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This report has been drafted by META Group and Coventry University, under the MIRRIS (Mobilising Institutional Reforms in Research and Innovation Systems) project. MIRRIS aims to encourage greater participation in the European Research Area by the EU13 countries through a process of analysis, dialogue and mutual learning among national research and innovation stakeholders and institutional actors.

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1. Introduction

Within the EUs flagship R&D&I Framework Research Funding programme (FP7), the EU15 member countries have tended to significantly out-perform the newer member states (EU13), both in terms of absolute numbers of participations, participations per head of population, the success rate of applications and volume of funding awarded.

On 20 May 2014, during the 1st Policy dialogue hosted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the details specific to participation of Slovenia in FP7 were presented. The intent of the policy dialogue was to provoke the discussion among participants for the purpose of starting a debate on how to improve performance of the country in terms of participation to the EU R&D programmes and in the view of new opportunities available within ESIF 2014-2020. This report summarizes the outcomes of the dialogue highlights strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, identifies potential gaps and provides a portfolio of suitable intervention schemes as a base for the 2nd Policy dialogue tentatively scheduled for January-April 2015.

The report is divided in two parts: the first part provides a snapshot on the key factors affecting the FP7 participation of Slovenia and main inputs collected by the MIRRIS Team during the 1st Policy dialogue in Ljubljana. The second part contains the SWOT and GAP analysis with a first set of recommendations and a portfolio of support schemes selected among good practices identified by MIRRIS to improve participation to the EU R&D programmes.
2. Background

2.1. Participation to EU R&D programmes

Slovenia is performing relatively well in FP7. Slovenia’s rate of participation in FP7 is above what might be expected for a country of its size. The number of FP7 participations per million inhabitants is well above both the EU28 and EU13 averages. The amount of funding received per capita is also above the EU average. However Slovenia’s success rate at applying for research and innovation funds is amongst the lowest in the EU.

The high level of participation but comparatively low level of success rate demonstrates that Slovenian research actors have been very active in applying for FP7 funds, but somewhat less successful in winning projects.

Public expenditure on R&D in Slovenia is above the EU13 average but slightly below that of the EU28. The availability of skills and employment in science and technology occupations and private firm expenditure on R&D is broadly in line with the EU average. Slovenia also has comparably high rate of English speaking population, which might influence the high level of FP7 participation.

Slovenia has 477 beneficiaries in FP7 funded research projects. Slovenian research groups are relatively strong in several thematic areas, particularly: “ICT” (121 beneficiaries), “Nano, materials, production, tech” (80), and Environment related research (60) (Eurada, 2014, p. 21).

2.2. Barriers and enablers of participation in FP7

There are important differences in the experience of Slovenia with regard to FP7 and ERDF funding earmarked for R&D in the period 2007-2013. The ratio of FP7/ERDF funding in Slovenia is 0.1. This compares to 3.8 in Denmark and 3.5 in Belgium where FP7 funding is more significant than ERDF. There are quite different incentives operating across EU member states. The extent to which this may influence FP7 performance is an important potential topic for discussion with national stakeholders.

There are 3 public and one private university in Slovenia. The University of Ljubljana is in several top rankings such as the “Shanghai 500”. This university had the majority of the national scientific production.

There is also a dozen relative strong scientific and research institutes.¹

Slovenia scores similarly to the average on the European Union’s innovation scoreboard index. The nation is currently in the “innovation followers” group.

¹ http://www.slovenia.si/slovenia/society/science/slovenian-scientific-institutes/

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National business systems are crucial when assessing innovation in its broadest sense. In this respect, the Commission points out that Slovenia needs to improve some macroeconomic imbalances. At a more micro level, Slovenia presents in many instances average indicators for the business ecosystem.

The principal language of the international research community, including that of the Framework Programme itself, is English. With the exception of the former British colonies Cyprus and Malta, significantly lower proportions of the populations of EU13 countries are fluent in English than is the case for the EU15. In the case of Slovenia, the level of English language competence is above both the average of new member states and the EU15. This factor may make Slovenia an attractive partner for international collaborations.

2.3. Wider science and technology context

Overall spending on R&D (as a percentage of GDP) in Slovenia is above the EU28 average. In Slovenia, the Government sector provides 31.5 per cent of total funds for Research and Development; the business enterprise sector provides 61.2.

Slovenia has some 309,000 employees working in a science and technology occupation and the proportion of the workforce employed in these occupations is very close to the EU average and above most new member states.

2.4. Slovenia within the EU context

Slovenia’s success rate in FP7 is below the average of the EU13 and significantly below that of the EU28. By contrast, the number of FP7 participations for Slovenia is much greater than would be expected for a country of Slovenia’s size, reflecting that the level of applications are high. The number of FP7 participations per million inhabitants is around a double that of the EU28 average, and very significantly above the average of the EU13. The level of funding received per capita is also above the EU average.

The ‘Spider diagram’ below shows how Slovenia compares with the EU13 overall in FP7 outcomes as well as some of the enablers and barriers which influence this performance.

---

2 The performance of Slovenia and of the EU13 combined, is benchmarked against the performance of the EU27, which is equal to 100 per cent in each of the categories.
3. Key outcomes of the 1st MIRRIS Policy dialogue conducted in Ljubljana on 20 May 2014

As already above noted, Slovenia’s rate of participation in FP7 is above what might be expected for a country of its size, however Slovenia’s success rate at applying for research and innovation funds is amongst the lowest in the EU. The reasoning behind this “opposite effect” can be found in the grant scheme that was applying in the past and due which the applicants were motivated for participation. Even though intention was good, this led to market distortion where as participants were carrying more of applying for the sake of applying than submitting a good, quality proposal, in other words-quantity over quality. As this situation continues and potentially may have a negative long-term effect on Slovene excellence as well as on further motivation of potential applicants, especially the new ones, it is essential to establish an evaluation system that will set up a number of criteria emphasising excellence and good content as requirement. In order not to discourage applicants with successful results in the past, evaluation process shall also consist of debriefing for the purpose of explaining the week points of the project proposal and what are the key points to be taken into consideration in order to overcome low scores for the purpose of submitting a good quality proposal in the future. Another step to take would be to establish a mechanism for pre-filtering potential applicants.

