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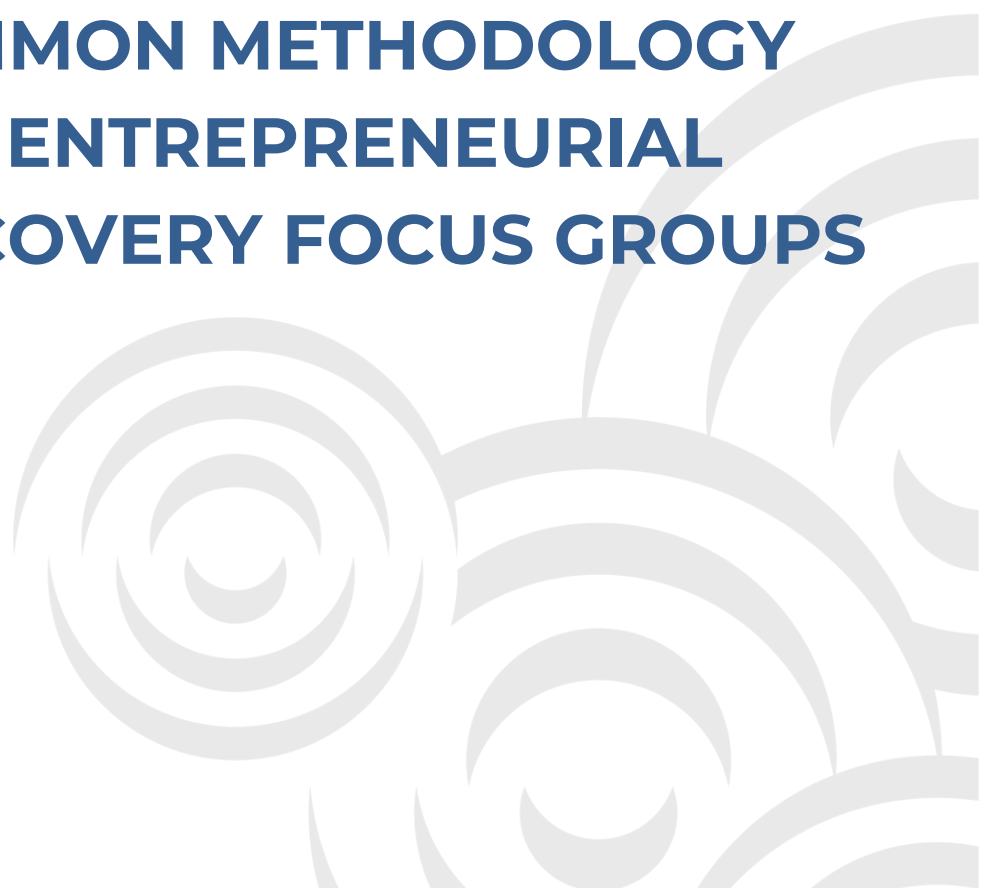
**Danube Transnational Programme**

**Danube S3 Cluster**

## **Danube S3 Cluster**

**Activity 3.2 Activation of the Entrepreneurial  
Discovery Process**

**COMMON METHODOLOGY  
FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL  
DISCOVERY FOCUS GROUPS**



|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
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## LISTS

### List of abbreviation

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ASP     | Associated Strategic Partners                               |
| CSO     | Civil Society Organization                                  |
| EDP     | Entrepreneurial Discovery Process                           |
| EUSDR   | EU Strategy for the Danube Region                           |
| FG      | Focus Group   |
| ICT     | Information and Communication Technologies                  |
| NGO     | Non-governmental organization                               |
| RIS 3   | Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation |
| RTD + I | Research, Technology, Development and Innovation            |
| PP      | Project Partner   |
| PR      | Public Relations  |

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## INTRODUCTION

### Brief Description of the Project

The project addresses the unbalanced distribution of innovation performances between Western part of the region with a high level of development and the Eastern part that is lagging behind, most of the countries belonging to the Modest Innovators group with more than 17% of enterprises producing only 3% of added value. This is due to different framework conditions and wide range of policies governing the R&I sector. Public policies in the area should be better coordinated while investment needs to be smarter and better focused. This is why cluster cooperation policies based on the smart specialization concept are at the core of delivering the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) strategy, as they help take the geographical and thematic context into account in order to boost growth.

The project aims to leverage the innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Danube area by developing smart and coordinated cluster policies in the context of research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation, enhance innovation management knowledge and skills and foster transnational cluster cooperation in Agri-Food sector. The sector has been selected since it is a priority area of the RIS3 in the partner regions and it is among the priorities selected for the Danube area by the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

The project aims are to generate a significant change by developing Danube S3 Cluster Strategy and Programme based on Quadruple Helix involvement as transnational strategic documents focused on exploiting the linkages between mutually reinforcing specialization areas across sectors. The strategy will be tested by 5 pilot initiatives in 4 cross-cutting themes (Market intelligence, Open innovation, Business models for Circular Economy and Healthy Food) that are interconnected and able to generate new innovative project ideas and feeding into EUSDR. The pilots will be implemented in Croatia, Serbia and Slovakia and especially in Moldova and Ukraine where most of the knowledge generator activities will take place, for a better coordination of cluster policies.

The partnership is composed by 15 Project partners (PP) and 5 Associated Strategic Partners (ASP) from 11 countries in the Danube area.



## Definition of RIS approach<sup>1</sup>, Principles and Steps

National/regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialization (RIS3) are integrated, place-based economic transformation agendas that do five important things:

- They focus policy support and investments on key national/regional priorities, challenges and needs for knowledge-based development, including ICT-related measures;
- They build on each country's/region's strengths, competitive advantages and potential for excellence;
- They support technological as well as practice-based innovation and aim to stimulate private sector investment;
- They get stakeholders fully involved and encourage innovation and experimentation;
- They are evidence-based and include sound monitoring and evaluation systems.

A national/regional research and innovation strategy for smart specialisation can be seen as an economic transformation agenda based on four general principles summarised in four 'Cs'<sup>2</sup>.

**(Tough) Choices and Critical mass:** limited number of priorities on the basis of own strengths and international specialization – avoid duplication and fragmentation in the European Research Area – concentrate funding sources ensuring more effective budgetary management

**Competitive Advantage:** mobilize talent by matching RTD + I capacities and business needs through an entrepreneurial discovery process

**Connectivity and Clusters:** develop world class clusters and provide arenas for related variety/cross-sector links internally in the region and externally, which

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<sup>1</sup> Guide to Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS 3), May 2012, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, ISBN: 978-92-79-25094-1, doi:10.2776/65746

<sup>2</sup> Guide to RIS 3, p.17





drive specialized technological diversification – match what you have with what the rest of the world has

**Collaborative Leadership:** efficient innovation systems as a collective endeavour based on public-private partnership (quadruple helix) – experimental platform to give voice to un-usual suspects.

Six-step approach to RIS3<sup>3</sup>:

1. Analysis of the regional context and potential for innovation
- 2. Governance: ensuring participation and ownership**
3. Elaboration of an overall vision for the future of the region
4. Identification of priorities
5. Establishment of suitable policy mixes, roadmap, action plan(s)
6. Integration of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

This methodology considers the fact that the project *Activity 3.2 Activation of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process* (EDP) focuses primary on the above-highlighted step 2 of the RIS3 six-step approach, namely Governance: ensuring participation and ownership.

However, the Focus Groups (FGs) are in close connection with the steps 3 and 4 of the RIS3 approach, since a definition of common vision of the regional smart specialization is stipulated to be one of the main outcomes; as well as description of the cross-cutting project ideas.

