



Request for pilot action

Project Acronym:	BRIDGES
Project Index (PGI):	PGI 00040
Title of the pilot action	Transregional access to innovation on demand
Policy instrument(s) addressed:	RIS3 Kainuu RIS3 Helsinki-Uusimaa RIS3 Western Macedonia
Partner(s) concerned	Regional Council of Kainuu, PP2 Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa, PP4 ANKO, PP5
Country	FI x 2, GR
Date of request:	28.3.2019

Reminder

Pilot actions are implementation-related activities dedicated to testing a new approach. This usually refers to the transfer of existing practices between partner regions. But it can also relate to a new initiative jointly designed by the partner regions during phase 1 and jointly implemented in phase 2. As reflected in the present form, pilot actions are possible under Interreg Europe under strict conditions only and the description provided in the form should be as detailed and as clear as possible.

Request for pilot action must be submitted to the programme as soon as it is ready and by the end of phase 1 at the latest. It will then be assessed by the Joint Secretariat which may require further clarifications. In case the pilot actions meet the programme's requirements, the Joint Secretariat will recommend it for approval to the Monitoring Committee. If approved, the application form will be updated through the request for changes procedure. Further information can be found in section "4.2.2 Phase 2 – monitoring of the action plan implementation" in the programme manual.

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A. Overall relevance of the request

A.1 Context and nature of the pilot action

Please describe precisely the nature of the activities envisaged and justify why this pilot action is important in the context of the project. Please also specify the main beneficiaries of the pilot action.

OBJECTIVE: The BRIDGES project is applying for a pilot action with the objective to explore further the lessons learnt from the project in relation to adopting interregional technological connectivity solutions as a way to address mismatches between the productive and research bases of the partner regions, improve the governance of the relevant policy instruments, and thus ensure more effective delivery of RIS3. The objective of the pilot action is founded on the BRIDGES project 1) testing of interregional solutions and the (repeatedly) confirmed interest of the partners to reinforce the experience beyond EC project-based options through simpler, more immediate procedures, 2) good practices relating to the provision of interregional innovation services (types of technological connectivity solutions addressed through BRIDGES) and the lessons learnt from them. The pilot action benefits from the transfer of the CENTROPE good practice (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/11/centrope-innovation-voucher/>) identified by the BRIDGES project PP7, and 3) partners' acknowledgement of the EU-wide interest in transregional cooperation schemes towards more effective, growth-generating innovation partnerships with long-term economic renewal potential.

PARTNER INVOLVEMENT: The pilot action partners are the Regional Council of Kainuu (PP2 of the BRIDGES project, IB), the Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa (PP4 of the BRIDGES project, IB) and the ANKO (PP5 in the BRIDGES project) closely working with the MA of Western Macedonia).

CONCEPT: The purpose is to improve the governance of the policy instruments of the three regions. This is done by (1) testing interregionally the CENTROPE GP and (2) introducing new action lines into the policy instruments of the three regions and thus reinforcing their RISE3 delivery effectiveness.

(1) The pilot action matches research-to-business across the BRIDGES partnership and maintains the BRIDGES project RIS3 & innovation-system reference (bio-based industries). Interregional research-to-business mini-projects are organised for preparing full research-to-business projects &/or investment plans, which are called for short 'follow up actions'. The mini-projects are based on value offers by research units willing to internationalise their research, and concern product & service development / improvement. They are aligned to the TRL¹ scale provisions. Follow up actions are, for example, investment & financing plans, ETC projects, regional / national structural funds applications, etc., that will be implemented in the programme area of the business that benefitted from the mini-project in the first place. Therefore, the pilot action and the mini-projects contribute supporting two important aspects of excellence-market placement requirements: (a) they facilitate access to a large pool of potential clients and (b) they fund the preparation of product development / improvement plans in which follow up funding solutions are described clearly.

(2) The pilot action introduces the concept of *Tools for transregional research-to-business partnerships* as a policy instrument governance improvement intervention. Such tools are (still) innovative at Structural Funds level.