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The measures are to be undertaken for improving coordination in between Slovene institutions for the purpose of overlapping in between framework programs and structural funds. This is an important issue if complementarities between the above noted programmes are to be reached. Certain efforts have already been undertaken in that regard during preparation of Research and Innovation Strategy, S3, H2020 and other. However, constant cooperation and engagement at different levels is essential.

The University of Ljubljana is in several top rankings such as the “Shanghai 500” and Institute Josef Stefan is number 1 among EU Research organisation ranking. Statistics speak in favour of Slovene excellence in European research domain, however, the word on Slovene excellence has not been spread nor promoted much further beyond its borders. Networking and lobbying activities have to be in line and right mechanisms are to be set as the above noted marketing activities in combination with coordination and pre-call collecting information shall deliver results and make an impact of a longer-term. Slovene National Contact Point (NCP) shall at least partly undertake this particular role. In order to minimize costs, NCP can still achieve the same goal by joining relevant associations and become an active member to utilize the best its benefits. In order to improve the current situation and learn from countries of the similar size, in terms of best practices and knowledge sharing, Slovenia has a preference towards the Scandinavian model (using Denmark as a benchmark), which is a combination of Anglo-Saxon and central European system model).

1st MIRRIS Policy dialogue in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 20 May 2014
In the case of Slovenia, the level of English language competence is above both the average of new member states and the EU15. This factor makes Slovenia being an attractive partner for international collaborations as well as for attracting foreign researchers to come and work in the country. However, for attracting foreign researchers other preconditions are to be in place such as incentive packages and satisfactory living and working conditions i.e. attractive employment conditions. Slovenia already made a step forward in that regard by introducing several National Strategies (Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020 (RISS) and Resolution on National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020) aimed at training enough researchers to meet its R&D targets and at promoting attractive employment conditions in public research institutions as well as in business.
4. SWOT ANALYSIS
### Strengths

- Slovenia has a relatively high investment in R&I in the region which has meant Slovenia has developed a presence in FP7 projects. The R&I budget of one of the highest among the EU13 member states.
- There have been a series of Centres of Excellence and Centres of Competence established which contribute to growth in research expertise in priority areas.
- The small size of Slovenia means that national stakeholders naturally have to collaborate with foreign partners. International partnerships are strength for many Slovenia stakeholders.

### Weaknesses

- A low success rate for research proposals.
- Perceived lack of support from the NCP network within research institutions.
- Poor administrative support in some research institutions.
- Many researchers do not have significant experience in writing research proposals.
- Often Slovenian institutions have not had a coordinating role in drafting research proposals, again preventing researcher development in this area.
- Complex administrative systems of support to business R&D innovation.
- Lack of integration of public R&D policy, support for business R&D and science and technology internationalisation policy.
- Little systematic monitoring and assessment of policy impact on national R&D&I framework.
- Continued reorganisation of government has led to separation of technology and innovation departments from the science and higher education department with little joint coordination taking place. Research is currently highly fragmented with small groups limiting the potential for collaboration with industrial partners.
- Changes to the research framework and funding systems are met with high level of resistance in some research institutions.

### Opportunities

- There are a growing number of projects with Slovenian participation.
- There is the opportunity to develop the research support environment as part of the Smart Specialization Strategy.
- The RISS places significant attention to the international cooperation.
- Current legislation means it is difficult for research institutions to establish a spin-off company as it would require special permission by the government. Until recently any spin-offs that developed as a result of a research project had to be separated from their institution completely in order to avoid legal issues. The establishment of Centres of Excellence and Centres of Competence provides some legal provision which means that public-private partnerships with stakeholders from public and private institutions is now more straightforward.

### Threats

- The Slovenian legal and regulative framework is complicated which reduces incentives to engage in R&D&I.
- Without co-ordination between ministries the framework for R&D&I will remain fragmented.
- Without the development of researcher skills for writing successful project proposals participation in such programmes is likely to remain at current levels.
- Without increased effort to create strong research teams with clear support from research institutions and other experts there is the potential for researchers to leave Slovenia.
5. GAP Analysis

MIRRIS observation of gaps identified in target EU 13 Member States in general terms can be divided into the following categories: structural, personal (motivational), and organisational. During 1st cycle of Policy dialogues and based on input collected, the evidence shared made obvious that participants to R&D programmes show significant weaknesses in the organisational segment, in other words, project (proposal) preparation. MIRRIS methodology for participation in H2020 projects, so called, MIRRIS decision tree, specifies steps to be undertaken in order to build a successful proposal. In order to elaborate areas where a single country shall improve in the process of proposal preparation and the structure, MIRRIS decision tree was further segmented into number of chronological actions taking into account both, demand and supply part of the participation value chain. The aim of the gap analysis is to reflect the feedback collected during the dialogue and to contribute to the identification of potential intervention schemes in the next cycle of dialogues.

The Decision Tree for participating in Horizon 2020
Pursuant to the above noted methodology, in case of Slovenia, areas where participants shall improve are the following:

- **Pre-call intelligence:** there is a need for more activity around developing awareness within research institutions of when calls for proposals are likely to occur, in order to allow researchers sufficient time to develop clear proposals for projects and establish networks with other institutions to do so.

- **Applicant awareness:** more opportunities to make researchers and research institutions aware of the potential routes for applying for funding should be sought.