This methodology is designed to help Project Partners to prepare, deliver and report the EDP FGs under the project activity A 3.2. It is practically orientated, that is why it comprises tips, concrete questions and templates.

The Project Partners in charge of the four FGs have to comply with it in respect to both organization and delivery. They should also use the reporting structure and the attached annexes in order to BSCSME to prepared the integrated report. However, some minor changes in the delivery (due to the different characteristics

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<sup>3</sup> Guide to RIS 3, p. 17



and context) are acceptable – if only they don't change the methodological concept and the final results. That is why all partners should strive to respect the methodological steps.

### Purpose and Objectives of the Methodology

This methodology is created to ensure the standardization and coherence of analysis process and activation of the entrepreneurial discovery. The standard approach refers to the uniform application by each Project Partner responsible for organization and execution of the entrepreneurial discovery focus group - from the first stages of planning and throughout the whole process to common working steps.

It will also help the PPs in charge to apply a standardized structure for execution and report documents on this activity.

The standard approach will help the Leader of A3.2.1 (BSCSME) to be able to produce the unitary report on the deployment of the 4 focus groups.

### Preparation Steps for EDP FGs

Preparation of a Focus Group comprises six steps in compliance of the Methodological Guidance for the Organization of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Focus Groups<sup>4</sup>, as follows:

- Choosing the targeted RIS3 priority area (accomplished during the preparation of the project proposal), as well as breaking it into sub-areas/sub-themes deriving from the analytical data collected;
- Coordinating administrative issues (venue, technical equipment, etc.);
- Setting up the agenda;
- Inviting external speakers;
- Appointing a moderator and a rapporteur for the parallel working group sessions;

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<sup>4</sup> Methodological Guidance for the Organization of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Focus Groups, Joint Research Center and DG REGIO, October 19, 2018, p. 6

- Elaborating the list of target group participants to be invited from the regional level, covering the Quadruple Helix.

Details regarding the above-mentioned steps are provided in the next chapter.



## PART A PREPARATION

### A.1 Focus Groups Overview

For the activation of the entrepreneurial discovery process, 4 EDP focus groups shall be organized in order to provide the opportunity to the cluster actors to share their knowledge, their needs and generate cross-cutting project ideas. The focus groups will be dedicated to the cross-sectoral themes of Market Intelligence, Business Models that Work in Circular Economy, Healthy Food and Open Innovation.

The focus groups, each of them with 30 local participants (not including PPs' representatives), will be organized as follows:

- **In Ukraine** – an EDP focus group on Market Intelligence in Clusters, partner in charge IMPEER NASU, supported by the knowledge generator partner S2i;
- **In Bosnia-Herzegovina** – an EDP focus group on Business Models that Work in Circular Economy, partner in charge NERDA, supported by the knowledge generator partner IFKA;
- **In Romania** - an EDP focus group on Healthy Food, partner in charge SMRDA, supported by the knowledge generator partner UM;
- **In Moldova** – an EDP focus group on Open Innovation in Clusters, partner in charge MTTN, supported by the knowledge generator partner ITC.

The composition of the participants shall reflect the Quadruple Helix approach in Agri-Food sector (more details in A.3 section of this methodology).

The preparation and delivery of all focus groups (here and after EDP FGs or FGs) are based on the Guide to Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specializations (RIS 3), as well as on Methodological Guidance for the Organization of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Focus Groups (JRC and DG REGIO).

The preparation and delivery will be accomplished in a similar way in order to give opportunity for a comparative analysis aiming to prepare the ground for the next project activity A 3.3 Strategy - Priority setting.

In this regard, this document has been created to serve as a Common Methodology to prepare and deliver EDP FGs.



The **main goals** of all focus groups, regardless their specific thematic topic, are:

- Share knowledge and needs of players in Agri-food sector,
- Identify what players should do in the field of research and development and innovations and non-technological innovation to build unique competitive advantage,
- Analyse data regarding markets, technologies, skills, knowledge transfer, capabilities, institutional agility, business models,
- Validate findings of the transnational analysis,
- Generate project ideas in the respective cross-cutting theme: Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business models that work in Circular Economy and Healthy Food.

From the whole process under the Activity 3.2 we expect the following **main outcomes**:

- A comprehensive list of the regional (local) resources on hand, however limited they are, in the Agri-food domain – understood as specific strengths and competitive advantages regarding markets, technologies, skills, knowledge transfer, capabilities, institutional agility, business models;
- List of the obstacles, bottlenecks, problems, challenges or threats and a list of some ways to overcome (mitigate) their influence;
- Comments on the lists above, where applicable;
- Definition of the regional vision – specific, unique, at the same time bold and realistic;
- Definition of the distinctive and original area(s) of specialization of the regions;
- Definitions the different actors' roles – what the key players in Agri-food sector should do in the field of R&D+I and non-technological innovation;
- Lists of needs of each of the key groups according to the Quadruple Helix as well as suggested solutions or tools to address them;



- Project ideas deriving from the definition of the regional smart specialization, resources on hand and the characteristics of the key players.

## A.2 Programme - General Guidelines

This Methodology accepts the common approach of consecutive sessions in one working day, i.e. each EDP FGs has been designed to take place in a single day in the framework of approx. 6-8 hours, incl. breaks for coffee and/or lunch.

The methodology allows flexibility for adaptations in respect to the cultural specific of each country or region, as well as logistics necessary for stakeholders' participation, which must be considered by the respective PP while preparing and delivering the focus group. It means, each partner has to decide whether a single day structure is suitable enough for all participants or it is better to divide the process into two days.

**Four EDP FGs will be accomplished before 1 November 2019.**

## A.3 Recruitment of Participants

The purpose of this section is to help concerned PPs (IMPEER NASU, NERDA, SMRDA, MTTN) identify and mobilize representatives of each stakeholder group.

The Quadruple Helix approach will be applied during the recruitment of participants process.

The Quadruple Helix Model has been chosen for tackling the complex challenges of the regional development and, more precisely, enabling innovations in Agri-food sector. It breaks down the traditional walls between public authorities, business (companies and business support entities), academia (universities, research and development institutions), and civil society (NGOs and other citizens' bodies). The Quadruple Helix Model accepts and applies the multidisciplinary viewpoint that brings together all key players and creates an environment promoting team working, collaboration and ideas sharing. By working together, the parts of the Quadruple Helix can create new shared value that benefits all participants not only a separate segment of a region.



The project “Transnational Cluster Cooperation active on Agri-Food, based on Smart Specialization Approach in Danube region” accepts the definition of the Quadruple Helix Model and addresses following participants in the four EDP FGs:

- Clusters active in Agri-Food and business support organizations, firms.
- Higher education and research institutions, knowledge generator in Agri-Food.
- National and Local Public Authorities responsible for cluster policies and innovation support.
- Civil society organizations.

To accomplish the EDP FG goals and to obtain the results that allow to prepare the sound implementation of the next project activities, i.e. strategic planning and local actions setting, participants should be carefully recruited.

Besides above-mentioned stakeholders according to the Quadruple Helix Model, the participation of so-called boundary spanners is recommendable, as described in RIS 35. It means people and organizations with an interdisciplinary knowledge or experience of interaction with several different types of organisations; they can facilitate new connections across sectors and institutions and they can mitigate the risk of one sector (institution) domination.

PP in charge of each EDP FG should identify institutions (organizations, bodies, legal entities) that are relevant key actors in Agri-food sector and the regional development.

A stakeholders mapping (see details in the next section) is to be applied in order to identify the profiles of these organizations. Individuals managing or representing them have to be considered as well. PPs have to consider the fact that some individuals do not necessarily represent only one group – it is especially valid for smaller communities, and his/her participation could guarantee several groups’ views (e.g. – a business representative could be an NGO board member at the same time).

