-7-2014.html>

decisions on participation can be taken. Last but not least, smart specialisation strategies allow LRIs to concentrate on their strengths and engage in JPIs based on common features.

The ten JPI's have established their own governance structures and have developed strategic research agendas (SRA), or are in the final stages. Further initiatives are not planned yet because the **establishment of new initiatives needs an evaluation of the existing ones.** The overall conclusion reached by the Expert Group is that the Joint Programming process has got off to a good start, although the process can only reach its full potential if commitment and financial support from national level administrations continues. In some cases participating public authorities are already working to orientate and align their programmes and their funding in order to contribute to the overall implementation of JPIs in a coherent manner. Variable geometry, that is, participation on a voluntary basis, has proven to be a contributory success factor for JPIs.

The **current challenge for the JPIs** is the effective implementation of the SRAs through joint activities, and the alignment of funding at national and European level. Political commitment for Joint Programming was renewed during the JP conference in Dublin 2012 by Member States, stakeholders and the European Commission (see above). In this regard, the contribution of the JPIs to the completion of the ERA has recently been noted by the Council in its conclusions of 20 and 21 February 2014.

ERA-Net

The ERA-NET instrument under Horizon 2020¹⁸ is designed to support public-public partnerships in their preparation, establishment of networking structures, design, implementation and coordination of joint activities as well as topping up of single joint calls and of actions of a transnational nature. It merges the former ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus into a **single instrument with the central and compulsory element of implementing one substantial call with top-up funding from the Commission.** The focus of ERA-NETs is therefore shifting from the funding of networks to the top-up funding of single joint calls for transnational research and innovation in selected areas with high European added value and relevance for Horizon 2020. This aims at increasing substantially the share of funding that Member States dedicate jointly to challenge-driven research and innovation agendas. Financial contributions of Member States can be in cash or in kind in order to broaden the scope of ERA-NETs towards the coordination of institutional funding of governmental research organisations.

Horizon 2020 plays a key role in facilitating progress towards the aims of the ERA framework and the Innovation Union, boasting a broad range of support measures: In the Work Programme 2014-2015 of Horizon 2020, more than **20 ERA-NET Cofund** actions and a number of CSAs (including those in **support to JPIs**) are planned, such as the currently open ERA-Net Cofund call for Nanotechnologies, Advanced Materials and Production especially enabling low carbon energy technologies (H2020-NMP-ERA-NET-2015)¹⁹. The budget dedicated to ERA-NET Cofund actions amounts to close to 93 M€ in 2014 and more than 163 M€ in 2015.²⁰

Teaming and Twinning

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net-in-horizon-2020_en.htm

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2536-nmp-14-2015.html>

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/era-net_en.htm

Horizon 2020 also features the **Teaming²¹ and Twinning²²** schemes that offer opportunities for medium- to long-term region-research institution and institution-institution partnerships, respectively, thereby promoting the transfer of know-how on research management and business development, the alignment of research funding systems adhering to the ERA principles of excellence, transparency, openness and competition (incl. e.g. the application of international peer-review in the selection of proposals) and the development of joint research agendas. Such systemic reforms to conform with ERA standards are a key pre-requisite for making national R&I systems more compatible hence for promoting the opening up of national programmes to joint ventures in R&I financing and alignment of funds.

Exploiting synergies between European, national and regional funds

The existence of a coherent policy mix (i.e. a set of instruments that are complementary) within a strategic framework for R&I in each country is a prerequisite for exploiting all available funding sources for transnational cooperation. Viewing these sources together in the context of a strategy enables policy-makers and R&I actors creating **synergies between programmes** managed at EU level, namely Horizon 2020, and those implemented at national, regional and transnational level, including European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), INTERREG, IPA, ENPI and other regional funds. With the new orientation of ESIF that are to be programmed in the context of smart specialisation strategies (RIS3), the Commission is active in supporting Member States and associated countries, regions and IPA countries in developing their RIS3²³ and in utilising all available funds most effectively and efficiently for R&I activities in the Danube region²⁴. The **Guide on Synergies²⁵** provides a comprehensive overview of the regulatory conditions and conceivable measures at EU, national (e.g. through Horizon 2020 NCP's) and regional (i.e. ESIF Managing Authorities) level tailored to supporting the coordination of funds across the whole policy mix for R&I. The challenge ahead is to explore these opportunities, adapt them to the individual national and regional contexts and make use of the possibilities of mutual learning and of applying a transnational dimension for the benefit of the whole Danube region. Exploring additional opportunities available to non-EU countries in the Danube region is of particular importance, e.g. as concerns the options to finance R&I activities (possibly also transnationally) from the new generation of IPA II and possibly ENPI sources.