- **Applicant readiness:** more opportunities to prepare researchers and research institutions for applying for funding should be sought.

- **Single proposer:** the level of activity from Slovenian institutions as proposers of projects is low and should be a key focus for future action.

- **Consortium facilitator:** there is currently low participation as a consortium facilitator and therefore more resources should be channelled into increasing this activity in the future.

- **Targeting partners:** in order to increase participation as a consortium facilitator, researchers should be encouraged to increase their activities which target partner institutions.

- **Targeted search:** researchers and research institutions should be provided with support to encourage a more targeted search for suitable projects to participate in.

- **Proposal drafting:** researchers should be provided with training opportunities to develop skills in developing successful proposals, including opportunities to understand examples of best practice.

- **Involvement in professional networks:** in order to foster greater participation within wider networks researchers should aim to increase their participation in professional networks within, and beyond national borders.

- **Position in the consortium:** low participation in these projects historically has meant that the position of Slovenia in the consortium could be developed. Through training, extending networks and submitting proposals for projects the position of Slovenia in the consortium should be developed.
The National Contact Points of Slovenia

The structure of National Contact Points in the country is also very relevant when support of participants to EU R&D programmes is concerned. In the following text we are providing a short overview of the structure of National Contact Points of Slovenia for Research Programmes. The National Contact Points (NCP) system in Slovenia mainly operates under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MIZŠ), which hosts thirteen of them. The remaining four are divided amongst the Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, responsible for Smart, green and integrated transport and Secure, clean and efficient energy; the Slovene Enterprise Fund, responsible for Access to Finance; and SPIRIT Slovenia, the Public Agency responsible for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Development, Investment and Tourism, which is responsible for SMEs. The majority of NCPs are responsible for two Horizon 2020 thematics.
6. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the policy landscape, the strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats of the R&D&I environment in Slovenia, and drawing on previous evidence presented, alongside the first round of policy dialogue, there are a series of recommendations which could be considered in order to foster an increase in Slovenia’s participation to EU R&D Programmes in the future.

### Identified barriers

- Better use of synergies among different sources of funds;
- Previous support schemes rewarding submission of applications rather than successful proposals contributed to create mistrust in the research community in EU programmes;
- Lack of visibility of Slovenian excellence at EU level;
- Slovenia has low attraction of foreign research. One issue is also legislation on use of foreign language;
- There is a GAP in pre-call intelligence part of the Value chain, Slovenia lacks of representation for research in Brussels, no priority considered for business development.

### Proposed recommendations

- Support organisations willing to qualify their personnel to improve their capabilities in terms of project writing. Promote their active involvement as evaluators of EU projects;
- Improve communication on added value of H2020 projects and set up a pre-screening service to help potential applicants to better evaluate success possibilities;
- Improve coordination efforts with Slovene representative in Brussels. Support the presence in Bruxelles of a team devoted to the Business development of the Slovene R&D&I actors in Europe;
- Better leverage on the activities of the Slovenian Research Agency to promote EU projects when co-financing scientific co-operation with individual countries;
- Invest more resources, co-ordination and communication efforts in the preparation phase, anticipating partner search and negotiation with project coordinators before the call is out;
- Rewarding the winning proposals not incentivizing the applicants;
- Include successful participation to EU programmes/projects among evaluation criteria for academics and researchers career;
- Support international fellowships and training for Slovene researchers.
7. Selected practices

MIRRIS Consortium has collected a number of good practices with an aim to make an additional effort in supporting target EU 13 Member States with case studies of support measures that have been successfully implemented in different countries and evidently contributed to the increase of participation to the EU R&D Programmes. Among collected practices, the MIRRIS Consortium selected six out of which one or maximum two will be presented by experts, who are at the same time the owners of the practice, during the 2nd cycle of policy dialogues. In this section, some of the above noted good practices have been presented to provide an overview of the structure and the needed tools for the measures to be replicated. All the practices have been targeting supporting measures pursuant to the MIRRIS Decision Tree for Participating in H2020.

7.1. Description of good practice - INNcorpórate a Europa service

**Title:** INNcorpórate a Europa service  
**Topic:** Practices for fostering higher participation in EU research funding programmes; upgrading the system of Research and Innovation. It is an assessment service provided to enterprises by the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and the office of the Region of Murcia in Brussels to promote the participation of private companies in European Programmes.  
**Country:** Spain  
**Geographic level (regional or national):** Regional (Region of Murcia)  
**Organisation:** INFO – Regional Development Agency  
**What were the aims of the experience/tool?**  
Increase the participation of private enterprises in European programmes to increase their competitiveness.  
**In which part of the decision tree is the experience?**  
Applicant readiness.  
**Who were the beneficiaries or the target group?**  
About 150 private companies per year. Among them, 70% belonging to the industry and 30% to services. 40 of these companies with experience in EU projects and the majority are newcomers.  
**Description of the experience of using the best practice:**  
Provide coordinated assessment, companies using local experts of the Regional Development Agency and experts of its office in Brussels. The service is provided by 4 experts (officers), 2 of them based in Brussels and the other 2 bases locally in the Region of Murcia.  
The assessment is provided along the whole life cycle of the project. The company receives advice about how to carry out the activity or solve a certain problem. The common starting point is the project idea, consequently the service helps the company to identify the most appropriate call, look for partners/consortia and the write the proposal. After the submission it is provided assessment in the evaluation follow-up, the negotiation with the European Commission and the project implementation.  
The majority of the 372 (year 2013) assessment services provided are done during the early stages of the process (idea, identification of call partner searches). The assessment provided is less relevant in number but more intensive in time for the proposal preparation, negotiation and project implementation. In any case, the main output is that companies have always an expert, permanently accompanying to resolve questions and provide assistance.  
This assessment service is complemented with the initiative “Plan Europe-SME” which coordinates the efforts of the main stakeholders of the Region of Murcia. The Plan provides awareness and capacity building. Specifically it carries out the following 3 main activities:  
**Preparados (ready):** It has been established 5 working groups with involve 21 stakeholders (clusters, technology centers, research organisations, etc.) Each group shares specialised information about EU programmes and organises a regional InfoDay for each major call.  
**Hospitality:** Every quarter a project officer from a company or a regional stakeholder goes to the Brussels office during one month to receive customized training and assistance to prepare project proposals.

