



BLACK SEA
HORIZON

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Bi-regional STI Dialogue

Towards a sustainable “EU-Black Sea Cooperation Programme in STI (BSCP)”

Final Document

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Abbreviations List

| | |
|-------------|---|
| AC | Associated Countries (to H2020) |
| BS | Black Sea |
| BSEC | Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation |
| BSCP | Black Sea Cooperation Programme |
| BS-ERANET | Networking on Science and Technology in the Black Sea Region |
| CERIC | Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium |
| DANUBIUS RI | Pan-European distributed research infrastructure in the Danube region |
| EaP | Eastern Partnership |
| EaP PLUS | STI International Cooperation Network for EaP Countries PLUS |
| EIS | European Innovation Scoreboard |
| ENI | European Neighborhood Instrument |
| ERA | European Research Area |
| ERANET | European Research Area Networks |
| ERIC | European Research Infrastructure Consortium |
| ESFRI | European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructure |
| EU | European Union |
| H2020 | European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014 - 2020 |
| HEI | Higher Education Institutions/Universities |
| IncoNet EaP | STI International Cooperation Network for EaP Countries |
| MS | Member States |
| MSCA | Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions |
| R&I | Research and Innovation |
| R2I | Research to Innovation projects |
| RI | Research Infrastructures |
| RPO | Research Performing Organizations |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| STI | Science, Technology and Innovation |

1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of the Black Sea Horizon project is to propose an “EU- Black Sea Cooperation Programme in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)” (BSCP) in close cooperation with major STI stakeholders in the Black Sea Region and in EU Member States. The purpose of this document is to *describe* the objectives of the BSCP, to *explain* the methodology of its preparation and to *present* the measures and governance of the BSCP.

2 Objectives of the BSCP

The BSCP is an international programme promoting the intra-regional multilateral STI cooperation with the overall aim of addressing current socio-economic and environmental challenges of the Black Sea Region. Key objectives of the BSCP are to:

- Enhance **regional STI cooperation within the BS Region** by employing experiences from ongoing coordination processes or previous STI initiatives, using a “**variable geometry**” approach according to national interests;
- Contribute to an **EU-BS bi-regional STI dialogue** by enhancing the information exchange and enabling the identification of tailor-made cooperation instruments and defining the processes for implementing such measures;
- Encourage **BS participation in ERA instruments including Horizon 2020** and seeking coordination with the programming bodies of the current EU STI cooperation programs;
- Encourage **BS synergies with programmes** which indirectly facilitate STI cooperation or could potentially contribute to a knowledge-based society in the region.

With a geographical focus on the Black Sea Region, the programme aims to encompass actors of the entire regional national STI systems and beyond, including the following target groups:

- National programme owners such as ministries;
- Policy delivery organizations such as agencies;
- Existing RPOs, including the research active HEIs;
- SMEs or industry sectors with interest in the production or utilization of knowledge through research or innovation activities;
- EU Member States, internationally active coordination groups or funding initiatives, which seek further ways of extending their involvement in STI in the BS region.

The **endorsement** of the BSCP is based on the intent of the concerned policy making and policy delivery bodies in the countries of the region. The **commitment** to the BSCP expresses an intention to participate in at least one of the proposed measures or to propose new measures as long as they are within the aims and objectives of the programme. **The endorsement does not require a general financial commitment.**

As already mentioned, the contribution to the BSCP is based on the principle of “variable geometry”, i.e. interested countries jointly agree on the objectives, on the measures addressing these objectives, and on the modalities of the BSCP, which should be **tailor-**

made to the needs and interests of the Black Sea countries. The support from **other sources** (private sector, international organisations or third countries) is encouraged.

3 Methodology

Based on analytical evidence provided by the Black Sea Horizon project (i.e. policy analysis; contacts with policy dialogue fora; and actions for the identification of pertinent topics for STI Cooperation), the preparation of the BSCP followed a **consultation process** among the partners of the project, which include representatives of ministries, academies and funding agencies in the non-EU Black Sea countries as well as in EU Member States.