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<sup>5</sup> RIS 3, p. 21



How to approach the right persons and elaborate the most effective list of invitees – see below some tips applicable for all stakeholders' groups.

- Use publicly available lists made during previous events dealing with the sectorial problems (agri-food issues) or broader themes (regional development, regional cooperation, EU programs announcement campaigns, etc.);
- Contact the umbrella organizations (applicable especially for civil society);
- Ask a public authority (a municipality, for instance) for help, their PR offices usually keep comprehensive lists of all regional and even national key players with up-to-date contacts;
- Start with an initial list of potential participants and ask them for further recommendations following the Quadruple Helix Model ('snowball' recruitment);
- Plan invitation process into steps and in accordance to invitees' specifics (see next chapter below giving details for each societal group);
- Once the final list is ready, send a message to all potential participants in order to give them more information and details regarding the EDP FG, including links to project site, Guide to RIS3, description of Quadruple Helix, etc. If possible, send them a preliminary list of participants to make them know each other;
- Call each participant personally a day or two before the EDP FG;
- Be prepared for unpleasant surprises such as last-minute change of a participant or disengagement. In this regard, it is reasonable to have a longer list of invitees – few participants more is better than few participants less.

Ideal participant is influential, informed, accessible and able to act as agents of change – see rationale below:





**Table 1 Ideal Participant**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Influential</b></p>                                    | <p>Represents their institution ex officio in terms of their official position.</p> <p>Well-known in their stakeholders' group.</p> <p>Experienced in practice.</p>   |
| <p><b>Informed</b></p>                                       | <p>Possesses sound knowledge not only in their specific area but also in the regional development as well.</p> <p>Aware of the grand societal challenges and the ways to address them.</p>  |
| <p><b>Accessible and able to act as agents of change</b></p> | <p>Not so low in the respective institutional ladder so they cannot perform changes, but not so high so they cannot fully attend the EDP FG.</p> <p>Able to communicate the FG results with co-workers and institution's heads.</p> |

It is unlikely that all these features can be found in a single person, but the closer the invited persons are, the more effective role they will play during and after the FG.

As a whole, the group of EDP FG participants should be balanced by following criteria:

- gender balance - even number of men and women invited;
- age and experience balance - even number of young and aged persons invited;
- geographical variety – people from outside the regional centre invited to attend the FG
- balanced mix of all segments of the Quadruple Helix (no one part prevails) – this criterion is crucial.



Again, the above-mentioned features describe an ideally balanced group that is unlikely to be reached in reality. However, the PP has to keep in mind these criteria and try to stay close to them.

Pay special attention to the last criterion, which guarantees reaching the FG goals. It could be met by pre-defined quotas for each of the target groups – 7-8 persons per group. The non-ability of meeting this criterion can compromise the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process.

## **A.4 Stakeholders Mapping**

### **A.4.1 Clusters Active in Agri-Food and Business Support Organizations**

This group is a difficult one – from the point of view of how to reach its representatives, how to invite them and above everything, how to persuade them into active participation.

First of all, it is not homogenous, it comprises a lot of different organizations. Each of them is independent, not subordinated, and you have to approach each of them separately. Next, many of them usually are reluctant when it comes to participation in public forums – and it is especially valid for companies, whereas business support organizations are, more or less, keen on sharing their experience and participating in consultations events. However, their opinions are very important, they are the voices of the practice.

Constraints:

- business people consider a consultation as a waste of time;
- business people are more sceptic than the others that the right solutions will be found;
- businessmen fear of competitors, that is why they are not eager to share their ideas in public;



- in smaller economies the companies are also small, it means usually their horizon of planning and business thinking is closer and does not go beyond national, even regional, limits.

How to contact them:

Use data from economic catalogues, investment profiles, yellow pages.

Ask a public authority to serve as your agent and to help you to contact the right people.

Rely mostly on phone conversations and personal meetings rather than on written invitation – it's better if you send an invitation letter after meeting respective people who make decisions in the companies.

Clusters active in Agri-Food and business support organizations mapping - in the table below (not exhaustive list).

**Table 2 Clusters Active in Agri-Food and Business Support Organizations Mapping**

| Level           | Type                                 | Representatives  |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>National</b> | Blue Growth Industries               | Directors        |
| <b>Regional</b> | Agriculture Machinery /Technology    | Managers         |
|                 | Horticulture                         | Board Chairs     |
| <b>Local</b>    | Crop & animal production             | Project managers |
|                 | Hunting & related service activities | Experts          |
|                 | Sustainable agriculture              | Owners           |
|                 | Agricultural Services                | Advisors         |



|  |  |             |
|--|--|-------------|
|  | Forestry, Wood Products<br>Education and Knowledge Creation<br>Advanced Packaging<br>Environmental Industries<br>Fishing and Fishing Products<br>Food Processing and Manufacturing<br>Traceability of food<br>Veterinary Medicine<br>Energy management<br>Bio-pharmaceuticals<br>Food, beverage & tobacco products<br>Transport & logistics<br>Wholesale and Retail Trade<br>Chambers of Commerce<br>Bilateral chambers<br>Business support bodies | Consultants |
|--|--|-------------|

#### **A.4.2 Higher Education and Research Institutions, Knowledge generator in Agri-Food**

Universities and research institutions is the group with a big potential to influence the process of Entrepreneurial Discovery. In fact, everywhere in Europe, we see an increasing involvement of the researchers and university professors into decision-making; they often serve as transmitters between the regional actors and young people who still need a kind of “translation” of the development ideas.

Constraints:

- on individual level, researchers may have the feeling they cannot change anything on their own – it can abstain them from participating in a FG;
- in some educational/research institutions the bureaucracy is time-consumable – the bigger the university, the longer it takes to contact the right participants;
- researchers are not used to participate in consultations, for some of them the process is too abstract and irrelevant to their own interests;



- usually, they are busy people and the idea to commit their attention to the FG for 4 hours could sound strange and not acceptable.

#### How to contact them:

Usually, there is no problem to find the University and Research Institutions' Heads names and right contacts, the problem will be to contact directly with them.

During the preparation stage you can follow several steps:

- compile a personalized invitation letter (see a template in the chapter Annexes);
- send the invitation letters to the President of the University or Research Institution;
- call and ask for a personal meeting with him/her or a person in the middle position;
- during the personal meeting explain the concept of the RIS3, as well as the role of the higher education/research in the Quadruple Helix Model;
- send the invitation letters to the people appointed to participate.

Higher education and research institutions mapping - in the table below (not exhaustive list).





**Table 3 Higher Education and Research Institutions Mapping**

| Level                              | Type  | Representatives  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>National</b><br><b>Regional</b> | Academies<br>Universities - public and private<br>Colleges<br>Research institutions<br>Association of researchers<br>Scientific organizations/centres | Presidents<br>Board chairs<br>Deans<br>Professors<br>Researchers<br>Project managers |

#### **A.4.3 National, Regional and Local Public Authorities Responsible for Cluster Policies and Innovation Support**

The engagement of the Public Authority group is very important for the success of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process because the participation of authorities can be attractive for the other groups and vice versa – the absence of the public servants from the FGs could push back the others. Moreover, no one analysis, conclusions or project ideas concerning regional/local development could be considered validated if the Authorities are not involved in the process.

Policymakers (especially elected politicians but it is also true for all public servants in high positions) fear the gap between public and politics. In addressing this gap, they are keen to talk about issues that people can relate to. It is particular valid when the issue is the regional development and transnational cooperation.

This requires showing policymakers that EDP is not just talking about abstract topics, but that it also relates to things that people care about – such as agriculture production and healthy food. Representatives of the public authorities are the most likely people to understand that innovations and transnational networks work better for society, giving more power to citizens and offering a chance for politicians to be on the side of the public.