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**Con-idea:** a yearly award to the best project idea not submitted yet by a company. The price is a free assistance from a private consultant to help the company to write the proposal for an EU call.

**What is the period during which the experience/tool has been carried out?**
Since 2011.

**What were the results of this best practice?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services to companies</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminated profiles</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressions of interests</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals submitted</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brokerages in Brussels</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is needed for the experience/tool to be successfully replicated?**

- Long term commitment to provide a valuable service to companies.
- At least 2 persons, one locally based and the other based in Brussels.

➢ For any references or bibliography here:

Nova Magazine of Research and innovation in the Region of Murcia. Number 28, page 14. Description of the iNNcórporate a Europa Service
INNCÓRPORTATE A EUROPA
Assessment during the whole life cycle of the project

**PROJECT SEQUENCE**

1. **Company brief**
   - We identify and inform you of the public call that best suits your project.
   - We attend information days so as to provide you with accurate data on public calls.

2. **Partner Search/ Consortium Creation**
   - We send you information on a potential project needing partners so you can join it.
   - We look for the partners that could best suit your project idea.

3. **Proposal preparation**
   - We offer advice:
     - Own resolution
     - Program requirements
     - Proposal review
   - Dialog with National Contact Points and the European Commission.
   - Budget
   - Results ownership
   - Information on proposal preparation, funding
   - Information on logistics for holding project meetings
   - Result dissemination

4. **Proposal assessment**
   - We follow up project evaluation

5. **Achievement**
   - NO
     - We identify new public calls and/or optimize any existing proposal
   - YES

6. **Negotiation**
   - We offer advice:
     - Own resolution
     - Program requirements
     - Dialog with National Contact Points and the European Commission
     - Budget
     - Results ownership
     - Logistics for holding project meetings
     - Result dissemination
     - Attendance to intermediate meetings

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Brussels Office: info@mirris.eu

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### 7.2. Description of good practice- ERA Austrian Portal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title:</strong> ERA – Austrian Portal</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Practices for fostering higher participation in EU research funding programmes; upgrading the system of Research and Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country:</strong> Austria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographic level (regional or national):</strong> National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation:</strong> Centre for social innovation on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (now Ministry of Science, Research and Economy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What were the aims of the experience/tool?</strong></td>
<td>ERA Portal Austria is a knowledge-sharing platform providing information on EU-related research policy and its implementation in Austria and in Europe. In this context it supports decision-making by providing strategic intelligence. In addition, ERA Portal Austria serves as a promotion platform for Austrian initiatives in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In which part of the supply side diagram is the experience?</strong></td>
<td>Within the decision tree, this measure belongs to pre-call intelligence, but not so much on the side of (potential) applicants but on the side of STI policy-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who were the beneficiaries or the target group?</strong></td>
<td>The beneficiaries are policy-makers and policy-delivery services (e.g. agencies) dealing with ERA from Austria but also from abroad as well as Austrian and international researchers from academia and industry. Within Austria several protected sub-groups have been installed under era.gv.at to coordinate the Austrian ERA governance across the different ministries (and agencies) in Austria dealing with the field of science, technology and innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of the experience of using the best practice:</strong></td>
<td>era.gv.at is a comprehensive webportal, which is programmed by IT-experts working at the Centre for Social Innovation. The editorial work is coordinated within the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (0.5 full-time equivalents for IT-services and 0.75 full-time equivalents for coordination work plus several editorial contributors from other ministries and agencies).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The web portal informs about:</strong></td>
<td>Policy fields (e.g. excellent science, research infrastructures, key enabling technologies, societal challenges, knowledge transfer, international cooperation, gender aspects, innovation – SMEs, and regional dimension)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiatives and programmes (e.g. Europe 2020, Innovation Union, Austrian RTI Strategy, ERA, Horizon 2020, multilateral research networks such as JPIs, ERA-NETs, Art. 185 initiatives, ETPs, JTIs, SET-Plan and ET)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Governance (e.g. European Council, Competitiveness Council, ERAC, High Level Group for Joint Programming, Strategic Forum for International S&amp;T Cooperation, European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility, Knowledge Transfer Group, Helsinki Group, Horizon 2020 Programme Committees, ERA Observatory Austria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Intelligence (Austrian EU Performance Monitoring for RTI, Evaluation, Monitoring, Studies, ERA Monitoring Mechanism, ERAWATCH, State Aid Rules for R&amp;I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Services (e.g. what’s up, Events, interactive diagrams, a Helpdesk for the Austrian RTI community providing answers to individual inquiries on ERA related matters, e-Mail alert, contact etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the period during which the experience/tool has been carried out?</strong></td>
<td>era.gv.at started its operations in 2001 and has accompanied the entire 6th and 7th European Framework Programme. It has been prolonged to cover HORIZON 2020 and the years 2013-2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What were the results of this best practice?</strong></td>
<td>Several assessments by clients of era.gv.at have been carried out. They state that era.gv.at is a valuable information tool about ERA and its instruments and about the Austrian position towards ERA. In the meanwhile it issued as the central knowledge management system for coordinating the national Austrian ERA governance system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is needed for the experience/tool to be successfully replicated?</strong></td>
<td>For more info <a href="http://www.mirris.eu">www.mirris.eu</a> or reach out to us via <a href="mailto:info@mirris.eu">info@mirris.eu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political will for a “national” ERA governance structure