OUTPUTS:

- 3 policy instruments impacted: successful aspects of the pilot action will impact the revision contents of the RIS3 of PP2 (Kainuu) and PP4 (Helsinki-Uusimaa) and will be integrated into the 2014-2020 ROP of PP5

¹ TRL = Technology readiness level, TRL 3: Experimental proof of concept; TRL 4: Technology validated in lab; TRL 5: Technology validated in relevant industrial environment; TRL 6: Technology demonstrated in relevant industrial environment; TRL 7: System prototype demonstration in operational environment; TRL 8: System complete and qualified; TRL 9: Actual system proven in operational environment. <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/kets-tools/kets-tc/map>.

(Western Macedonia). PP5 are impacting the Structural Funds of Western Macedonia so that there will be funding for the mini projects and for the follow up actions. In all these cases, the policy impact will be recognisable under a common title for all three regions: *Tools facilitating transregional² research-to-business partnerships*.

- 9 research-to-business transregional mini-projects implemented with 9 fundable 'follow up actions' clearly described, out of which 3 follow up actions funded by Western Macedonia.
- 1 ex post evaluation report for the purpose of reinforcing the mainstreaming of the strengths of the pilot action and impacting the policy instruments of the three participating regions. The recommendations of the evaluation report are required inputs to the regional boards of PP2, PP4 and PP5 and the implications of the reports for the policy instruments will be discussed accordingly.

BACKGROUND: The pilot action builds on the partners' own experience generated through the BRIDGES project and on the CENTROPE good practice. CENTROPE is a transnational innovation voucher developed through a Central Europe Interreg B project called CENTROPE. Through the BRIDGES pilot the GP is transferred to interregional level and it is valorised also from the perspective of research-to-business. Nine out of the ten types of the CENTROPE supported activities are adopted by the pilot action, while a number of transferability challenges are also addressed, for example provisions for the sustainability of the effort, faster processes, and addressing marketing challenges. The GP transfer benefits are explained in more detail *in section A.2.2 Interregionality*.

A.2 Compliance with the programme requirements

Please explain further how the pilot action complies with the programme's requirements in terms of:

A.2.1 Policy relevance and durability

How will the pilot action contribute to improving the policy instrument addressed? Is it confirmed that the pilot action is a full part of the action plan for the region concerned? What are the plans to ensure the durability of the pilot action in case of success?

The policy instruments addressed are the RIS3 of PP2, PP4 and PP5. The impact is foreseen on the current RIS3 (PP5), for the revised RIS3 (PP2 and PP4) and the forthcoming structural funds (PP2, PP4, PP5). The durability of the pilot action in case of success is guaranteed by its relevance, feasibility, and mainstreaming:

1. MAINSTREAMING & IMPROVEMENT OF THE GOVERNANCE OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT: the mainstreaming of the pilot action under the title '*Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships*' will be included under a same name heading in the RIS3 revisions of PP2 and PP4; PP5 will create such a heading in the ROP of Western Macedonia. Western Macedonia will activate through their structural funds the funding for the follow up actions as well. The policy instrument impact process is planned to be completed during 2019. The process of mainstreaming the pilot action into the RIS3 revisions is very important to PP2 and PP4 since this is a period of intense preparation for development actions in the future and structural adaptations in Finland. In addition, both Finnish regions will be making the new regional development programmes starting early in 2020. In Finland, the regional development programmes are the enabling frameworks for any development actions, including the structural funds. The quality of the pilot action and its RIS3 integration should be foreseen to be aligned with the forthcoming new regional development programmes as well. For PP5, as also stressed during the PP5 action plan presentation during the mid-term conference (8.4.2019), BRIDGES project is an important diversification initiative for the regional economy. It is in this context that PP5 MA decided to open up the ROP calls to benefit for

² The term 'transregional' is utilised as a more inclusive term to allow options for a wider range of partnerships beyond the programme areas of the partners, i.e. to allow for interregional, transnational, and eventually maybe cross border options.

interregional cooperation schemes. In this case this means the *Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships* and the funding of the follow up actions of the mini projects.

The RIS3 integration in the case of PP2 and PP4 happens as follows: (1.1) at the start of the RIS3 revision process: PP2 and PP4, include among the preconditions for the RIS3 revision the action line “Tools for transregional research-to-business partnerships” as a cross-cutting action, i.e. the enabling provision for generating projects addressing commercialisation & internationalisation of excellence located in the respective PP2 and PP4 regions; reference is made to the research-to-business approach introduced by the pilot action. It is also noted that PP2 and PP4 reserve the right to update the project funding criteria of this action line throughout the RIS3 revision, as well as later on during implementation. PP2 and PP4 introduce these issues aspect to the RIS3 revision groups and there are referenced notes from the meetings as intermediate deliverable.