## Constraints:

- the invitation process takes longer than for the other groups because of the bureaucratic reasons – first, the Head of the particular institution has to be invited and he/she will decide who will participate in the FG, usually it needs time;
- representatives on high positions are very busy, it is not easy to meet them or to speak them on the phone;
- public authorities receive a lot of invitations per day, ours could be just buried under a pile of letters;
- public servants of high positions are not able to commit 4 hours of their time for a FG, whereas people who can come and stay usually have lower positions, i.e. they are not as influential as you need.

### How to contact them:

Usually, there are no significant problems to find the right contacts and the names of the Heads of public authorities – all authorities have sites.

During the preparation stage you can follow several steps:

- first, send an invitation letter addressed to the Head of the institution;
- in several days call him/her or their secretary to remind them about the invitation and to ask for the name(s) of people appointed for participation;
- if the participants are not appointed yet, try to obtain the attendance of at least middle position servants – such as Head of Unit;
- call the concrete participants (at least one per institution) and ask them for a meeting in advance in order to explain the EDP approach and the details of the FGs – usually, all of them will be grateful to see you and understand what are your expectations of their attendance;
- in case of elected politicians (members of Parliament, for instance) a preliminary meeting is highly advisable. Have in mind that their participation in the FG, besides other benefits, attracts media attention.





Public Authorities mapping – in the table below (not exhaustive list). Their structure varies from one country to another depending on the national administrative divisions.

**Table 4 Public Authorities Mapping**

| Level           | Type   | Representatives  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| <b>National</b> | Government<br>Ministries<br>Agencies<br>Parliament/Assembly<br>Regulatory bodies   | Ministers<br>Directors of Agencies<br>Members of Parliament<br>Heads of national regulatory bodies |
| <b>Regional</b> | Regional governmental bodies<br>Regional governor administrations<br>Regional councils<br>Regional governmental agencies | Heads of regional regulatory bodies<br>Regional governors<br>Chairs of the regional councils       |
| <b>Local</b>    | Municipalities<br>Community governmental bodies<br>Local Councils  | Chairs of the local councils<br>Mayors   |

#### A.4.4 Civil Society Organizations

Civil Society Organizations is a stakeholder group used to attend seminars, workshops, consultations. They are usually eager to share their opinions and practical experience on societal problems. They are experienced in working with various stakeholders. Most probably, they have more available time than the other groups. Their representatives possess high knowledge of development policies and practices, as well as EU, national and regional documents, strategies, plans. This group is the most likely to be easily found. This group is also the most likely to understand and accept the ideas of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process due to their previous experience.





## Constraints:

- many NGOs (or other civil society organizations - CSOs) are tired of public events, incl. consultations, where they have been invited to in order “to fill in the gaps and to be registered in participants lists”;
- due to their previous experience many NGOs are persuaded that most of the public consultation do not lead to solutions;
- many experienced NGOs have been discussed the problems in their area of activity so many times that they are already discouraged;
- strong dependence of NGOs on project grants can disinterested them from participation in other activities outside their own project actions;
- the other sectors tend to under-estimate the NGOs role and don't accept them as equal partners and providers of knowledge and expertise to solve societal problems.

### How to contact them:

Usually, the NGOs in a region know each other and keep in touch, that is why the snowball recruitment is applicable. It is enough to contact one of them and you'll be advised how to contact the other relevant NGOs.

However, lists of NGOs and their contacts could be found in many publicly accessible sites and platforms.



Civil society organizations mapping – in the table below (not exhaustive list).

**Table 5 Civil Society Organizations Mapping**

| Level           | Type  | Representatives   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <b>National</b> | Umbrella organisations<br>Associations of NGOs<br>NGOs platforms<br>Networks of NGOs<br>(permanent or temporarily)  | Chair of the Board<br>Board members<br>Board advisors<br>Executive directors<br>Managers<br>Staff members – full-time and part-time<br>External experts<br>Trainers<br>Project managers<br>Volunteers |
| <b>Regional</b> | Associations of NGOs<br>Regional networks of NGOs<br>Trade unions   |   |
| <b>Local</b>    | Community-based organisations<br>Community Centers<br>Social movements<br>Foundations<br>Faith-based organisations<br>Trade unions<br>Charity organisations<br>Clubs<br>Schools committees<br>Non-formal groups of citizens |   |



## A.5 Moderators' Recruitment

The selection of right moderators is extremely important for reaching the EDP FGs goals. He/she has the main role in the focus group dynamic: to keep the focus of the discussion. With so many and so different participants working at the same time, they can too easily lose the general picture and tend to over-estimate their institutions' role.

Keeping the focus means the moderator makes sure that:

- the key topics are covered by the FG;
- everyone has equal opportunity to participate and express his/her opinion and ideas;
- an open and safe environment has been created so people feel encouraged and free to speak up and be actively involved in the discussion;
- he/she is also an active member of the group, not only the one who gives the floor.

Likely the orchestra conductor, the moderator gets the best from each participant so that the FG's goals are met.

During the preparation stage the role of the PP is to select the right moderators according to their competences for interpersonal communication, process management and understanding.

Considering the big size of each national FG (30 participants), it is unlikely that the whole group can work together all the time. For an effective process, the group has to be divided into 2 small groups; thus, the FG dynamic will combine the big group sessions (focus on presentations) and the working in small groups (focus on discussions). Deriving from this fact is the necessity at least 2 moderators to be prepared to conduct and manage the FG sessions.

Moderators could be selected among the invited stakeholders' bodies – for instance, some representatives of the business support organizations are highly skilled to implement the moderators' roles.



In the next chapter you'll find summarized a list and explanations on moderator's competences, as well as some tips for the moderators themselves – and again, as previously said, the ideal persons are unlikely to be found. This is just to give the PPs some orientation while selecting the moderators.

Besides moderators the PPs have to select experience rapporteurs to help the moderators during the parallel sessions in the small groups, as well as to contribute to reporting.

## **A.6 Roles of Bodies Involved in the Preparation and Delivery of EDP FGs**

### **A.6.1 Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises (BSCSME), Bulgaria – Task Leader**

Responsibilities:

1. Elaborates the Methodology for organization and delivery of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process Focus Groups under the Project “Transnational Cluster Cooperation active on Agri – food, based on Smart Specialization Approach in Danube region”, Activity 3.2 Activation of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process.

Deadline: October 2018

2. Undergoes consultations with the Project Partners regarding the Methodology and updates it.

Deadline: November 2018

3. Mentors the PPs in charge of focus groups how to implement the methodology correctly. Mentoring process is to be accomplished by two ways:

- via e-mail and/or skype one by one with each host PP to clarify how to take local particularities into account, to advise on invitations or preliminary meetings, to help to identify the suitable premises, etc.
- on the spot, before the FG, with further clarifications, if necessary

Deadline: October 2019



4. Participate to all Entrepreneurial Discovery Focus Groups

Deadline: October 2019

5. Monitors the focus group, helps the partners when they need, answer questions regarding strategic planning process, applicable models, etc. - if any

Deadline: October 2019

6. Collects the PPs reports according to the reporting template

Deadline: November 2019

7. Drafts a summary report based on PPs' reports

Deadline: November 2019

#### **A.6.2 PPs in charge of EDP FGs**

- In Ukraine – IMPEER NASU, supported by the knowledge generator partner S2i;
- In Bosnia-Herzegovina – NERDA, supported by the knowledge generator partner IFKA;
- In Romania – SMRDA, supported by the knowledge generator partner UM;
- In Moldova – MTTN, supported by the knowledge generator partner ITC.

