



EC Joint Research Centre

PROGRESS REPORT¹

on recent developments regarding research and innovation cooperation in/with Western Balkans (Period: June 2016 – June 2017)²

1 Policy actions and legislative initiatives (legal and strategic framework)

1.1. Enlargement and Integration Action

Through its Enlargement and Integration Action (E&IA), the Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides scientific and technical support to H2020 Associated Countries. The aim of the Enlargement and Integration Action is to support the transposition of the EU legal framework (acquis communautaire) to national legislation and facilitate scientific and technical exchange. The training and capacity building activities targeted to scientists, researchers and policy makers relate to specialised areas which correspond to JRC core competences (such as energy, disaster management, Eurocodes, environment, etc.). Smart Specialisation is a key element of E&IA

Smart Specialisation strategies are a useful framework to advance reforms in research and innovation, while at the same time strengthening the links with EU regions and countries. Governments and stakeholders develop jointly such strategies to focus investments and efforts on science and innovation in those domains with the highest growth potential. Building a strong and transparent evidence base for this prioritisation is an important element of this.

JRC is currently running a two-year pilot project that includes Serbia to support the development of smart specialisation strategies. Governments in Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro have already expressed their commitment to comprehensively analyse their economic fabric and involve all relevant stakeholders in prioritising R&I efforts through smart specialisation.

Science organisations play an important role in this process and the Commission is discussing how to best support these recent initiatives.

¹ **Important Note:** The progress reports are collected in preparation of the meeting of the Steering Platform on Research and Innovation for the Western Balkans and will be made available for the participants. Based on this report, please prepare one PowerPoint slide, which will be used during the meeting to present the main topics of the progress report to all SP members. Please send the report and the PowerPoint slide by September 1, 2017 to Ms. Ines Marinkovic at marinkovic@zsi.at.

² The last Steering Platform was held in Sarajevo on June 7, 2016. All related information is also available online here: <https://wbc-rti.info/object/news/15251>



The main focus of JRC support will be on the process of strategic management and policy design in partner countries with a view to supporting the organisational and staff development of relevant bodies for territorial development and innovation. S3P is planning to offer capacity building actions such as S3 awareness raising events, intensive training, working sessions, non-EU partner participation in the S3-related project events and other activities facilitating the participation of the non-EU partners in the European S3 community.

The other E&IA activities are described in section 3 and 4 of the present report.

1.2. Technology Transfer

JRC technology transfer activities in the Western Balkans are supported and funded by the JRC Enlargement and Integration Action.

These activities are also combined with the objectives of the IPA-II funded action called Capacity Building in Technology Transfer in the Western Balkans – EU4Tech Project. This action aims to accelerate the technology transfer and innovation ecosystem in the Western Balkans by providing support in the area of Technology Transfer Offices management, science parks and incubator creation and management, the exploration of new technology transfer related investment instruments and access to finance for start-ups and SMEs.

The technology transfer activities are also coordinated with the JRC Smart Specialisation Strategies.

1.3. Open Access to JRC Infrastructures

In 2017 JRC has launched the Initiative of open access to its research infrastructures to users from EU and H2020 associated countries, including the Western Balkans. The JRC operates **41 unique research infrastructures**. The implementation for Open Access will run on a Pilot basis with three groups of research infrastructures in the fields of safety of buildings and Nano biotechnologies at the Ispra (IT) site, and in the field of nuclear at the Geel (BE) site.

Access of users to JRC research infrastructures contributes to the dissemination of knowledge, capacity building, improves related methods and skills, provides education and training and **fosters collaboration at European level**.

The Opening of JRC research infrastructures is part of the Fit-for-Purpose Infrastructures JRC Strategy 2030. The implementation considers two modes of access: relevance- and market-driven.