In addition, a Workshop on the “EU-Black Sea Cooperation Programme in STI” took place on 15 December 2016 in Brussels. The event offered the opportunity to discuss the progress of the preparation of the Black Sea Cooperation Programme (BSCP) and to inform policy makers, representatives of international organizations, Liaison Office representatives from countries and organizations that are not currently involved in that process, allowing their potential participation in the programme.

Building on the consultation process and the outcomes of the event in Brussels, a Conference under the Black Sea Horizon project took place in Athens on 8 May 2017 with the aim to consolidate the BSCP. Through interactive sessions, more than 70 participants from the field of STI policy making, policy delivery and analysis from the EU and Black Sea countries, had the opportunity to critically assess the BSCP and recommend improvements in the document.

The BSCP ensures synergies and compatibility with existing initiatives. It is evident that a sustainable “EU – Black Sea Cooperation Programme in STI” can only exist, if it is ‘rooted’ in the already numerous policy dialogue fora, policies and instruments active in the Region. Such ‘rooting’ means in practice the inclusion of references to the BSCP in relevant policy documents (e. g. in the Joint Strategy of the EaP Panel on R&I, in the new BSEC Action Plan on S&T, in the policy documents of ENI, in the Black Sea Synergy documents, etc.), that will pave the way for the successful implementation of the Programme.

4 Content of the BSCP

The BSCP includes a series of **measures** to be implemented, as well as indications about the **governance** of the programme, as follows:

- 1) Measures of the BSCP
 - A. Joint Research Calls
 - B. Capacity Building Activities
 - C. Strengthening Mobility
 - D. Support to Innovation
- 2) Governance, Steering and Funding of the BSCP

4.1 Measures of the BSCP

A. Joint Research calls

Joint research calls are already a reality among the Black Sea countries (EU and non-EU) as well as with the EU MS in a broader sense. These calls are implemented under bilateral and multilateral schemes:

- Bilateral cooperation programmes are a widely used instrument for scientific cooperation in the region and beyond. They can be open or focus on jointly selected priority fields. The financial scale of supported projects is usually smaller than in multilateral schemes, while lighter application procedures are in use. Bilateral cooperation programmes are more flexible to emerging needs and complement multilateral programmes; simultaneously they are important starting points to increasingly engage in multilateral cooperation programmes.
- Multilateral cooperation programmes include the 'core' activities of Horizon 2020 but also various co-fund schemes such as the ERANETs. Although more complicated in their structure, multilateral programmes provide larger funds for research, but they demand already existent networks of cooperation.

The joint research multilateral calls under the BSCP could be based on and enlarge the existing bilateral cooperation programmes, while capitalizing on the successfully implemented regional ERANET project BS-ERANET. They could either:

- Focus on regional research priorities not adequately covered by Horizon 2020, e.g. on current regional challenges, allowing researchers from the Black Sea region to address them, or
- Overlap with Horizon 2020, paving the way for future successful applications in it.

Joint research calls under the BSCP would have as a result an increased visibility of the Black Sea countries at the EU level. Moreover, they could constitute a breeding pot for future multilateral collaboration in and with the region.

Characteristics of the joint research calls under the BSCP:

- **Variable geometry:** Countries/parties should participate in each call, based on their own priorities and strategic agenda. The target group can include all Black Sea countries (EU and non-EU), as well as all other EU MS/AC.
- **Addressed** to researchers from countries that committed funds. A 'real' or 'virtual' common pot approach could be used employing consequently a **juste-retour principle**.
- **Thematic priorities** are to be defined by the participating funding parties, covering fundamental or applied research fields.
- **Sustainability and periodicity** of the calls - in order to build an identity and to consolidate and streamline the procedures. A call every one or two years is considered necessary and realistic for achieving that goal.
- **Jointly developed evaluation procedures**, based on openness and transparency. The Regional STI Evaluation Platform, planned and implemented in the context of the IncoNet EaP project, can play an instrumental role in the evaluation process.
- **Jointly defined selection criteria**, which should take into account the budget committed by each party when establishing a shortlist for funding.