#### **Responsibilities of each PP:**

1. *Prepares one FG according to the project:*
  - 1.1 Identifies participants in accordance of the Quadruple Helix Approach
  - 1.2 Invites participants via letters, phone calls, preliminary personal meetings
  - 1.3 Keeps in touch with the Task Leader via e-mail and/or skype in case additional clarification on the Methodology needed
  - 1.4 Draws the EDP FGs agenda



1.5 Appoints moderators – at least 2 per FG, as well as 2 rapporteurs, and makes sure they are well acquainted with the RIS3 concept, Entrepreneurial Discovery Process, the Methodology. The PP could appoint one or more moderators among stakeholders if it is more effective way to reach the FG goals

1.6 Arranges suitable premises for the FG, catering, other facilities and materials

2. *Delivers the FG:*

2.1 Registers the participants

2.2 Moderates the sessions of the FG (the plenary and the parallel sessions)

2.3 Takes pictures and prepare other documents according to the project management rules

3. *Draws a report on the EDP FG implementations and results and sends to the Task Leader*

Deadline: a month after the EDP FG delivery

4. *Cooperates with the Task Leader during the compilation of the summary report*

### **A.6.3 Stakeholders According to the Quadruple Helix Model**

Responsibilities:

1. Appoints their relevant representatives to participate in the FG

2. Takes active part during the FG by giving their opinions, discussing, sharing experience and ideas

3. Interacts with other stakeholders' representatives applying the best rules of respectful and equivalent partnership





## A.6.4 Project Partners

Responsibilities:

1. Each of the other Project Partners, not being in charge of preparation and delivery of an EDP FG, will attend at least two focus groups
2. In order to ensure more or less even number of PPs' participants in the focus group the PPs will coordinate their participation
3. Their role in a focus group is to serve as international experts (in the understanding of RIS 3<sup>6</sup>) giving peer review, different prospective and benchmarking deriving from their national and regional specific as well as their personal experience.

## A.7 Other Requirements

Considering the fact that the FG will combine plenary sessions and small group sessions it is necessary the venue chosen to allow both types format – a conference format and round table format.

As regards the necessary equipment, both for the plenary sessions and for each of the working groups the PP has to provide one laptop and one multimedia, a screen (walls could be used as well), a flipchart and a flipchart paper.

The PPs have to consider the fact that many participants don't know each other and the organisers have to facilitate the process of mutual acquaintance. In this regard, a big-size colourful post-its (76 x 102mm), or other name tags, will be necessary – during the registration the participants will be asked to put their names on them and to stick them on their cloths. It would be helpful if they mark their sector (according to the Quadruple Helix Model) as well. It could be done by specific colourful post-its for each sector or abbreviations in the respective local language. Big and small-size colourful post-its will be necessary as well for the parallel sessions of the small groups. Different colours' markers should be provided to participants, as well.

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<sup>6</sup> RIS 3, figure in p. 36



It is also recommended to provide participants with folders with: the agenda, white paper sheets, a pen, templates as per Annexes chapter, as well as some printed materials with presentation of the project, RIS3 concept, Quadruple Helix Model.

Due to the fact that foreign experts, representatives of the other PPs, are participating, a translation service has to be provided.





## PART B DELIVERY

### B.1 Roles of the Moderators and Rapporteurs - Overview

The moderators' role, being so important for the FG success, as mentioned above, could be implemented by persons selected by each PP among their experts or external experts.

Each of the working groups shall be guided by a moderator, assisted by a rapporteur.

In this section you'll find some important characteristics of the moderators' and rapporteurs' roles as well as some tips.

#### **Listening**

First of all, focus on listening rather on talking. Make a conscious effort to listen, repeat what is said in your mind and even loudly, if you consider the group needs a repetition in order to understand the ideas correctly. The moderator should not interrupt the participants or intervene too much (although it is acceptable or even recommendable, he/she to share their opinion as well, but it has been done very carefully and in a moderate way). The moderator facilitates generation of ideas amongst the participants; the group discussion is all about the exploration of participants' views and interactions.

It is important just to focus on what is said, postponing judgment or critique. The moderator has to make clear what a participant implies, using, for example, questions to gain an in-depth understanding of a participant's view. Examples of questions: "what do you mean, why do you think that, could you give an example, how do you see, etc."

The moderator listens with the sincere intention to understand the other person opinion and to help the group to understand him/her.

While listening, the moderator controls his/her non-verbal language by being conscious about his/her body posture, eye contact, smile.

It is a specific type of listening since the moderator has the goal to structure the information heard, connecting all the time what has been said and the direction (main topic of the discussion) in which the conversation should be heading. One



of the most difficult aspects of moderating group discussions is the continuous switch between empathic and analytical listening. Empathic listening supports the positive interaction with the participants in order to understand their perspectives. Analytical listening helps the moderator to structure what is said and bring it in relation to the FG objectives.

## **Process management**

It is the moderator's task to manage the group process. This means being sensitive to what the group needs.

It is helpful to set procedures like conversation rules, agenda, boundaries (what is acceptable, what is not) as from the beginning and refer to them in the working process.

Always acknowledge the input of participants, they need to know their contribution is valuable.

Use techniques like summarizing and clarifying participant responses, it gives the group time to understand each opinion.

Stimulate openness and respect, postpone your own judgment.

Help people to keep focused on the discussion topic, remind it to them as many times as the situation needs. While their own work is concerned many people tend to be partial and overly enthusiastic, that is why - talkative, in these cases the conversation may go aside the FG topic(s).

The moderator has to be aware that resistance is an aspect of a group dynamics and it often takes a form of repetitive questions, dominance, passivity or other problematic behaviour (both verbal or non-verbal).

Examples of repetitive questions concerning the FG and/or the project: why are we supposed to do this, who wants to know, who paid for this, etc. A balance way of answering is needed in these cases – on the one hand, the moderators has to build mutual trust, on the other hand, it could be time-consumable. Make sure your response is direct and concrete and at the same avoiding that too much time is spent. If a participant keeps on asking such type of question, suggest him/her to postpone the conversation for the time after the FG.



Examples of passivity: a participant drops out of the discussion, unfocused and drifts away. It is the moderator's job to make every participant actively engaged – so address such participants, ask for their opinion.

Examples of dominance: overly enthusiasm or aggression. The moderator's role is to avoid obstructive atmosphere – so in both cases he/she can interrupt the dominant persons and let the others to equally take part in the conversation. One of the helpful technics is first let participants think of answers and write them down, then make a go-round asking them out. In this way, everyone participates in accordance to what they have written down themselves (i.e. the influence of the dominant person is mitigated).

For the most problematic behaviours there are no polite ways to be overcome. Make clear that this conduct is not tolerated even if you need to ask the participant to leave.

Summarizing is one of the important obligations of the moderators. He/she has to be able to find the intersection of what is said, different participants' opinions and the EDP FG goals. Making the links between opinion evident for everyone helps the group to reach conclusions, to generate new ideas, even to better understand each other.

Summarizing what was said above, the mentor's roles are as follow:

- Explains briefly the process at the beginning of each parallel working group session;
- Explains at the start of each task the task objective and the time available,
- Does a strict time-keeping;
- Moderates any discussions related to the presentation of project ideas, and propose grouping of related ideas;
- Based on the outcome of the voting on project ideas, takes into consideration the need to form mixed partnerships (of different organizations from the Quadruple Helix);
- Assists idea partnerships by clarifying any aspects related to the content of the information to be introduced in different parts of the project fiche, as well as with comments, observations regarding the idea itself, if requested by participants.





Rapporteur’s roles are to help the moderator in filling in the provided Excel templates, writing down the ideas proposed, the participants' names, the voting and the grouping of ideas. He/she assists the reporting process.