(1.2) During the planned interregional meeting in Helsinki (it was planned for May 2019, but now it will need to be adjusted to a bit later, maybe late August or early September 2019), partners agree the criteria of the data collection for the evaluation report. The evaluation report is the tool for evidence-based policy decision making in the pilot. PP2, coordinator of the pilot action introduces a list of criteria that are discussed, agreed (or not) with PP4 and PP5. Among the most important criteria are questions such as: which ones among the 16 supported activities of the pilot action (*Table 3 Supported (=eligible) activities for the mini-projects*) have the most frequent demand (including review of all the submitted applications) and what is the associated TRL improvement level (-s); which ones of the mini projects have been implemented fully, and what is their multiplier effect; the trend of the interest of the research institutes to submit applications; etc. The evaluation report, as also mentioned elsewhere, plays the role of generating data for evidence-based policy making and mainstreaming into longer term policy solutions.

(1.3) PP2, throughout the duration of the pilot, populates the evaluation effort with data collection from the 3 participating regions and leading to groups of insights -as previously explained (item 1.2 above). The first insights are presented to the closing meetings of the RIS3 revision at the end of 2019.

(1.4) Updates of the pilot action evaluation insights and policy mainstreaming recommendations happen in Spring 2020 and in Autumn 2020. If necessary, they are then integrated into the RIS3 project funding criteria.

The mainstreaming approach is discussed in more detail in section **B.1 Summary of activities and timetable**, item 6, and has been taken into account accordingly in the implementation activities and timetable of the pilot action.

2. THE RELEVANCE FOR TRANSREGIONAL ACCESS TO INNOVATION revealed during Phase 1 (innovation maps, feasibility studies, testing of interregional technological connectivity, and opening up of the structural funds of PP5 to this option already during Phase 1), confirmed in three progress reports of the BRIDGES project, and evidenced by the decision of the partners during the 9th ISC (September 2018) to apply for a pilot action focusing on this issue. The pilot action stresses facilitation for research-to-business actions and associated investments, which are at the heart of RIS3 implementation. The need for excellence to access markets is not new. There is a lot of work done on how excellence can be commercialised. However, ongoing facilitation options are for the most part business-driven and not excellence-driven³. Excellence-to-business support tools focus, for the most part, on how to make excellence known, not on how to make it accessible & tailor technology offers to a wide range of innovation – absorbing businesses. It implies that a lot of excellence remains awaiting demand and, as a result, a lot of knowledge-driven investments (including RIS3 related investments) are delayed or not happening. In the BRIDGES project, the possibility to benefit from business-to-research options at interregional level has been tested with very positive results (Slovenia/Finland; PP6/PP4, and Greece/Finland; PP5/PP4). Moreover, the innovation maps identified for

³ For example, the EUROSTARS programme which we studied during BRIDGES Phase 1 (during Phase 1 of the BRIDGES project we tested EUROSTARS and what came out was the request for primarily research-to-business options); the ZIM programme organised by Germany and currently active between Germany / Finland, as well as business-to-research facilitation options proposed by Business Finland.

all regions' excellence strengths seeking new clients. This is one of the mismatches between the knowledge and productive bases of the BRIDGES regions confirmed, as well, during the project. It has also been acknowledged by the feasibility studies of PP2 Kainuu (renewal of the berry industry) and PP4 Helsinki-Uusimaa, prioritising commercialisation of research. In the case of PP4, the regional development programme Uusimaa 2.0 of the partner stresses commercialisation and internationalisation as overriding priorities for the region.