Around 2 full-time equivalents to programme and maintain such a comprehensive web-portal and to collect, analyse and present information (editorial work)

- For any references or bibliography here:
  era.gv.at can be accessed under http://era.gv.at/

7.3. Description of good practice – OPERA Office for the promotion of European Research Activities of the A4U (Alliance for Universities)

**Title:** OPERA – A4U  
**Topic:** Practices for fostering higher participation in EU research funding programmes; upgrading the system of Research and Innovation.  
**Country:** Spain (OPERA is located in Brussels)  
**Geographic level (regional or national):** National  
**Organisation:** Universities  

**What were the aims of the experience/tool?**

The purpose of OPERA was to enable the strategic partnership between four Universities to:

- Increase participation and improve leadership in funding programmes at European level;
- Promote the interests of A4U universities in the formulation and the decision making of EU R&D policy and of the various work programmes of the FP.

The office promotes European research activities in known as OPERA (Office for the Promotion of European Research Activities).

**In which part of the supply side diagram is the experience?**

**Pre-call intelligence**

- Encouragement to become involved in the evaluation committees of FP projects to increase knowledge;
- Anticipation and advise of FP projects in priority areas;
- Awareness raising and training for researchers;
- Engagement in consultations by the European Commission.

**Pro-active partner search**

- Facilitating the participation of researchers from the four Universities in European networks.

**Targeting Partners**

- Increasing the visibility and influence of A4U Universities.

**Who were the beneficiaries or the target group?**

Researchers and doctoral students at the A4U Universities.

**Description of the experience of using the best practice:**

OPERA has had the following implications:

- A4U members have strengthened their commitment to internationalisation of research activities;
- Common practices introduced with regard to how A4U institutions participate in FP7 projects. This was facilitated by the role of the support office;
- Location of the OPERA support office in Brussels increases visibility of A4U institutions and facilitates engagement in networks and communication with stakeholders of research funding;
- The office also is advantageous in giving access to strategic information in relation to European Innovation policy and the associated financial instruments.

**What is the period during which the experience/tool has been carried out?**

Since 2011.
**What were the results of this best practice?**

The Office officially opened in 2010 and continues to provide support.

An evaluation of the impact of OPERA is yet to be published. The following notes some of OPERA’s achievements:

- Supporting researchers with their European Commission contracts, for example co-ordinating with project officers;
- Nominating candidates to evaluate proposals to European Research Council (ERC) calls;
- Providing logistical support to researchers visiting Brussels (about 10 meetings);
- Engagement in consultations launched by the European Commission regarding FP7 evaluations and future FP evaluations;
- Attending the EU Conference on Technological Platforms;
- Providing the draft Work Programmes 2011 of the FP7 prior to the official publishing;
- Supporting the participation of universities and their researchers in European networks such as the European University Association (EUA) and the ECRI (European Conference for Research Infrastructures);
- Establishing specific Action Plans to provide tailored support to each institution, according to their interests and needs.

**What is needed for the experience/tool to be successfully replicated?**

The following steps are suggested to replicate the success of the OPERA initiative:

- Identify different institutions to enhance consortium engagement by promoting their European research activities. Establishment of a common institutional commitment;
- Identify the commonalities in their actual participation in the different European research programmes;
- Define the common strategy to follow in enhancing this promotion (definition of common strategic objectives);
- Search for facilities in Brussels and define the structure organisation;
- Select the staff who will be directly involved in the running activities of the new structure in Brussels;
- Evaluate the resources needed to maintain the facilities in Brussels;
- Identify funding sources for each institution;
- Agree upon a governance structure and establish regulatory standards;
- Sign a collaboration agreement among all the institutions involved, in order to manage the structure/office in Brussels.

➢ For any references or bibliography here:

A4U (2014) Alliance for Universities
http://www.alliance4universities.eu/home.php> [29 July 2014]

http://eliare.eu/support-to-stakeholders/good-practices/> [29 July 2014]
7.4. Description of good practice- ERIO-UCL

| **Title:** European Research and Innovation Office - UCL |
| **Topic:** Practices that elaborate activities with an aim to encourage and support academic communities in leading new Horizon 2020 proposals. |
| **Country:** UK |
| **Geographic level (regional or national):** National |
| **Organisation:** European Research and Innovation Office |
| **Organisation:** INFO – Regional Development Agency |

What were the aims of the experience/tool?
The UCL European Research and Innovation Office’s primary function is to help maintain UCL’s position at the forefront of European collaboration in science and technology.

In which part of the decision tree is the experience?
Researchers and departments of the university and companies working in the area of Greater London.

Who were the beneficiaries or the target group?
ERIO-UCL has under management 650 FP7 projects, 26 collaborative projects for 148 million EUR and 110 ERC grants.

**ERIO provides the following rank of services:**
- Proposal support services
- Proposal workshops and information days
- Horizon 2020 advice and proposal-writing guides;

UCL is also a founder member of Vision2020: The Horizon Network, a platform for excellent research organisations and companies collaborating in Horizon 2020 proposals and projects.

Description of the experience of using the best practice:
The UCL European Research and Innovation Office’s primary function is to help maintain UCL’s position at the forefront of European collaboration in science and technology. They have a team of 17 people.

**These services include:**
- Horizon 2020 funding information;
- Proposal support services;
- Project management;
- Project costings;
- Contract negotiations.