- **Jointly defined *reporting and monitoring* procedures.**

In terms of fields of funding for the BSCP, certainly *applied research* can provide more tangible results that are easily perceived by the general public in the BS countries (tackling societal challenges). However, on the other hand, a large share of the research potential in BS is oriented towards fundamental research. Therefore, the research potential in BS is not sufficiently addressed by H2020 and -often- by EU national funding programmes, leaving a potential niche for the BSCP.

The evolution of certain bilateral cooperation programmes among the BS countries to multilateral ones presents several advantages since the latter ones are more comprehensive; bring more expertise and access to infrastructure; they can have more scientific impact; they train researchers to the working conditions of H2020; etc. However, the increased need of coordination and the administrative barriers that may exist should not be underestimated, and certainly the variable geometry principle should fully apply.

Most of the countries in the BS region have expressed their support for the development of a joint research call as well as their interest to be engaged in its development. Certainly securing the necessary funds constitutes the biggest challenge, especially in terms of the necessary harmonized procedures and coordination for exploiting national existing budget lines; however the effort is overall assessed as realistic.

As a concrete step towards a BSCP, a *Call for Joint Research actions* is currently under preparation in the region in the context of the Black Sea Horizon project. A group of tentative funding parties has been identified, thematic priorities have been discussed in Expert Group meetings and Rules of implementation are under development (details on the Call under preparation are given in Annex 1). Such a Call for Joint Research could constitute a starting point for the BSCP joint research calls.

B. Capacity Building Activities

The BSCP supports the development of concrete measures contributing to STI capacity building in the BS countries with a view to improving the efficiency of the STI systems in the region and at the same time to **improving the framework conditions** for an enhanced cooperation with the European Research Area (ERA), **eliminating remaining STI obstacles**.

Characteristics of the Capacity Building activities under the BSCP:

- **Past experience:** Capacity building activities need to include the **most effective measures** based on the experiences from the recent years made in the framework of national, bilateral and multilateral programmes targeting capacity building, such as the EU's Framework Programme for R&I (INCO-type or bilateral Projects, ERANET schemes,

Policy Support Facility, etc.). To this end, the BSCP will employ the capabilities of EU MS and of regional experts in a **peer-to-peer process or dialogue**, whenever possible.

- **Tailor-made:** Capacity building measures need to be **dedicated and tailor-made** in order to address different stakeholders active in the establishment of a knowledge-based society at the national level. The target groups should include researchers, administrators, research organisations, agencies as policy delivery organisations, as well as policy makers in ministries or research councils.
- **Serving priorities and needs:** Capacity building activities should serve **regional priorities** as well as similar **national needs** of the participating countries as expressed in the national STI policies or other key policy documents. At the same time, measures should have a rather **multilateral scope**, addressing several countries on a variable geometry basis.

There are converging views about the need for capacity building activities and their implementation is assessed as realistic. The main benefits that such actions can bring to the region include: the acquisition of new skills, the development of knowledge with emphasis on best practices at international level, etc. that will ultimately support the establishment and enhancement of technology transfer support structures. In that respect, the participation of experts from EU and from international organizations in these actions is seen as essential.

On the other hand, duplications should be avoided since similar actions have already been implemented at national or even regional level in cooperation with the UN, the EU, the World Bank and other international organizations.

To increase the number of targeted participants and therefore their impact, such actions should be organized locally, involving where fitting to a topic -to the maximum extent- young researchers, innovative SMEs, local Technology Transfer Offices, etc. In addition, it is very important that the proposed capacity building activities are tailor-made in order to address different stakeholders active in the establishment of a knowledge-based society at the national level – in particular considered for these proposed measures are policy makers, policy delivery (agencies), research organisations (including project managers, research team leaders, and administrators), and individual researchers (senior and junior).