Relevance-driven access is based on a peer-review selection process following a call for proposals. Relevance-driven access is financed from institutional resources and it is mainly targeted to academia and research institutions, as well as to SMEs. Users accessing JRC research infrastructures under the relevance-driven mode will only be charged the additional costs associated to such access; nuclear RIs (i.e. Euratom laboratories) may also grant access to users free of charge.

Market-driven access is granted upon payment of a fee covering the full access costs of the JRC, and it is mainly targeted to industry.

Both access modes may be complemented by in-kind contributions from users.



1.4 JRC Scientific support to the Danube Region and JRC involvement in the Danube Inco.Net Project

JRC is coordinating the initiative "Scientific Support to the Danube Region" aiming to provide scientific support to the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The Danube Region covers nine EU countries and five non-EU countries, including Moldova and Ukraine.

The JRC initiative aims to address the scientific needs related to the implementation of the Danube Strategy and to strengthen the scientific cooperation in the region. It focuses on four vertical priorities: environment protection, irrigation and agricultural development, navigability and energy production. As a transversal priority, it also aims to support the development of Smart Specialisation strategies for innovation in the region and Technology Transfer.

The Initiative contributes to the capacity building through its thematic clusters in the above mentioned priority areas and in three years led to over 40 scientific publications and technical reports, 7.000 data sets and around 4.000 stakeholders involved.

As for Danube Inco.Net Project, which promotes Research and Innovation Support Initiatives and encourages their establishment, it has a work package is related Smart Specialisation Strategy. The JRC as one of the partners has prepared the report "The Role of Smart Specialisation in the EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood policy" (more details in section 5).

2 Development of international cooperation and actions on integration into ERA

(e.g. new bilateral/regional/multilateral/international agreements, memberships, support structures, important projects, programmes, etc.)

3 Important events, meetings, training activities, studies etc.

In the framework of Enlargement and Integration Action JRC has organised several workshops and training activities addressed to researchers and policy makers from the H2020 Associated countries:

- JRC-ICGEB "Smart Specialization Strategy in the Field of Biotechnologies in Europe: A Challenge for CEE Region" (4-6 September – Bratislava SK)

The JRC, together with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnologies (ICGEB) of Trieste, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of SS. Cyril and Methodius, Trnava, the Slovak Academy of Sciences and ICARST, Bratislava organized a two-day event on S3 in biotechnologies. Over 100 participants representing strong academic values, small industries and Biotechnology for the general good, including food security and clean energy advocate Smart Specialisation for inclusiveness, dynamic entrepreneurial discovery, knowledge-driven innovation for the ecosystem, differentiation, concentration of resources, synergies and place-based economic transformation.



- JRC-SAS-INGSA Evidence and Policy Summer School (6-8 September Senec (SK)
To help researchers to have more impact and policymakers to use evidence for policy solutions, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), together with the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, organised the third Evidence and Policy Summer School in Senec, Slovakia.
- In the framework of IPA Project Capacity Building in Technology Transfer in the Western Balkans, JRC has mobilised a vast network of stakeholders and is in the process of developing a road-map and action plan for the creation of dedicated support instruments for the region. In this context it has already organised four major events supporting Innovation and Technology Transfer in the Western Balkans:
 - Macro-Regional Innovation Week (Trieste, September 2016)
 - Workshop on Financial Instruments for Innovation (Belgrade, March 2017) and
 - Workshop on Science Parks and Incubator Management (Thessaloniki, May 2017)
 - Workshop on Proof of Concept (PoC) in South Eastern Europe (Trieste, 21-22 September 2017) as a follow up of the Belgrade Workshop and with the aim to explore best practices in the creation and management of proof of concept support programmes and to consider possibilities for the creation of additional PoC support schemes in the region to finance early stage innovation

Other DGs are actively involved in all these events (NEAR, RTD, GROW), as well as representatives of EU delegations in the Western Balkans.