**The development and implementation of new ERIO services to encourage and support UCL’s academic communities in leading new Horizon 2020 proposals. These services include:**
- Proposal support services;
- Proposal workshops and information days;
- Horizon 2020 advice and proposal-writing guides;
- Horizon 2020 information services;
- Proposal Management;
- Pre-award consultancy service;

**H2020 & Proposal Advice:**
- Advice for PIs expressing an interest in Horizon 2020 funding;
- Horizon 2020 guidance documents for UCL PIs
- Previously successful proposals;
- Templates & budget calculators;
- Proposal Review;
- Stage 1 & ad hoc checks of proposals;
- General relevance to the Work Programme;
- Advice on Impact & dissemination;
- Formatting & level of completion;
- Management structure & IP matters;
- UCL costing & general finance check;

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The ERIO is also organized Workshops timed to support UCL researchers applying to particular Horizon 2020 calls, with ERIO staff and guest speakers, including experienced PIs and ex-EU proposal evaluators ERIO takes care also of the Proposal Management. They provide proposal support, from concept to final submission. Afterwards, ERIO supports in the Implementation phase, management & finance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERIO receives about the 1% of total award as ERIO fee if funded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on successful trial in 2012 (75% funded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selection based on a structured application</td>
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<tr>
<td>A part of the team of the ERIO office (4 people) takes care of the post-award management, coordination and assurance of the projects under management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are involved in 26 large international research and innovation projects, for a total budget of 146 m EUR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For 2014, ERIO agreed to submit 44 Principle Investigators proposals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ERIO provides the following rank of services:**
- Proposal support services
- Proposal workshops and information days
- Horizon 2020 advice and proposal-writing guides

**What is the period during which the experience/tool has been carried out?**
Since 2000.

**What were the results of this best practice?**
ERIO-UCL has under management 650 FP7 projects, 26 collaborative projects for 148 million EUR and 110 ERC grants.

**What is needed for the experience/tool to be successfully replicated?**
There are 17 people working in the ERIO office. Their background is either legal, business management or finance. The consulting model followed by ERIO of receiving the 1% of the contract also for projects funded to private companies is a model that could be replicated as well.

- For any references or bibliography here: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/research/europe

For review and selection of other collected best practices, please visit www.mirris.eu

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8. Next step: the second policy dialogue

The second policy dialogue, planned for January-April 2015, will focus on the identification and selection of the most appropriate intervention schemes. MIRRIS team will closely cooperate with Slovene stakeholders in order to collect input to prepare a road map that would lead to improving the participation of Slovene researchers into EU programmes.

![Diagram showing the sequence of policy dialogues and road mapping](image-url)
9. Annexes


May 20, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization/Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Primož Pristovšek</td>
<td>Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dr. Franci Demšar</td>
<td>Director of Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrs. Natalija Medica</td>
<td>Ministry of Economic Development and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dr. Igor Milek</td>
<td>NCP for SMEs in Horizon 2020 (SPIRIT Slovenia Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dr. Špela Stres</td>
<td>Institute Jozef Stefan, EEN, TTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dr. Davor Kozmus</td>
<td>NCP for &quot;Europe in changing world&quot; and NCP for &quot;Security&quot; in Horizon 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dr. Stojan Sorčan</td>
<td>NCP for &quot;Science with and for Society&quot; in Horizon 2020 and analytical officer in Science Directorate (MESS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mrs. Mirjana Oblak</td>
<td>National Institute of Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mrs. Lucija Gorički</td>
<td>Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts (SAZU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mrs. Anja Vodišek</td>
<td>Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts (SAZU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mrs. Marjeta Trobec</td>
<td>Institute Jozef Stefan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mrs. Staška Mrak Jamnik</td>
<td>University of Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dr. Marijan Leban</td>
<td>University of Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dr. Martin Čopič</td>
<td>Vice-Rector, University of Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Representative of the EC Office</td>
<td>Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mrs. Mojca Cvirn</td>
<td>Technology Park Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mrs. Kristina Ober</td>
<td>Technology Park Ljubljana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dr. Tomaž Boh</td>
<td>Head of Science Division, Science Directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mr. Peter Volasko</td>
<td>NCP-Ministry of Science and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mr. Andrea Di Anselmo</td>
<td>Project Director of Mirris and Vice President of META Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ms. Nina Mazgan</td>
<td>Project Manager and Investment Manager for Slovenia, META Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ms. Melania Niec</td>
<td>Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, PARP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9.2. Annex 2 Policy Landscape

9.2.1. Institutional framework

The Slovenian institutional framework for R&D&I is complex and has undergone significant transformation since the early 2000s. The Slovenian R&D&I framework has evolved via a complex relationship between the influential public R&D sector and increasing presence of private sector businesses in R&D.

Research policy is established through a series of formal mechanisms as outlined in the Law on Research and Development (OG 96/2002, rev 22/2006).

In 2004, Slovenia transferred R&D policy making responsibilities from two ministries (Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Education, Science and Sports) into a new Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. In the same year the Slovenian Research Agency (SRA) was established.

In 2006 the Slovenian Technology Agency was formed, predominantly to focus on the R&D&I taking place in the private business sector.

In 2011 the system changed once again: the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology merged with Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Culture to form The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS). Activities relevant to technology sector were transferred from Ministry of Economy to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology. The Directorate of higher education also merged with directorate of science. In 2013 the culture was erased from the MESCS to form a separate Ministry of Culture and amending the title to Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

In 2012 a new agency, SPIRIT, was established to support and promote internationalisation, entrepreneurship, technology development and tourism, merging the Public Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (PAEFI), Slovenian Tourism Organisation (STO) and Technology Agency (TIA).

The result of the continued change taking place to the institutional framework is that the landscape for R&D&I had become fragmented.

Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) and Ministry for Economic Development and Technology retains responsibility for the preparation of policy for R&D and the implementation of such policies (for example the Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia for 2011-2010), as well as responsibility for public R&D budget and fostering international cooperation for R&D. Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MESS) has increased its presence in the policy landscape, beyond a co-ordinative role. It monitors the results of research policy and proposes new measures for implementation. It also implements measures such as establishing Centres of excellence, which involved a special programme of co-financing R&D in SME’s.
The National Science and Technology Council (comprised of members of research community, higher education, businesses acts as an advisory body to government on R&D issues.