## B.2 Sessions Guideline – Overview

As mentioned above, the FG group of 30 participants is too big-sized to accomplished the pre-defined actions and reach the stipulated outcomes.

The PPs have to decide if:

- all sessions of the focus group will be accomplished with the whole group;
- there will be plenary session(s) and small group sessions (recommended).

In latter case, a pattern could be used as shown in the table below:

**Table 6 Pattern of the FG sessions**

|                                     |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Plenary session INTRODUCTION</b> |                                 |
|                                     |                                 |
| <b>Plenary session DISCUSSIONS</b>  |                                 |
|                                     |                                 |
| <b>SMALL GROUP 1</b>                | <b>SMALL GROUP 2</b>            |
| <b>Project ideas generation</b>     | <b>Project ideas generation</b> |
|                                     |                                 |
| <b>Plenary session CONCLUSIONS</b>  |                                 |





### B.3 Focus Group Agenda

The model agenda in this section is created for a focus group in a working day (approx. 7-8 hours incl. breaks) that combines plenary and small-group sessions.

The duration of the sessions in the agenda below is provisional. Each PP has to decide whether to follow strictly it or to change (cut, combine, reverse) the sessions. The agenda could be shortened or divided into two days according to the local preferences and established practice. What is mandatory is to follow the steps (tasks) during the parallel sessions.

**Table 7 Focus Group Agenda**

| 30 minutes |            | Registration of participants, welcome coffee   |
|------------|------------|--|
| <b>1.</b>  | 60 minutes | <p><b>Plenary session INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>Welcome speech</p> <p>Short overview of the project</p> <p>Presentation of the RIS 3 concept</p> <p>Presentation of the EDP FG agenda, goals and procedures</p> <p>Presentation of the respective cross-sectoral theme (Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business models that work in Circular Economy and Healthy Food) and the tendencies at European level and in the country</p> <p>Setting up the FG rules</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Moderator A + presenters</i></p> |
| <b>2.</b>  | 30 minutes | <p><b>Plenary sessions DISCUSSIONS</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Moderators A and B</i></p>   |



|           |             |   |                            |
|-----------|-------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>3.</b> | 120 minutes | <b>SMALL GROUPS PARALLEL SESSIONS</b>                             |                            |
|           |             | SG 1<br><i>Moderator A</i>  | SG 2<br><i>Moderator B</i> |
|           | 60 minutes  | Break (coffee break, business lunch)                              |                            |
| <b>4.</b> | 90 minutes  | SG 1<br><i>Moderator A</i>  | SG 2<br><i>Moderator B</i> |
|           | 20 minutes  | Coffee break  |                            |
| <b>5.</b> | 30 minutes  | Summary of the working group results<br><i>Moderators A and B</i> |                            |
| <b>6.</b> | 30 minutes  | <b>Plenary session CONCLUSIONS</b>                                |                            |

### B.3.1 Focus Group Agenda: Plenary Session INTRODUCTION

After participants being registered according to the program requirements (and don't forget GDPR rules), the EDP FG starts with a short welcome speech given by a PP representative.

The plenary session is led by the Moderator A.

Next step is to present the project. Keep the presentation short and make sure the participants understand that the Focus Group is an essential element of a project concept. Pay special attention to Activity 3.2 and the way it prepares the next step, creation of the Danube S3 Cluster Strategy. The main topic of the focus group (one of the following: Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business models that work in Circular Economy or Healthy Food) has to be highlighted and shortly explained.

The points to be clarified in the presentation<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>7</sup> Key points and questions given in this chapter are provisional, their role is to help PPs while preparing their presentations



- what is an innovation? According the Guide on RIS3, a wide view of innovation is to be adopted, i.e. that innovation may occur everywhere, in different forms, and not only in the form of high technology development in metropolitan areas.
- why is it important to improve the institutional and infrastructural framework conditions for research and innovations?
- why is it important to participate in the planning process?
- what would be the region's main benefits?
- why does the region need the transnational partnership?

A presentation follows that is dedicated to the RIS 3 concept with several key points:

- what is smart specialization and its rationale;
- why should Agri-food clusters be a part of the smart specialization;
- RIS design in a nutshell – 6 steps.

Next presentation is on the FGs goals as follow:

- Share knowledge and needs of players in Agri-food sector;
- Identify what players should do in the field of R&D&I and non-technological innovation to build unique competitive advantage;
- Analyse data regarding markets, technologies, skills, knowledge transfer, capabilities, institutional agility, business models;
- Validate findings of the transnational analysis (if available in the moment of FG implementation);
- Generate cross-cutting project ideas.

The presentation of the respective cross-sectoral theme (Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business models that work in Circular Economy and Healthy Food) should prepare the participants for the discussions during the next session.



That is why it should introduce the current state in the country and, where it is possible, a comparison to the tendencies at European level.

Make sure that all presentations are very short and clear.

Finally, the FG's rules have to be set – principles of work in mutual respect, equal participation, non-discrimination, as well as practical procedures such as phone conversation during the sessions, etc.

### **B.3.2 Focus Group Agenda: Plenary Session DISCUSSIONS**

The plenary session is led by the Moderator A.

The main goal of the session is to clarify how the participants see the current state, the needs and the challenges in the respective cross-sectorial theme in their country and/or region.

In order to save time, the PP in charge has already prepared some suggestions, that have to be discussed and agreed.

*Main questions/key points of the discussions:*

1. Strengths and weaknesses of the Agri-food sector players.
2. Needs and main challenges for Agri-food sector in the region (ex.: low-technological absorption, limited contribution of foreign direct investment to technology transfer, highly energy-intensive and energy-inefficient production, low level of productivity, modest flow of information and knowledge between regions, lack of knowledge and internationalization of SMEs, insufficient transnational cooperation and coordination, etc.).
3. Efficiency and effectiveness of agencies and programmes in supporting innovation.
4. What is your understanding of innovation?
5. How do you see the innovation in the public sector, in services and in manufacturing?





6. What are your opinions on product and processes innovations, competence building and organizational innovations<sup>8</sup>?
7. What would be the role of the transnational cooperation?

The main findings (statement, positions) are written on a flipchart sheet by Moderator B.

At the end of the session the Moderator A gives time for questions and answers. He/she announces the 2 sub-themes before dividing the group into 2 small groups:

- **Small Group 1 on Sub-theme 1**
- **Small Group 2 on Sub-theme 2**

Considering the fact that each EDP FG consists of 30 participants, division into 2 small groups is realistic and operative. If more than 2 sub-themes are identified during the discussion plenary session, it is advisable they to be incorporated into 2 united sub-themes.

Both small groups comprise participants from all 4 groups of the Quadruple Helix: Business, Civil Society, Authorities, and Higher education/researchers.

The participants are invited to join a small group according to their preferences and experience, but at the same time the Moderators make sure that there are representatives of the four stakeholders' bodies in both groups.

In this respect and to save time, it would be useful if the PP has prepared beforehand lists of participants in both groups so that their composition reflects the Quadruple Helix Approach. However, the participants preferences should be respected as well.

The cross sectoral themes Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business Models that Work in Circular Economy and Healthy Food will be broken down to two sub-themes/sub-fields. The small groups are going to be focused on the sub-themes identified for the cross sectoral themes of Danube S3 Cluster.

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<sup>8</sup> According to the wide view of innovation, Guide to RIS3



Both small groups work at the same time, this fact should have been considered during the preparation stage and ensured by premises and other facilities necessary for two groups.