4 Outlook and perspectives

- Training on citizen engagement in Policy relevant Science, Technology and Innovation (12-13 October – Sarajevo - BA)

The training addresses the science for policy domain where engagement of citizens is needed and relevant to ensure quality of policy formulation processes in situations described in the framework of “post-normal science” where “facts uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent”. The training offers a hands-on reflection on the theoretical and regulatory basis as well as methods of citizen engagement. It aims at any practitioners that work at the interface of science, society and policy.

- 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region "A secure, connected and prospering Danube Region" (18-19 October – Budapest – RS).

<http://www.danube-forum-budapest.eu/danube-forum-budapest>

The Forum will emphasise the different challenges related to, and perspectives of, energy security, transportation development, clean connectivity issues, spatial data



infrastructures and financing opportunities. The key question to answer will be how to best transform political commitments into operational policies and measures

- “JRC tools to support the reduction of fuel/energy consumption, CO2 and pollutant emissions from road transport in Europe”- University of Belgrade, October 19-20, 2017

The JRC is organising a two-day workshop to introduce participants from Enlargement and Integration (E&I) countries to the tools developed by the JRC in the support of policies for reduction of CO2 and pollutant emissions from road transport.

- Macro-Regional Innovation Week, planned for 13-15 November 2017 on the JRC Ispra Site. The Week intends to promote the exchange of best practices and knowledge among local and international policy and decision makers, academics, financial actors and various types of innovation and technology transfer practitioners among Europe's macro-regions, including Western Balkans and East-European neighbouring countries.

The objective of this event is to discuss the optimal link between S3 and TT in macro-regions together with innovation practitioners of the regions with a view to align strategies and streamline implementation.

Focus of the 2017 Innovation week is on reinforcing the links between Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and Technology Transfer (TT). S3 are meant to enable individual regions to turn their needs, strengths and competitive advantages into marketable goods and services by prioritising public research and innovation policies. TT strategies are the necessary complement of S3 at the operational level, which are intended to put in place a wide range of implementing instruments such as proof-of-concept, innovation ecosystems, financial instruments, testbeds and demonstrators, IPR management, start-ups creation.

- Workshop on Investment Readiness, spring 2018, Croatia – one of the follow-ups of the Belgrade and Thessaloniki workshops. Exact date and place to be decided.

- **Innovation Camp - Belgrade 14-15 December 2017**

Innovation camps present a relatively novel form of public administration/political outreach towards local and regional authorities and citizens at large. They are inclusive and open to local representatives and experts from a variety of backgrounds

The JRC is organising an Innovation Camp as part of the entrepreneurial discover process of Smart Specialisation Pilot project in Serbia. The objective of the event is to stimulate co-creation of shared scenarios for the development of the ICT and software industry in Serbia. The Innovation Camp will involve participants from other IPA countries.



5 Other relevant information related to Research and Innovation cooperation in/with Western Balkan economies)

JRC Reports

- The Role of Smart Specialisation in the EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policies

In the framework of the Danube-INCO.NET project the S3 Platform together with experts prepared the report which explores the conditions under which the smart specialisation model can be applied in the EU enlargement and neighbourhood (E&N) countries. The analysis examines developments of research and innovation policies in 11 E&N countries - five countries in the Western Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina) some of which are EU enlargement countries and six Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), also defined as EU neighbourhood countries in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. The authors identify the main gaps that might hinder successful implementation of S3 initiatives in the E&N countries, suggest considering some essential pre-conditions for initiation of sustainable S3 processes and offer some guidance and policy recommendations on facilitating the S3 outside the EU.

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/report-the-role-of-smart-specialisation-in-the-eu-enlargement-and-neighbourhood-policies?inheritRedirect=true>

JRC Conference Reports:

- Macro-Regional Innovation Week: at the crossroads of three European Macro-Regions: Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine Regions
<http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC105020>
- Workshop on Investment Vehicles and Financial Instruments supporting Technology Transfer and Innovation: Focus on the Danube Region and the Western Balkans countries
<http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC106747>