The Slovenian Research Agency (SRA) is responsible for execution of public research financing, professional and independent selection of projects and programmes, and monitoring of research programmes. The SRA develops an annual research programme which identifies a financial plan for its own operation as well as the funding of various research programmes. After approval from MESS, his is presented to government The SRA is then responsible for implementation of these programmes.


The Council for Science and Technology provides guidelines for the national R&D programme. To develop these guidelines the Council carries out consultation with various stakeholders.

The Fiscal Council provides assessment of the sustainability of fiscal policies and in doing so will need to ensure efficient use of public funds for R&D.

Slovenian Enterprise Fund an institution which provides financial support to enterprises and is focused on private support for SME’s and start-ups.

The key policy document for the institutional framework for R&D&I in Slovenia is the Research and Innovation Strategy (RISS) established in 2011. RISS identified the importance of supporting interdependence between science, development and innovation, as well as the importance of support institutions for R&D. An initial output from this was the creation of SPIRIT (agency tasked with promotion of entrepreneurship and development). This policy complemented the National Programme of Higher Education (NPHE) 2011-2020.

RISS identified several priorities

- Better integration of research and innovation
- Publicly funded sciences and scientists to contribute to economic and social restructuring
- Enhancing closer cooperation between public research institutions and the business sector
- Increasing scientific excellence, through increasing competitiveness within science and technology stakeholders, and providing resources in terms of finance and human resources.
The diagram below provides an overview of the Slovenian R&D&I institutional framework.

Source: Udovič & Bučar (2014)
The RISS (and Research Infrastructures Roadmap 2011-2020) are designed to address two problems previously identified: lack of cooperation between research institutes and fragmentation of research infrastructure.

RISS pays particular attention to research infrastructure highlighting that the Slovenian system required better exploitation of existing national research infrastructure and greater international infrastructure.

The RISS identified priority areas where research infrastructure should be developed: advance materials and nanotechnology, energy efficient and sustainable construction and geo-information sources, sustainable energy resources and environmental technologies, biotechnology, biomedicine and biological sources, high-performance computing.

In 2013 a revision of the budget which influences R&D led to a decrease in available funds and therefore reduced calls for tender from the Slovenian Research Agency.

In the 2014 Innovation Union Scoreboard Slovenia is considered an innovation follower and a growth leader within this category with innovation growing despite a fall in 2012. Its strength are considered to be in international scientific co-publications, R&D expenditures in the business sector, public-private scientific co-publications. Weaknesses are considered to be in the area of non-EU doctoral students and knowledge-intensive exports.

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**Funding of Research**

The majority of research is funded through ‘Research Group Programme funding’ which is a system established in 1999 in order to create some stability in the research infrastructure. In this model funding is allocated to researchers to carry out projects of their choosing. The Slovenian Research Agency (SRA) is responsible for monitoring and administering this programme. Citations are largely used as a form of monitoring in terms of research output although more recently SRA have begun to request information on the socio-economic relevance of the research in order to secure funding.

There is also ‘Basic and Applied Projects’ funding also administered by the Slovenian Research Agency. This focuses on shorter, applied and post-doctoral research project.
9.2.2. Networks

Research and development activity in Slovenia is largely concentrated in the centre of the country, primarily due to the concentration of research institutions in the capital Ljubljana. Private sector business research is more equally distributed across the country.

Most private sector business investment remains within that private sector. In 2006 introduce tax incentives for investments in R&D from private sector business. In 2010 this tax subsidy was increased. There has been no evaluation of the impact of this at this stage.

There are current several regional R&D agencies but none with responsibility for policy formation. These regional agencies (which vary in legal status from public, public-private partnership and full private owners) largely provide consultancy services.

There is recognition from the Slovenian Development Strategy that there is a need for more coherent regional development objectives in order to reduce spatial differences in development.

The National Research and Development Programme (2006-2010) did not have a regional focus, and nor does RISS. Although the government has stressed the importance of strengthening research capacity across the country to create a ‘creative nucleus’. The ‘creative nucleus’ was intended to foster polycentric development which would increase research competiveness and development potential of each region.

There are a number of public-private research and technology organisations in Slovenia although there a range of issues related to this due to the different legal statuses of the collaborations. These institutions can be categorised as: bridging institutions (e.g. Technology Centres, Technology Platforms, Centres of Excellence, clusters) and support institutions (e.g. Technology parks).

- Technology centres: independent legal entities established by several business to carry out R&D in a specific research area.
- Technology Platforms: introduced in 2005 with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Financial subsidies provided for the establishment of the platforms and their participation at the EU level.
- These platforms were seen as an efficient way of voicing the R&D and innovation priorities of a particular industry sector as well as generating interest from the public R&D.
- The Cluster initiative: established in 2000 but after the change of government in the end of 2004, the cluster support programme was discontinued.
- Technology Parks: another measure that has been long established (since 1994) are supported by Ministry of Economy through PAEFI. Here, too, the modes of financing have changed several times since their establishment.
9.2.3. Supporting Researchers and Research Institutions

There are several tools used by the national network of the NCPs to support researchers, including: information events, seminars, workshops, training courses, match-making, partner search, and consultations.

In 2013 Ministry of Education, Science and Sport announced a call for career opportunities for researchers who had finished PhDs with a fund of €6 million to support this.

Within R&D funding, the Slovenian Research Agency (SRA) has published a series of calls for programmes which are designed to support the career development of researchers:

- In 2013 there was a call for mentorship in a Young Researchers Programme from the SRA, and also a call for researchers in their initial stage of career from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Slovenia has been providing funds since 1985 for postgraduate students who wish to develop their research career. In 2001 the funding remit was expanded to include young researchers in the business sector.

