



S3 Couple Net (S3CN)- for Resilient Economic Systems, Green and Digital Transition

Output: A.T2.3.1 Draft for formalization and operation of the network

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EUROPEAN UNION



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About S3 Couple Net

Project summary

Project identification

Programme priority	Sustainable networks and institutional cooperation
Programme priority specific objective	4a
DTP Project Code and Acronym	S3 Couple Net
Project title	Cross-border network for activating the S3 strategy of the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria
eMS Project Number	ATCZ262
Name of the lead partner organisation	Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, a.s.
Project duration	16 months
Start date	1. 9. 2021
End date	31. 12. 2022

Description of the project

The South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria have long supported the development of innovative entrepreneurship - whether through various support schemes, the development of a regional innovation ecosystem, cooperation with other institutions in the region or the implementation of measures in accordance with its S3 regional strategy. In both regions, these development documents for the coming period have recently been revised and updated (RIS3 Strategy of the South Bohemian Region 2021-2027 / Strategic economic & research programme for Upper Austria "#upperVISION2030").

It is a strategic approach to the economic development of the region in the field of research and innovation, which is a process of identifying opportunities and positive aspects of the region, which can benefit from specialization in a particular field of science or technology. The concept of smart specialization recommends regions or states to create the content and design of their innovation strategy so as to maximize the impact of regional policy together with other EU policies. It is based on the Commission Communication entitled "The

contribution of regional policy to smart growth in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy" of October 2010, which refers to these strategies as Smart Specialization Strategies. In principle, therefore, these strategies address the needs and innovation potential of both regions concerned (South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria). Attention is paid to the existing infrastructure (R & D & I, production and tertiary spheres), specific trends derived from the economic profile of the region and new technological directions (so-called megatrends), which are again based on innovation profiles of the area, but also on current economic challenges.

Thanks to the harmonized RIS3 methodology, it is possible to effectively analyze both documents, create a cross-border network of key actors and find common needs, complementary capacities, specific measures and activities. A unique opportunity is also the upcoming new programming period, which will be prepared by the preparation of potential projects and cooperation potentials of the network members.

On both sides of the border, this project is approached by partners who are directly responsible for the successful implementation of these regional strategies and at the same time represent entities with a region-wide scope. The main goal of the project is to activate an effective cross-border network of actors based on a detailed comparative analysis of S3 strategies in the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria, which will prepare a set of measures for the development of cooperation in key areas for the regions.

Partners

<i>Name</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Country</i>
Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, a.s.	Lead partner	Czech Republic, South Bohemia
Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH	Project partner	Austria, Upper Austria

1. Introduction

The presented document has been part of the task „Network Building“ (T2) of S3CN. The overall goal of the task T2 is to identify key actors that are beyond the frame of the cooperation partners in both regional innovation systems and to build a network including the definition of roles, competencies and activities. It comprises on the one hand facilitation of meetings and discussions of the key actors, the research of existing structures and key actors in both innovation systems as well as the research on existing funding and support programmes/instruments and the analysis for their synchronization potential. For results on the before mentioned activities please see the elaborated outputs:

- “Document on structure and stakeholders of both innovation systems (South Bohemia & Upper Austria)” (Output: T2.1.1 research on existing structures)
- “Support and funding instruments for innovative Entrepreneurship in the South Bohemian Region and Upper Austria” (Output: A.T2.4.1 Research of existing funding instruments)
- “Synchronizing regional funding programmes for innovative Entrepreneurship”, (Output: A.T2.6.1 Proposal for synchronization of existing funding programmes)

The presented document at hand shows the draft for operation of the S3CN as well as to network beyond the present project's duration and regions. Thus, the focus was laid on efficient operation of a sustainable growing network for RDI cooperation between the neighboring regions along the Austrian and Czech Republic border which are equivalent to the regions eligible for Interreg Austria – Czechia 2021-2027 programme. These are in Austria: Lower-Austria (Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen, Sankt Pölten, Waldviertel, Weinviertel, Wiener Umland-Nordteil), Vienna, Upper-Austria (Innviertel, Linz-Wels, Mühlviertel, Steyr-Kirchdorf) and in Czechia: Jihomoravský kraj, Jihočeský kraj, Kraj Vysočina.



2. Learnings, Insights & Considerations for maintaining and further developing the S3 Couple Net

Considerations on the design of the formalization and functioning of the S3CN network.