Proposed Activities

1. Launching of regional benchmarking exercises among research institutes

Past experience shows that benchmarking exercises provided long-term benefits to participating research institutes and drastically increased their performance. The BSCP proposes to implement regional benchmarking exercises involving outstanding research institutes or centres in fields of priority across the BS countries, in order to provide a “critical friends” assessment on their functioning and allowing them to further increase their performance and to foster their international collaboration with emphasis on networking with EU institutions.

2. Trainings on research management and international cooperation for individual researchers, in particular, young researchers, and research administrators

The BSCP proposes to implement tailor-made trainings for researchers or research administrators with a view to increase their performance in terms of research management capabilities as well as in terms of developing international cooperation strategies within their institutions.

3. Thematic trainings for individual researchers, such as on IPR issues;

Thematic trainings should follow a bottom-up approach to address emerging needs of the countries in the region. Informing researchers and other interested stakeholders about the recent legal and administrative dispositions concerning the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) in line with international standards, as well as concerning the harmonisation of the existing national standards and certification systems in the BS region could constitute

Specialized trainings for policy makers on STI policies. BSCP could implement continuous education seminars for policy makers informing on STI policies, e.g. the state-of-the-art in the organization and management of national research systems, new methods and new types of instruments for better policy steering. Past experience (e.g. in the context of IncoNet EaP) provides proof of successfully organized high-level seminars on research and innovation policy, focussing on new approaches and instruments for modern STI policies, as well as on the assessment and evaluation of public interventions. National authorities have already expressed interest for the continuation of such specialized seminars for policy makers.

4. Support measures for STI Peer Reviews in BS countries

STI Peer Reviews (PRs) have recently provided (through the IncoNet EaP project or the Policy Support Facility of the European Commission) valuable recommendations to the policy

making and delivery levels of countries in the region (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) oftentimes opening the way for structural STI reforms. The BSCP could implement either follow-up actions based on the recommendations of these PRs, or deliver new reviews (recommended after a period of 5 years) in order to assess developments in the performance and potential of the national research systems (or parts of these systems). Such activities will also further improve the framework conditions of the EU-Black Sea countries cooperation and the smooth integration in the ERA. When implementing new peer review actions, the open data policy issue needs to be seriously considered, since open data policies are STI drivers in the region. However, sharing of data is not always feasible and constitutes an obstacle.

5. Actions related to an STI Evaluation Platform

An STI Evaluation Platform was recently established under the IncoNet EaP project, with a dedicated MoU signed by some of the participating BS countries. The aim of the Platform is among others to facilitate joint regional (i.e. international) S&T peer review procedures for calls and to support the capacities for better review procedures in national research funding bodies in the EaP countries. The BSCP could further promote the consolidation of this platform, since it will have a positive impact on the quality and transparency of the STI proposal evaluation and selection procedures at national level.

6. Foresight exercise for STI in the BS region

A foresight exercise similar to the ones already implemented in EU would allow the development of a vision for the future of the STI cooperation in the BS region, allowing a better prioritization of the activities to be implemented jointly in the context of the BSCP and beyond. Also priority setting for STI cooperation topics can be supported with a regional foresight exercise.

C. Strengthening Mobility

The BSCP aims to support the mobility of the researchers intra-regionally and towards the EU. The measures on mobility aim to **stimulate and enhance the performance** of the local research personnel through **intensive internationalisation activities**. **These measures will contribute to the reduction of isolation of the researchers** in the region providing incentives.