Transnational cooperation on research infrastructures (RI)

Building on past experiences in the **transnational cooperation on research infrastructures (RI)**, including examples such as ELI²⁶ or Science Link²⁷, efforts should concentrate on considering the most effective ways to further support such cooperation, both in terms of; implementing strategic joint selection processes of research infrastructures in the Danube region that are prioritised for support by the interested countries; joint financing mechanisms using various instruments in the policy mix (from Horizon 2020 via ESI-Funds to IPA and ENPI

²¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2535-widespread-1-2014.html>

²² <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/6064-h2020-twinn-2015.html>

²³ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

²⁴ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3fordanubemobilisingfininst>

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/synergy/synergies_en.pdf

²⁶ <http://www.eli-beams.eu/>

²⁷ <http://www.science-link.eu/>

as well as national and regional sources); launching joint calls for interested users, and; developing schemes to support the attraction of excellent researchers and businesses to research infrastructures (e.g. R&I vouchers). The European Commission, in its recent **communication “Research and innovation as sources of renewed growth”**²⁸ underlined that research infrastructure investments should make up an integral part of an overarching R&I strategy of a country and be steered at a sufficiently high political level, since R&I affect many policy areas and involve a large number of actors. Improving the quality of strategy development and the policy making process, therefore, involves taking account of the long term impact of R&I by developing a stable multi-annual strategic framework and forward planning of public investment.

4. EXISTING BUILDING BLOCKS AND LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS INITIATIVES FOR COOPERATION IN THE DANUBE REGION: SUCCESS STORIES AND OPEN ISSUES

One of the main activities of Danube-INCO.Net is the development of the so called DRRIF (Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund) by coordination of funds. In this context, a “DRRIF Working Group” acting under PA7 and led by the Austrian Ministry (BMWF) was set up in order to monitor the establishment of DRRIF and to harmonise the developments. In close cooperation, a “DRRIF feasibility study” shall elaborate the possible implementation of a DRRIF by the Slovak contractor Ernst&Young (May 2014- April 2015). Further steps are necessary in order to reach a common understanding and a possible implementation of a future harmonised Danube funding programme. This concerns the establishment of a Funding Parties Platform, the close cooperation with the EUREKA programme as well as the development of a roadmap towards an Art. 185 initiative for the Danube Region. Regarding this Workshop in Belgrade, the respective Danube-INCO.NET Work Package and Task aim at making some steps in the direction of the ERA in the Danube region. The discussion about this subject among the project partners has just started and will be followed throughout the project.

The initiative “Scientific Support to the Danube Strategy” of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission²⁹ serves as a solid scientific base to the implementation of the EUSDR. The outcomes of a consultation process with many scientists and policy makers from the region were currently presented, discussed and endorsed at a High Level Meeting in Vienna during a Ministerial Panel (June 25, 2014). This initiative will be carried on and serve as scientific base not only for the EUSDR.

Another initiative, the “Ulm Follow up Working Group” set up after the Ministerial Conference in July 2012 in Ulm/Germany and lead by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), dedicates its work to the opening up of national programmes to other Danube countries. In concrete terms, a BMBF-call is planned for the end of 2014 to support joint projects and innovative networks in the Danube region. All Danube countries are invited to join and co-finance the researchers from their countries; interest has already been signalled by several Danube states. In the past, two other multilateral calls launched by BMBF have proven very useful to support the transnational cooperation; they targeted Middle and Central East Europe

²⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-the-union/2013/research-and-innovation-as-sources-of-renewed-growth-com-2014-339-final.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none>

²⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/crosscutting-activities/danube-strategy>

and the Danube region. In addition, a bilateral call financed by BMBF together with the Hungarian Academy of Science (NIH) may provide lessons for future joint initiatives. A Hungarian call for R&I was opened to a co-funding by BMBF; projects are being funded and are ongoing now. The proposals were peer reviewed only by the Hungarian side (scientific board; experts from the Academy of Science according to the national evaluation criteria published in the NIH call). The biggest obstacles on the German side were to renounce from the German evaluation procedure and the timely synchronisation. Each country pays its own researchers.

In all these mentioned initiatives, representatives from the Ministries in charge of Science and Innovation from the Danube countries are involved.

Another important initiative of relevance for most of the Danube region is the recently finished WBC-INCO.NET (Western Balkan countries-INCO.NET³⁰), committed to the coordination of research policies with the Western Balkan countries. In the frame of this project, meetings were organised to support the regional policy dialogue, among them mainly those of the Steering Platform on research of the Western Balkan countries. They take place biannually and are chaired by the European Commission, the EU Council Presidency and one of the Western Balkan countries. The Platform is an important and very visible high level dialogue group tackling important topics in the field of research policy and cooperation between the EU countries and the Western Balkans. Even after the closure of the project, the meetings are intended to be organised regularly (next meeting in September 2014 in Trieste). One of the important results of WBC-INCO.NET is the identification of regional research priorities for the Western Balkans in the fields of AgroFood, ICT, Health, Environment, Transport, Social Sciences and Humanities and Energy; an exercise that successfully proves the results of harmonisation efforts of several countries in a region. Another important achievement of the WBC-INCO.NET project was the establishment of a database on research infrastructures. The projects webpage is providing information on a number of research infrastructures (RIs), important research facilities and services as well as research equipment used by the scientific community to conduct research in respective scientific fields. This database offers an information to the scientific community looking for cooperation and for services offered by research institutions and private companies.