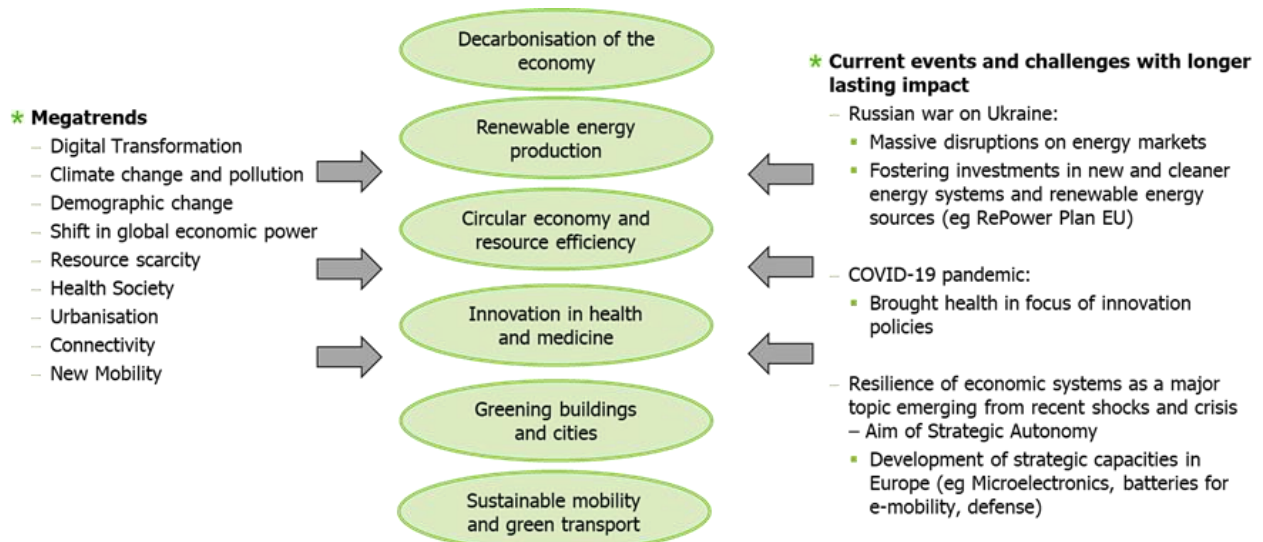
The project S3CN started during the Corona pandemic in Sept 2021. This was a difficult time for activating and formulating the cross-border network. Till the beginning of March 22 physical meetings were not possible due to protective measures and afterwards there were too many events to be caught up and the target groups had not have the time to join each event of interest.

Although Corona had a negative impact on the project in terms of activating and connecting stakeholders, it demonstrated once again the importance of close partnerships, supply chains and cohesion for a resilient economic structure.

Megatrends and current events are challenging European regions and do not stop at regional or national borders but impact our society and thus our innovation priorities.

Global developments such as the digital transformation, climate change, demographic change, increasing scarcity of resources and urbanization are setting key fields of action for economic and innovation policy, in particular: Solutions for decarbonizing the economy, renewable energy technologies, circular economy and resource efficiency, greening buildings and cities, sustainable mobility and green transport or innovation in health and medicine.

Figure 1: Megatrends and current crisis shaping innovation agendas¹



Source: P-IC, own illustration

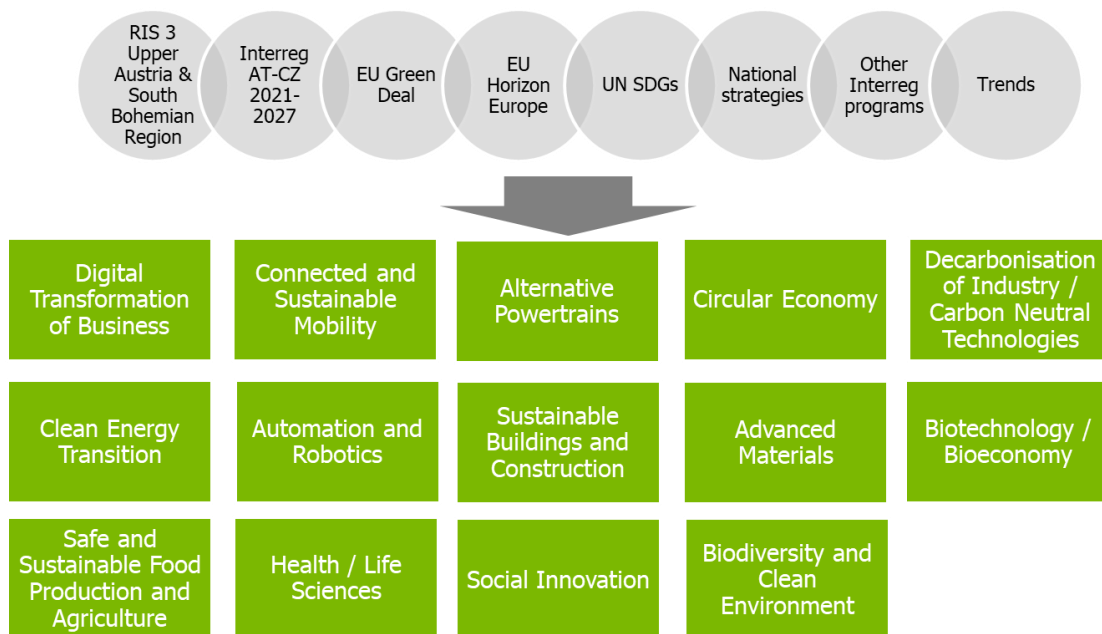
The analytical work (e.g. comparative analysis of S3-priorities of Upper Austria and South Bohemian Region, stakeholder analysis) and the cross-border workshops carried out in 2022