Characteristics of the Mobility activities under the BSCP:

- **Complementarity principle:** Mobility measures of the BSCP are complementary to -but not duplicating- the **existing functioning mobility schemes/programmes**. These measures will include also mobility actions to promote **access** to research infrastructures in the region and in EU countries. Finally, the BSCP will seek to contribute to the **coordination** of existing bilateral exchange schemes i.e. with EU countries which could be extended to more countries.
- **Strengthening incoming and outgoing excellence:** The BSCP mobility measures will facilitate the researchers' mobility **incoming** to the region and **outgoing** to EU countries or intra-regionally to other BS countries (brain circulation) based on **excellence criteria**. It will include young researchers, PhD's, experienced researchers for individual mobility actions, diaspora researchers, etc.
- **Serving research necessities and priorities:** Mobility activities should serve in priority research **necessities** and **research priorities** in the region. Measures should serve already existent or potential **synergies** with competent research infrastructures in EU or in the region which could clearly stimulate the performance and research output of the beneficiaries.

The implementation of activities aiming at strengthening the mobility of researchers in the context of the BSCP is considered as highly relevant for the region and at the same time realistic and feasible. Such activities will contribute to new knowledge gaining on advanced research practices, to the expansion of research networks, as well as to getting access to advanced research infrastructures, contributing therefore to the bridging of the gap among the participating countries.

Particular emphasis should be given to bi-directional mobility measures, in which also the scientific diasporas can play a substantial role, as well as to the involvement of young researchers in the exchanges.

However, there is a need for prioritizing disciplines while developing relevant mobility schemes, since it is practically difficult to fund all the indicated schemes for mobility under the BSCP. Moreover, it is necessary that a mapping takes place about existing measures and mobility opportunities supported by the European commission, in order to avoid duplications.

In addition to individual, bottom-up mobility support, targeted mobility (e.g. for **proposal preparation**, for **long-lasting twinning** between research entities, etc.) should be supported in priority and when a BS regional benefit can be demonstrated.

Proposed Activities

1. Grants for networking with EU organisations through incoming/outward mobility

One of the most common mobility activities are grants for networking in the context of thematic brokerage events or conferences. INCO-type projects have provided a significant number of such grants to researchers allowing them to network, establish contacts and develop synergies with an impact in the short, mid and long term. The BSCP can provide similar grants either for incoming or for outward mobility in the BS region. The aim is to use this measure for providing the opportunity to individual researchers, and in particular, young researchers to travel, extend their outreach and improve their research performance by meeting with counterparts from prominent research entities in EU or in the region.

2. Twinning/mentoring actions between research organizations with two-way mobility components

Strategic cooperation between research institutes is one of the key and most effective mobility measures. The BSCP could include such measures as twinning or mentoring actions that will facilitate exchange of practices among research entities, transfer of know-how at the organizational level, and perspectives for establishing or strengthening research synergies¹. Twinning actions of the BSCP involving mobility measures, such as short trainings, or internships, will increase research excellence of the participating BS institutions, enhance networking channels, and improve capabilities to compete successfully for funding in the future. The scientific diaspora can constitute a privileged target for initiating the twinning/mentoring actions.

3. Supporting Access to Research Infrastructures

BSCP twinning or grant schemes could specifically address the facilitation of transnational access to important Research Infrastructures (RIs) in EU MS and in the region. This kind of measures will reduce the isolation of BS researchers allowing them to use high-class equipment.

¹ Twinning schemes were organized as pilot actions in the context of IncoNet EaP with great success: two of the twinning teams have succeeded in receiving Horizon 2020 funding.

To this direction, specific activities could include information provision about existing opportunities in the countries (existing and potentially to be upgraded/developed RIs) and awareness campaigns for using this opportunity.

In addition, other measures could be envisaged such as networking for the participation in existing and new research infrastructure consortia (e.g. CERIC-ERIC or DANUBIUS RI which are Flagship EU initiatives on the ESFRI roadmap); developing partnerships of organisations with existing research infrastructures; participating in planning and developing the upgrading or construction of new joint infrastructures in the BS. Through such activities interaction with a wide range of social and economic sectors, including business, industry and public services will be triggered.