- There are also regular annual calls from the Slovenian Enterprise Fund which issues a series of financing options for SME’s including direct investment grants guarantees for loans for technological research projects, and support for start-ups.

- In 2005, implemented by the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship and Foreign Investment (PAEFI) and later SPIRIT, the Ministry of Economy supported a programme to encourage transfer of researchers from public research institutes to research departments in private sector business.

There is also a not-for-profit organisation related to R&D in Slovenia, the Slovenian Science Foundation (SSF). This organisation is involved in the promotion of science as well as the provision of scholarships for young researchers, although it does not provide research funding in any other form.

The mobility of researchers, professors and students has increased significantly since the membership of Slovenia in EU. The government actively supports the participation in various mobility programmes through the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS).

Increased participation of Slovenia researchers in international collaborations has been facilitated by RISS. This included financing participation of Slovenian researchers at conference fees, membership fees for professional association, support of preparation of project proposals for EU framework programmes.
9.2.4. Key highlights from Researchers’ Report 2013 on Slovenia published by Deloitte

Slovenian research and innovation, apart from funding received on behalf of business enterprise, also receives support from the EU budget through two main instruments: the Structural Funds and the 7th Framework Programme. Slovenia is one of the countries where R&D expenditure has increased steadily both before and after 2008. As a result Slovenia had the sixth highest R&D intensity in the EU in 2011, a development which reflects the Slovenian counter-cyclic commitment to ensure increased and sustainable economic growth”.

The latest data show that despite the economic crises, the growth in 2010-11 in the number of R&D personnel in public research institutes was 4%.

In 2010, the percentage of women grade A academic staff was 20.1% in Slovenia compared with 15.4% among the Innovation Union reference group and an EU average of 19.8%.

The National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020 and the Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020 provide the possibility for employees at public research and higher education institutions to step out of the salary system for civil servants. Both documents point out that research and higher education institutions should enjoy greater autonomy in their recruitment system and management of human resources.

The Slovenian government has taken a number of measures since the mid-1980s to promote, attract and train young people to become researchers. An important national science policy instrument is the co-financing of doctoral students (Young Researchers, Young Researchers in the Economy, and Innovative Scholarship Scheme) from national and European public resources. Consequently, in the last five years, the number of students increased from 1,582 in 2007 to 4,098 in 2011 (an increase of 160%). The number of women doctoral students increased by even more, namely by 182% (781 female students in 2007; 2,200 female students in 2011). The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport run a special Science Promotion Programme (publishing annual calls) designed to raise general awareness of scientific knowledge and technological innovation, particularly in primary and secondary education.

The Research and Innovation Strategy of Slovenia 2011-2020 encourages the strengthening of the qualifications of research personnel so as to be systematic and based on the principle of lifelong learning. The Strategy envisages that researchers need to gain knowledge of managerial techniques, communication, intellectual property rights management, and entrepreneurship. The Strategy provides for the adoption of an Action Plan for Improving Career Opportunities for Researchers in all Career Periods and for Ensuring the Gender Equality Principle in order to implement these objectives. The ministries of science and of technology are jointly responsible for carrying this through.

In 2011, the Slovenian ministry responsible for higher education introduced the Innovative Scholarship Scheme for Funding Doctoral Studies. The purpose of this measure is to encourage doctoral students to choose relevant doctoral thesis topics for innovation, industry and sustainable development. The scheme covers student’s tuition fees, living expenses and material
costs for their research. It is co-funded by the European Structural Funds. Selection of the candidates is carried out by the universities or other contractors of the PhD students. In 2011, more than 700 doctoral candidates were funded for an annual amount of EUR 3.3 million.

Co-financing of bilateral international co-operation is provided by the Slovenian Research Agency on the basis of public tenders for co-financing scientific co-operation with individual countries. International scientific co-operation is carried out on the basis of bilateral international agreements on scientific and technological co-operation between the Republic of Slovenia and individual countries. In 2011, 17 bilateral public calls were issued in cooperation with 16 countries. A total of 510 projects with 31 countries were co-financed with national budget funds. The Agency used EUR 729 000 of national budget funds to co-finance bilateral international cooperation projects.

Insecure career prospects and personal reasons (salary is not enough to raise a family) are the main obstacles to inward mobility of Slovenian researchers. For foreign researchers, unattractive pay (salaries the same as those paid to civil servants) has been the main obstacle to moving to Slovenia to work.

Public Research Institutes in Slovenia require international experience (a stay abroad of at least three months) for researchers signing an employment contract with them. Moreover, promotion up the academic ladder in Slovenia requires transnational (or international) mobility.

9.3. Annex 3 - Highlights from MIRRIS on the National reform programmes 2012 - R&D and innovation

Slovenia regards research and development as a priority for enhancing long-term growth prospects and research and development intensity continues to exceed the EU average, due to slightly above-average expenditure by both businesses and the public sector. Structural funds are an important source of funding for research and innovation. The measures outlined in the 2011 Research and Innovation Strategy and the above-mentioned National Programme for Higher Education are yet to materialise, pending further roadmaps. The EU 2020 research and development intensity target of 3 % seems achievable so the main challenges remain the effective and efficient deployment of available resources (including from the European Regional Development Fund), the structure of policies to provide support to research and especially to stimulate innovation, enhanced cooperation with the business sector and focus on strategic industrial sectors, and investment to support key enabling technologies. Tax allowances for research and development were increased in April 2012. The National Reform Programmes indicates the government will steer research and development towards enhancing the economy’s non price competitiveness (trademarks and patents).
10. References


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✓ ERA AUSTRIAN PORTAL http://era.gv.at/