¹ S3CN Analysis of topics for cross-border cooperation, Output: A.T1.3.1 Analytical analyses & peer review of topics for cross-border cooperation

within S3CN project activities (June, September, November) as well as a comprehensive analysis of framework conditions are setting the scene for innovation priorities in the coming years: e.g. Megatrends and current events impacting innovation priorities, EU priorities (such as Twin Transition and Green Deal, Horizon Europe), UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Interreg AT-CZ 2021-2027 and other relevant Interreg programmes as well as national innovation strategies enable the identification of specific thematic fields for potential cooperation in the coming years between the regions Upper Austria and South Bohemia.

14 thematic fields for potential cooperation (projects) between Upper Austria and South Bohemia were identified.

Figure 2: 14 topics for future cooperation between Upper Austria and the South Bohemian Region



Source: P-IC, own illustration

In special the results of the interactive parts of physical workshops show that physical meetings, networking in general, personal exchange are still of most importance for lowering barriers for cooperation and identification of matching cooperation partners.

There is an unbroken demand on personal meetings additional to online meetings. E.g. Study trips or mutual visits to RDI (research, development and innovation) institutions facilitate the personal exchange on actual projects and priority fields, on the need for cooperation respectively for facing common challenges. Furthermore, participants gain more critical mass for technologies and services offered by their regional institutions as well as access to capacities and expertise in neighboring regions along the Austrian and Czech border.

3. Draft for formalization and operation of the S3CN Network

The draft for formalization and operation of the S3CN network beyond the project duration and regions is based on the results of the analytical analysis in regard of potential cooperation themes and stakeholders as well as the three cross-border workshops hold with RDI representatives of the regions South Bohemia, Vysočina and Upper Austria.

Thus, focus was laid on needs, interest, resources and efficient operation of a sustainable growing network for RDI cooperation.

S3CN network aims basically to support innovation activities and to strengthen the cross-border cooperation in the priority fields of the regional smart specialization strategies (S3).

➤ **Roles:**

The founding members of the S3 Couple Net (S3CN) have taken the role of the coordinators for the 'controlled networking' of the more or less formed groups of actors. The coordinators facilitate the getting to know each other, the exchange and removal of obstacles for cross-border cooperation between RDI institutions, business support organizations and entrepreneurs.

The members of the S3 Couple Net (S3CN) have been invited to provide their RDI services and competences at the RDI catalogue (www.s3cn.eu), to join 3 interactive cross-border workshops and excursions, to review the analytical work and thus to contribute with their expertise to the definition of thematic fields for potential cooperation projects. Thus, their role is to contribute to the network with expertise, offers and needs as well as to benefit from the network support, dissemination opportunities for their competencies and research infrastructures.

Therefore, the founding members of S3CN (Business Upper Austria and JVTP) propose the following for the operation and further strengthening of the network:

➤ **Network maintenance and development**

The project partners will maintain the functionality of the established network

- through the project website, with the principle of transparency (comprehensive presentation of the network, advantages of the participation, current topics of cooperation / partner search)
- by continuing the LinkedIn channel to stay in contact with RDI stakeholders via social media to remain visible as network facilitator
- by promoting of relevant events which support cross-border cooperation in the priority fields of the regional smart specialization strategies (S3).

➤ **Cross-border RDI service catalogue**

- Annual update of the RDI catalogue entries

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- Research and supplement organizations from other regions along the Austrian/Czech border to the RDI catalogue

➤ **Physical meetings**

- Facilitation of at least one physical cross-border meeting of the network per year preferably in combination with a visit to a research institution or an established conference in the border region (e.g. OÖ Zukunftsforum, in cooperation with ERDV, ...)
- Further personal meetings in the context of project sustainability or at thematically suitable events will maintain the network
- JVTP also considers to anchor the established network also in official structures for the implementation of the RIS3 strategy.

For extending the network along the entire border region of Austria and Czech Republic and performing the controlled networking and the above mentioned activities it is suggested to develop and submit a follow-up project with additional project partners. The follow-up project can build upon the S3CN results, especially in context of the defined 14 thematic fields with potential for future cooperation.

4. Memorandum on the establishment of the network

The establishment and further activation of the innovation network accelerate the implementation of regional strategies through cross-border cooperation and technology transfer.

To ensure sustainability and further facilitation of the exchange between RDI stakeholders for improving the cooperation and to jointly compete against common challenges the undersigning founding members declare their consent and support for the continuation and further implementation of S3 Couple Network according the structure and activities elaborated and recommended by the S3CN consortium.

The founding members of S3CN are JVTP- Jihočeský vědeckotechnický park, a.s. and Business Upper Austria – OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH/Department for Clusters and Cooperation.

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