4. Engaging Diaspora in mobility schemes

It is really important to use resources of the BSCP for engaging the scientific diaspora of Black Sea countries working in EU countries. Such type of activities have already been implemented in the past and demonstrate the high interest of BS countries to take advantage of expertise and experience from their diaspora. This activity should commence with a review and study of BS scientific diaspora.

5. Exchange of best practices on mobility schemes

The BSCP could support the organization of workshops among STI policymakers from BS countries as well as from EU and beyond to exchange practices on current national mobility schemes and how these could be improved and better coordinated with EU initiatives (e.g. MSCA) or with the BSCP mobility measures.

6. Organization of regional BS Summer schools with a thematic focus

Experience from previous similar initiatives demonstrates that regional summer schools with a horizontal or thematic focus are good examples of successful mobility measures (e.g. the Black Sea Horizon Summer school held in Summer 2017; IncoNet EaP project implemented Summer and Winter Schools in 2016 for young researchers in the field of energy efficiency). The number of applicants for such activities reveals their dynamism (e.g. for the two Schools of IncoNet EaP, approx. 350 researchers applied for 46 positions). The BSCP could organize such regional BS Summer Schools to address regional thematic priorities.

D. Supporting Innovation

The strengthening of Innovation and in particular of the exploitation of the research results constitutes a major challenge shared by most of the countries in the broader Black Sea region. Often the private sector does not realise the benefits of innovation and thus does not demand innovation or is less open to relationships with research providers. The private sector in the region must be informed of the important role of innovation in the development and improvement of competitiveness.

To address this challenge, several recommendations have been proposed in the recently implemented Peer Reviews of the STI systems in several BS countries (i.e. Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and support was also provided through the R2I projects funded by Horizon 2020.

Activities to support innovation are considered to complement the ones under development at national level or in the context of the ERA.Net RUS or ERA.Net RUS Plus projects. They need to be cross- and inter-disciplinary – not sector specific. Support should not just be limited to technological innovation; social, marketing and process innovation is also very important. In priority, it should address institutions – such as universities – that have little experience on this.

In that context, the BSCP should further promote innovation in the region through a series of actions that can include (indicatively):

1. Voucher schemes

Voucher schemes allowing industries and SMEs in BS to ‘purchase’ scientific research services from competent research performing organizations could be launched at regional level. The experience from the implementation of such schemes at national level through various initiatives showed the existence of strong and sound demand from the private sector and contributed to the reduction of the segregation between the research and the economic activity.

A Voucher scheme at regional level could have the following characteristics:

- **Variable geometry:** Only interested countries/parties should participate in each call, based on their own priorities and strategic agenda. The target group should include all Black Sea countries (EU and non-EU), as well as all other EU MS/AC.
- **Addressed to companies from countries that committed funds.** Vouchers can be used via a vis research entities from the broader region.
- **Training for entrepreneurs** should be part of the voucher system – without this, new entrepreneurs will not have the skills to develop and benefit from an entrepreneurial eco-system.
- **Jointly developed evaluation procedures,** based on openness and transparency. The Regional STI Evaluation Platform, introduced by the IncoNet EaP project, should play an instrumental role in the evaluation process.

- **Jointly defined selection criteria**, which should take into account the budget committed by each party.
- Jointly defined **reporting and monitoring** procedures.
- **Sustainability and periodicity** of calls in order to build an identity and to consolidate and streamline the procedures.

Voucher schemes should be as wide as possible – including marketing, research and other services.

2. Calls for cross-border clustering

The organization of clusters among companies with similar or complementary research needs, including also relevant research entities is considered as a powerful tool for promoting research-based innovation. Such clusters are increasingly developing in EU MS/AC and a Grant scheme has been launched under the Horizon 2020 EaP PLUS project for linking EaP entities with these clusters.

In that respect, cross-border clustering calls in the context of the BSCP can further stimulate the setting-up of clusters in the Black Sea region. The aforementioned principles of variable geometry, sustainability/periodicity, evaluation and selection procedures as well as reporting and monitoring, should also apply to such calls.