The parallel sessions of the Small Group 1 and Small Group 2 will be organized in the uniform agenda following the 6 tasks below<sup>9</sup> - the details are given in the next chapter:

- TASK 1. Assessment of bottlenecks, needs and challenges (20')<sup>10</sup>
- TASK 2. Individual generation of ideas (40')
- TASK 3. Presentation of ideas (40')
- TASK 4. Assessment/prioritization of project ideas (20')
- TASK 5. Formation of “idea-partnerships” (30')
- TASK 6. Development of ideas (90')

### **B.3.3 Focus Group Agenda: PARALLEL SESSIONS Small Group 1 and Small Group 2**

The main goal of the Small Group 1 session is to generate the innovative project ideas in the Sub-theme 1 for the host country cross-sectoral themes (Market Intelligence, Open Innovation, Business models that work in Circular Economy and Healthy Food).

The main goal of the Small Group 2 session is to generate the innovative project ideas in the Sub-theme 2 for the host country cross-sectoral themes.

Each small group has an agenda following the 6 steps (the above-mentioned 6 tasks). The Moderator A leads the Small Group 1 helped by a rapporteur; and the Moderator B leads the Small Group 2 helped by a rapporteur.

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<sup>9</sup> According to the Methodological Guidance for the Organization of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Focus Groups, JRC and DG REGIO

<sup>10</sup> Provisional duration of each task; it is in order the ratio between them to be shown



In the beginning of each Small Group session the moderator shortly presents the agenda of the session, next at the beginning of each new task he/she gives an introduction for each of them.

The session in each Small Group starts with a short discussion which aims to link the previous plenary session and the project ideas formulation. Participants are encouraged to share knowledge on the current situation, to outline needs of the Agri-food sector's key players, to point out challenges and the potential for smart specialization. The regional analysis' (output 3.1) findings could be discussed and validated (if available in the moment of the event).

Next, the Small Group parallel sessions follow the steps corresponding the 6 above-mentioned tasks.

### **TASK 1. Assessment of bottlenecks, needs and challenges**

The work in the Small Group continues individually – each participant is asked to think and give his/her opinion on the main challenges, bottlenecks or needs in the respective sub-theme. The Moderators suggests some key questions.

*Main questions/key points:*

1. Knowing the needs and challenges, how do you assess the climate for entrepreneurship in your region/country? Is it easy to pursue innovative business ideas? Are people (incl. young ones) keen to start up their own business or do they rather prefer jobs in established enterprises or public sector?
2. How do you assess the current state of interactions between stakeholders (Quadruple Helix) in your region/country?
3. Do you estimate opportunities to involve domestic and foreign non-traditional actors in the Agri-food sector development?
4. Potential of the regional Agri-food sector for smart specialization<sup>11</sup> (potential for excellence): traditions, past experience, know-how,

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<sup>11</sup> According to the Guide to RIS3, p. 51



human resources, existing networks, technologies, scientific knowledge, education structure, etc.

The questions stated above, covering the challenges, problems and bottlenecks, are samples; it is up to the Moderator to select the right discussion points according to the region specific, the pre-defined cross-cutting themes and the respective sub-theme.

Each participant gets 1-2 post-its and is asked to:

- write down in the upper right corner of each post-it a one letter-symbol for their institutional profile (E: entrepreneur, U: university, R: research organization; P: public sector; O: other)
- describe in keywords a need, a challenge or a bottleneck that their organization or the society as a whole is confronted with. The problem should be one than can be overcome with a product, process or service innovation or their combination. The problem should be clearly linked with the sub-theme under focus of the respective small group.

## **TASK 2. Individual generation of ideas**

Each participant gets 1-2 post-its and is asked to:

- write down in the upper right corner of each post-it a one letter-symbol of their institutional profile (E: entrepreneur, U: university, R: research organization; P: public sector; O: other);
- describe in few keywords an idea for product, process or service innovation (research-related or non-research related) in reply to a challenge; each participant can prepare up to two ideas on two different post-its;
- use *E.2 Template - Short description of a project idea* (see the Annexes chapter) to describe further details of the idea. The templates will be collected at the end of the session.



### **TASK 3. Presentation of ideas**

Each participant is asked to briefly present to the rest of the group the identified by him/her challenges (needs, bottlenecks), as well as the proposed project idea(s), and stick the corresponding post-its on a flip chart. No comments are accepted at this stage. Related ideas can be grouped. The moderator keeps a strict time keeping.

During the presentation of ideas, the rapporteur writes down in the Excel sheet projected on the screen the short title of each idea. He/she also groups the similar ideas by an extra line inserted under the first idea. The rapporteur also adds the participants' names and their profile (E, U, R, P, O) to the screen. The rapporteur uses *E.3 Template – Excel table for rapporteurs* (see the Annexes chapter).

### **TASK 4. Assessment/prioritization of project ideas**

Based on the presentation of ideas, a consolidated list of ideas is created by the rapporteur (using the *E.3 Template – Excel Table for Rapporteurs*), in which similar or complementary proposals are grouped. The participants are asked to identify those idea(s) which they are interested in developing further by scoring them from 3 to 1.

The moderator asks each participant one by one which ideas are of his/her biggest interest. The rapporteur adds the interests of each participant to the screen in the following way: 3 for the first choice; 2 for the second choice; 1 for the third choice.

Final scores of each project idea are calculated in the last column of the Excel table as shown below. The moderator and the participants decide how many of the project ideas with a higher ranking shall be developed during the next step of the parallel session.





| Working group number and sub-theme |              |                               |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|--|--|--|
| Idea number                        | Idea title   | Participants names and scores |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
|                                    |              | P1<br>(E)                     | P2<br>(O) | P3<br>(U) | P4<br>(P) | P5 | P6 | .. | .. | .. |  |  |  |
| 1                                  | Title Idea 1 |                               |           | 2         | 1         |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| 2                                  | Title Idea 2 | 3                             | 1         | 3         | 2         |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| 3                                  | Title Idea 3 | 2                             |           |           | 1         |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| 4                                  | Title Idea 4 |                               | 2         |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| 5                                  | Title Idea 5 | 1                             | 3         |           | 3         |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| 6                                  | Title Idea 6 |                               |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |
| ..                                 |              |                               |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |

### TASK 5. Formation of “idea-partnerships”

After the competition of the Task 4, a break is following. During it, for each project idea to be developed, the Moderator and the Rapporteur shall select the “idea-partnerships” that shall be proposed at the beginning of the next Small Group session and agreed on jointly by involving participants.

Each “*idea-partnership*” shall be comprised of:

- the participant proposing the idea,
- the participants voting the prioritized idea, giving priority to first and then second choices,
- rest of participants, taking into consideration the need to have as many mixed partnerships as possible (on behalf of different types of organizations from the Quadruple Helix Model), as well as the personal interest of



participants expressed. Assigning one person to more than one group has to be avoided. The assignment shall start with the project promoter.

*E.g., in the Excel table above, P1 and P3 could collaborate on Idea number 2 and P2 should be grouped with P4 to develop Idea 5 or (if it is the case) the grouped ideas 5 and 6.*

After joint discussion and agreement, the group proceeds to organize itself in “idea-partnerships” – i.e. the participants form sub-groups in the framework of each Small Group.

## **TASK 6. Development of ideas**

Each of the “idea-partnerships” discusses the idea further, defines a concrete title for the idea, a brief project description, the research components of the idea, a rough estimation of the resources needed, a timeline for the idea implementation, the stakeholder groups involved and opportunities for middle/long-term quadruple-helix interaction.

For the development of the ideas, *the E.4 Template - Project Fiche* (see the Annexes chapter) is used.

Ideally each sub-group makes the project description in an electronic format. If that is not possible, the description should be provided handwritten on the templates printed out.