To mention in this regards is also the SEE-ERA.NET PLUS³¹ project, an EU funded project with a consortium of 17 institutions from 14 countries. Building on the successful forerunner project SEE-ERA.NET, SEE-ERA.NET PLUS is aiming at the further integration of the Southeast European countries, especially the Western Balkan countries, in the European Research Area (ERA). The main objective of SEE-ERA.NET PLUS is to launch and implement a Joint Call for „Joint European Research Projects“ (JERPS). With a call budget of approximately 3.5 Mio €, 23 JERPS with a duration of up to two years were funded through a real multilateral funding activity, topped up by budget from the European Commission. For the Joint Call, two topics identified as regional research priorities in WBC-INCO.NET (see above) in the fields of AgroFood and ICT were used. The central administration of the call was done by a Joint Call Secretariat responsible for the national funds and the contribution of the European Commission. The lessons of SEE-ERA.NET (best practice but also worst case) should be taken into account when following the vision of a Danube region Programme.

³⁰ <http://wbc-inco.net/>

³¹ <http://www.see-era.net/>

5. PROPOSED GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Roundtable on the results and “take-aways” from the last “Ulm follow-up” meeting on 27 May 2014

1. Transnational cooperation in the Danube region is a challenge, especially since the region is heterogeneous (EU Member States and Non-Member States, potential and candidate countries, neighbourhood countries): What are the opportunities, where do you see barriers in the **coordination of the different parallel initiatives** (i.e. in the policy dialogue) and in the coordination of funds for the Danube region?
2. **What lessons can we draw from recent experiences** of joint R&I funding? (see also discussion paper, section 4)
3. What is the **short-term goal in your country** in terms of deepening R&I cooperation in the Danube region?

Session 1: Joint programming / aligning national funds through synchronisation and harmonisation

4. What are the main constraints for non-EU Member States to **participate in JPI's**?
5. What can be learnt from experience made by public authorities participating in JPI's (particularly Moldova) in their effort to aligning their programmes and funding in order to from JPIs?
6. How can the **ERA-NET Cofund** scheme be employed to advance the implementation of joint activities in the Danube region?
7. To what extent are the **Teaming and Twinning** schemes regarded as suitable instruments for less-performing Member States (MS) and associated countries (AC) in order to promote the compatibility of funding systems and the development of joint research agendas in the Danube region? How are these schemes addressed in your country, how many proposals are in the pipeline, and who are the targeted “leading” partner institutions?

Session 2: identifying and strengthening synergies between programme funds of the EU (H2020, ESIF, IPA, ENPI) and with national and regional funding sources

8. According to the GPC expert groups, the **lack of strategic priority-setting** may be the main barrier to joint programming in the future. Can this be confirmed from the perspective of Danube countries? What are the reasons and how can this problem be addressed? How could the opportunities promoted by the concept of **smart specialisation** be seized for matching R&I priorities of countries and regions in the Danube area? How could the S3-Platform be fully exploited for the Danube region?
9. Are there intentions or already activities in all Danube countries to develop national ERA strategies and initiatives, as suggested by the Competitiveness Council³², linking to the ERA roadmap at European level planned for mid-2015?
10. How are Danube countries aiming at **creating a coherent policy** mix of EU, national and regional funding instruments for R&I? Are there dedicated attempts to promote

³² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/141120.pdf

coordination and synergies between programmes in support of joint calls, joint programmes or the development of research infrastructures?

11. Are opportunities for using ESIF, IPA or ENPI sources for joint programmes being explored? How can non-EU-Member States mobilise IPA and ENPI sources for participating in ERA-Nets?
12. Are there any concrete actions foreseen or implemented in the Danube region?

Session 3: transnational cooperation of research infrastructures

13. What are the **main constraints for advancing research infrastructures** of European interest in the Danube region and for providing access to users (researchers, businesses)?
14. **What role can Horizon 2020 play** to enhance the transnational cooperation on RI? E.g. to what extent does the current **Work Programme 2014-2015 of Horizon 2020** offer real opportunities for research infrastructures located in the Danube region to attract excellent researchers? And, conversely, how can research groups in the Danube region be supported in accessing excellent research infrastructures in Europe?
15. What are appropriate measures for your country or organisation to **increase the capacity of research infrastructures and research groups in the Danube region?**