A joint information system on clusters – a type of extension of ECCP² – would be a useful addition for cluster managers.

3. Collaborative calls for Academic sector – Industry research cooperation

Researchers are very distant from industry with different experience and skills. Significant training for researchers is required to close this gap. Academy – Industry (including SMEs) calls can follow the model described earlier for Joint Research calls at regional level but specifically addressing consortia necessarily involving Industry actors or SMEs, to stimulate the cross-border inter-sectoral cooperation in applied research fields. Without ignoring the fact that such collaboration is usually relevant at national level, the inclusion of such measures in the BSCP will provide a strong signal on the need and importance of the inter-sectoral Industry – Academia cooperation.

4. Calls for inter-sectoral Industry – Academy two-way mobility

Inter-sectoral mobility calls can follow the model described earlier for Joint Research calls at regional level but specifically addressing the cross-border inter-sectoral staff exchanges to stimulate the Industry - Academy cooperation. As mentioned earlier, the particular relevance of such a measure at national level should not exclude its inclusion in the BSCP in order to provide a strong signal on the need and importance of the inter-sectoral Industry – Academia cooperation.

² European Cluster Collaboration Platform (<https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/>)

5. Improving access to Risk Finance for Innovation

A limiting factor for the development of Innovation in the Black Sea region is the limited access to appropriate Funding tools (risk financing, venture capitals, business angels, etc.).

To address this weakness, as a first step, awareness activities, trainings and studies to identify possible obstacles to such financing could be supported in the context of the BSCP, while later on the feasibility of setting up such financial tools can be explored.

A further possible addition to this measure could be a competition for an international business plan, funded through a venture capital or bank – thus providing (limited) actual financial support.

6. Black Sea Regional Competence Centres

BS Regional Competence Centres to provide research-based solutions for specific economic sectors can considerably contribute to the strengthening of the innovation capacities in the region. The setting-up or the expansion of such Centres (usually jointly established and operated by research organisations and industry/SMEs) can be promoted in the context of the BSCP. Currently such initiatives do not exist and the feasibility needs to be explored further.

7. Extending the European Innovation Scoreboard in BS Countries

In the context of the IncoNet EaP project, awareness and training activities have been initiated dedicated to the presentation of the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) in view of a possible implementation of its concept in BS countries not familiar with this methodology. The BSCP could include precise measures such as exchange of experiences, trainings, mentoring, pilot application, aiming at the effective implementation of the EIS in countries not currently using it.

8. Trainings for technology transfer and commercialization support experts in BS countries

The limited capacity of innovation and technology transfer support structures is considered to be one of the bottlenecks of the innovation systems in most of BS countries.

To address this weakness, trainings for specialists of the aforementioned structures should be organized in the context of BSCP, while exploring in parallel possibilities for closer cooperation between similar structures of the BS countries and of EU.

The trainers should include regional experts from the BS to ensure the training is sufficiently targeted.

4.2 Governance, Steering and Funding of the BSCP

The BSCP is seen as a joint effort of countries and institutions sharing the same challenges and wishing to promote their STI cooperation, adding value to ongoing national and bilateral cooperation activities and developing additional ones. In that respect, the variable geometry principle will constitute the bottom-line approach in order to avoid unnecessary commitments and to precisely serve the interests of the participating parties in each specific activity.

Nevertheless, in order to run and monitor the whole programme and, moreover, to initiate and implement every specific activity a certain **Governing procedure** is necessary, involving a **Steering pillar** and an **Implementation pillar**.

Last but not least, for the implementation of every specific action **adequate funding** needs to be secured. A universal solution cannot apply: the source, i.e. the funding parties and the amount to be committed will be defined on a case-by-case basis and with a variable geometry approach.

When considering the Governing procedure for the BSCP, the existence of STI policy making bodies active in the region should be considered:

- The **BSEC Working Group on cooperation in S&T**, in which all the BSEC Member States are represented;
- The **EaP Panel on Research and Innovation**, in which all the EaP countries and the EU MS are represented.