The moderator goes around the groups, clarifies the questions, and helps participants to fill in the template. He/she encourages the participants to stay focused on points like these ones:

1. What is (could be) unique competitive advantage of the region?
2. Which technologies, products and global market opportunities do you see as very promising for the future (upcoming decade)?
3. What the Quadruple Helix societal groups should do in the field of R&D + I and non-technological innovation?
4. What could you/your institution personally contribute?



At the end of the session, the moderator collects the templates in electronic or paper format.

### **B.3.4 Plenary Session CONCLUSIONS**

During the last Plenary session of the EDP FG all participants are gathered to report back main outcomes from the parallel sessions of the Small Group 1 – the most relevant project ideas in the framework of the Sub-theme 1; and respectively the Small Group 2 – the most relevant project ideas in the framework of the Sub-theme 2.

The reporting of both Small Groups could be done by the Moderators. It is not necessary all the project ideas to be presented during the plenary session; the Moderators have to choose the most relevant ones.

Finally, the Moderator A summarizes the EDP FG work and explain further steps stipulated by the project.





## PART C REPORTING

The Project Partner in charge of an EDP FG has to compile a report regarding the preparation and delivery of the FG, main findings, and project ideas identified.

The four reports from EDP FGs should be based on the regional competitive advantages, potential for excellence in sectorial or cross-sectorial level, including the roles of the Quadruple Helix representatives in place.

The reports from the four FGs are sent to the Task Leader BSCSME. The Task Leader BSCSME collects and summarizes all reports in a way to facilitate the process of the priority setting (Activity 3.3) and defining concrete and achievable objectives.

That is why it is highly recommendable each PP to follow the same reporting structure; thus, the Task Leader will have the possibility to summarize the FGs with their findings and new ideas, as well as to reach comparative conclusions, where applicable.

The report volume is not predefined, it depends on the PP to decide on it and make sure that the main points are well clarified and can be used for the strategic planning.

The report covers the main aspects of each EDP FG, and namely:

- Data about the number of participants and type of organizations represented at the event;
- Date, place and agenda of the EDP FG;
- Overview of bottlenecks, needs and problems identified in the parallel sessions as discussed under task 1;
- List and brief description of all individual ideas proposed during task 3;
- Project ideas prioritization made during the task 4 – Excel table;
- Overview of idea-partnerships, including idea title, short description - project fiches, compiled during the task 6;



- Conclusions and recommendations with a view on next project steps.

The report should be sent out to participants together with the Power Point presentations made during the event.

A suggested template for the report is provided in the Annexes chapter – see *E.5 Template - EDP FG report*. Its aim is to offer guidance on minimum reporting requirements, it can be modified according to own needs.



## PART D BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Danube Region Strategy, [www.danube-region.eu](http://www.danube-region.eu)
2. European Cluster Collaboration Platform, [www.clustercollaboration.eu](http://www.clustercollaboration.eu)
3. Guide to Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS 3), May 2012, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, ISBN: 978-92-79-25094-1, doi:10.2776/65746
4. Methodological guidance for the organization of Entrepreneurial discovery focus groups, prepared in the in the framework of the project Targeted Support for RIS3 implementation in Romania”, implemented by the Joint Research Centre and DG REGIO, version: October 19, 2018
5. Smart specialisation platform, [s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu](http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu)



## PART E ANNEXES

### E.1 Template - Invitation Letter

[*Our institution letterhead*]

[*City, date*]

Dear [*title, surname*],

[*Our institution*] is honoured to invite you to be part of the European project "Transnational Cluster Cooperation active on Agri-food, based on Smart Specialization Approach in Danube region", funded by the Danube Transnational Program.

[*Our institution*] is coordinating in [*country*] the delivery of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process Focus Groups (EDP FGs), which aims to outline the regional potential for smart specialization and the regional ability to participate in a common Danube Region Innovation Cluster Strategy in Agri-food Sector.

The focus group will be held in [*place/venue*] on [*date*], from [*hour*] to [*hour*], with leading representatives from research, education, policy, civil society organisations, industry and business.

Your experience in [*fields - e.g., policy making, higher education*] will be a key contribution for the EDP FG's goals and further on the project, since you will have the opportunity to share your knowledge and vision with people committed to the regional development.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to accept this invitation.

We kindly ask you to confirm your participation by [*date*], to [*name*], at [*e-mail*].

In case you will not be able to join us, we would be grateful if you could suggest any colleague who might be interested in attending the meeting.



Should you need more clarification regarding the focus group and the project, please, don't hesitate to contact me *[a person from our organization]*.

Yours sincerely,

*[Signature]*

*[Name Surname Title]*

*[Institution, Department]*

*[E-mail, Telephone, [Address]]*



## E.2 Template – Short Description of a Project Idea

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Working group number   |  |
| Participant Name   |  |
| Organisation name  |  |
| Organisation type<br>(Entrepreneur (E), university (U), research (R), public sector(P), other (O)) |  |

Brief title of the Innovative idea (research-related or non-research-related)

Description of the Innovative idea



Research dimension

External expertise/Partners needed



### E.3 Template – Excel Table for the Rapporteurs

| Working group number and sub-theme |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Idea number                        | Idea title | Participants names (and scores) |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|                                    |            | P1<br>(E)                       | P2<br>(O) | P3<br>(U) | P4<br>(P) | P5 | P6 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| 1                                  |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 2                                  |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 3                                  |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| 4                                  |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| ..                                 |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| ..                                 |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| ..                                 |            |                                 |           |           |           |    |    |    |    |    |    |





## E.4 Template - Project Fiche

Project idea title

Project idea brief description

Research components of the idea

Resources needed (rough estimation)

Implementation timeline

Stakeholder groups involved

Opportunities for middle/long-term Quadruple Helix interaction

Other relevant information (not mandatory)



E.5 Template - EDP FG Report

**ENTREPRENORIAL DISCOVERY FOCUS GROUP**

Cross-cutting theme

.....

*(Market intelligence, Open innovation, Business models for Circular Economy, Healthy Food)*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Date, place of venue, agenda.

Number of participants by types of organizations from the Quadruple Helix.

**2. CHALLENGES, NEEDS, BOTTLENECKS**

For each group and by type of organization from the Quadruple Helix the challenges, needs

and bottlenecks shall be synthetized and stated in the table below.

**Small Group 1 – Sub-theme 1 (title)**

| NEEDS, CHALLENGES, BOTTLENECKES                             |  |
|---|--|
| Business environment  |  |
| Universities, RD institutions, technology transfer entities |  |
| Public sphere   |  |
| Other (for ex. NGOs, civil society)                         |  |





### Small Group 2 – Sub-theme 2 (title)

| NEEDS, CHALLENGES, BOTTLENECKES                             |  |
|---|--|
| Business environment  |  |
| Universities, RD institutions, technology transfer entities |  |
| Public sphere   |  |
| Other (for ex. NGOs, civil society)                         |  |

### 3. PROJECT IDEAS

The project ideas proposed should be presented and grouped under the sub-theme for each working Small Group. In the case ideas were clustered this should be reported.

Furthermore, the development stage of the idea should be written down, i.e. if it was further developed during the EDP or remained at the stage of description. Consortium composition might be added, as well.

| Project ideas  | Development stage |
|--|-------------------|
| SUB-THEME .....  |                   |
| Clustered idea (title and 1 sentence description)<br>..... |                   |
| Component idea (title and 1 sentence description)<br>..... |                   |
| Component idea (title and 1 sentence description)<br>..... |                   |
| Idea (title and 1 sentence description)<br>.....           |                   |



| SUB-THEME ..... |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 |  |
|                 |  |
|                 |  |
|                 |  |

**4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5. ATTACHMENTS:**

- List and brief description of all individual ideas proposed during task 3
- Project ideas prioritization made during the task 4 – Excel table
- Project fiches, compiled during the task 6