The aforementioned bodies can provide adequate platforms for discussing the implementation of the BSCP, acting as facilitators and initiating specific activities. However, for the effective implementation of any activity, a permanent or rotating **Secretarial structure** for the whole BSCP, or **alternatively an ad-hoc one for each specific activity** would be necessary in order to establish the Steering and Implementation pillars.

The *Steering* pillar should include:

- The development of an international cooperation strategy for the BSCP with a view, inter alia, to establish synergies with other initiatives;
- The planning and initiation of each specific activity including the identification of adequate funding sources;
- The overall monitoring of the BSCP;
- The assessment of the BSCP and its possible updating or revision.

The *Implementation* pillar should include:

- Initiation of specific measures and collection of Expressions of Interest ('critical mass').
- Planning of measures, definition of their content and identification of funding parties.
- Implementation/call phase: rules of participation, modalities, evaluation, selection.
- Implementation/project phase: contracting, funding and reporting modalities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the activity.

Whatever the Governing structure and procedure for the BSCP will be implemented, participation of the private sector and of experts along with policy makers is considered as critical for a close connection of the programme to the local economic environment and to the regional and national development objectives.

ANNEX 1

Implementation of a *Joint Research Call of S&T Programme Owners and Programme managing agencies from Black Sea Countries and EU Member countries*

Background Information

The **Black Sea Horizon** project funded under Horizon 2020 by the European Commission, provided the framework for the preparation of a multilateral S&T call for proposals. Programme owners and programme managers from the EU Member States and the Black Sea (BS) countries have prepared a first call to be launched in 2018. The implementation of the joint call will occur outside of the BSH and without funding from the European Commission. Such calls can be repeated in future and will as well be based on a **variable geometry** i.e. based on the available funding and interest to participate in calls on selected research topics.

Building on the successful forerunner FP7 **BS ERA.Net project** (1/2009 to 12/2011) and on the mutual interest of programme owners and programme managers in the countries from the Black Sea region as well as EU MS and AC's and other countries, a **Group of Funding Parties** (GFP) has been established. However, there is still a possibility for interested funding agencies to join the preparation of the call.³

General conditions

A **Steering Committee**, comprising representatives from each **Funding Party** (FP) is responsible for defining the principles of the **Joint Research Call on Science and Technology** as well as for the steering, decision-making and monitoring of its implementation. The **Call secretariat** will provide services related to preparation and the launch of the call for proposals as well as related to the final selection of projects.

Details of the implementation of the Joint Call have been agreed upon by all GFP members in an **Implementation Agreement** (IA) with its **Terms of Reference** (ToR) being an integral part thereof. As a part of the preparatory activities, three workshops were organised within Black Sea Horizon project in Bonn (2016), Izmir and Chisinau (2017).

Scientific Fields

Three thematic workshops within Black Sea Horizon held in 2016 in Moscow, Tbilisi and Sofia contributed essentially to the thematic priorities of the forthcoming call:

- Smart materials for a smart future
- Resource efficiency and environment
- Sustainable agriculture: Grand Challenges and Technological Change

Forthcoming steps

- Consolidation of Funding parties list and final documentation of commitments (2017)
- Announcement and execution of the call (2018)

³ A current list of a Group of Funding Parties is intentionally not presented in this document, mainly not to influence national clarification processes. The total budget announced with the first call might reach 2 Mio€.

Expected Impact

This Joint Call gives an unprecedented opportunity for the FPs from the Black Sea region and other countries to mutually enhancing scientific cooperation within the region.

An important goal of this Joint Call is **gaining experience for the FPs from the region in the funding of multilateral research** in a flexible manner. This might allow making **long-term decisions** on how to further promote and support multilateral research, encouraging international networking, mobility and support of young scientists. The call can be considered as a pilot activity of a “Black Sea Cooperation Programme” complementing other regional activities i.e. by BSEC.