- 3. FEASIBILITY:** Both, demand (research) and supply (SMEs as clients) for the mini projects have been investigated in depth before deciding to make the pilot action application. The (interregional) supply has been analysed during the BRIDGES project Phase 1. Besides the examples of research-to-business cooperation between Slovenia/Finland and Greece/ Finland, the options. Cooperation between Poland / Finland was also analysed. The request for access to research-to-business options (vs business-to-business) was emphasised. The demand for transregional (including interregional, cross border, and transnational) access to innovation tools was confirmed by mainstream excellence and applied research units in all three regions. The concept of mini-projects was introduced to the research units in Kainuu, Helsinki-Uusimaa and Western Macedonia during February – March 2019. The idea of mini-projects has been welcomed by all research units. Moreover, contributions in the mid-term conference (8.4.2019), during Work Session 3, by research partners VTT & LUKE from the PP4 region and the University of Oulu from the PP2 region, participated and confirmed the relevance of their interest. PP5 discussed with one important research unit located in their programme area, the Centre for Research & Technology (CERTH), Kozani unit. Evidence from all these exchanges confirms that excellence-units & businesses consider very important the mini-projects' contribution supporting excellence-market placement in terms of (a) technology value offers, (b) access to a large pool of potential clients and (c) the preparation of product development / improvement plans in which follow up funding solutions are included.

A.2.2 Interregionality

How is the pilot action linked to the interregional exchange of experience process? How does it relate to knowledge / practice learnt from other project partners?

The concept of the pilot action has two sources of inputs: first, the experience generated during Phase 1 of the BRIDGES project, where interregional technological connectivity solutions were tested bilaterally, between three of the partner regions (PP6 Slovenia/PP4 Finland, PP5 Greece/PP4 Finland) with very encouraging results. The testing addressed mismatches between the research and economic base of the partner-regions, which is one of the key concerns of the BRIDGES project. It was mostly motivated by the regions that needed more research. From this experience, the concept of ensuring "access on demand to innovation services" across the EU was outlined and discussed⁴. This experience is confirmed by the innovation maps and the feasibility studies of the regions. The innovation maps identified in most of the BRIDGES regions excellence strengths seeking new clients. This is one of the mismatches between the knowledge and productive bases of the BRIDGES regions that has been confirmed during the project. The feasibility studies of PP2 Kainuu (renewal of the berry industry) and PP4 Helsinki-Uusimaa, prioritising commercialisation of research, confirm the same. In the case of PP4, the regional development programme Uusimaa 2.0 of the partner stresses also commercialisation and internationalisation as overriding priorities for the region. Moreover, bio-based industries, as the baseline RIS3 industries of the BRIDGES project, were confirmed as a very dynamic and promising interregional cooperation framework. These findings form the base for the pilot action and are summarised in Table 1 below.

⁴ It has also been acknowledged in the BRIDGES progress reports 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1 Excellence in bio-based industries in the BRIDGES project regions

Pilot action regions	Bio-based industries excellence areas to internationalise
PP 2 Kainuu	<p>(1). Bio-based economy research base to productise berry residuals and extracts for functional foods and regenerative cosmetics. The offer is valid not only for well- known berries, but also for less appreciated berries which however have ingredients with high potential (berry seeds, berry skins, berry leaves and various underutilized berries such as crowberries, chokeberries and bog whortleberry).</p> <p>(2). Censors and on-line measurements (the excellence offer is either on developing and testing the solutions further, or on adapting and utilising them in different environments) of all kinds of materials and complements the berry-excellence.</p>
PP4 Helsinki – Uusimaa	<p>(3). Biotechnology and cleantech</p> <p>(4). Vegetable proteins</p> <p>(5). Functional food</p> <p>(6). Fisheries and aquafarming</p>
PP5 Western Macedonia	<p>(7). Biomass chain</p> <p>(8). Biomass testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Co-combustion biomass with lignite</i> ● <i>Gasification of biomass</i> ● <i>Biomass testing-power production of biomass</i> <p>(9). Research & laboratory work - Chemical Process & Energy Resources Institute (CPERI)</p>

Thanks to the policy learning and the good practice analysis, one BRIDGES good practice was identified as approximately addressing the needs for 'interregional innovation on demand', it is the CENTROPE GP. CENTROPE is a good practice contributed by PP7 PBN and is approved to the Interreg Europe data base, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/11/centrope-innovation-voucher/>. CENTROPE discusses the experience of a transnational innovation voucher created by an Interreg Central Europe project, in which PP7 was partner. As a result of the interregional exchange, BRIDGES PP2,4, and 5 decided to transfer and adapt to their respective regional interests the CENTROPE good practice.

In conclusion, CENTROPE was selected for transfer because (1) it combines transnational activities and prioritises technology-oriented projects; and (2) the supported activities are very closely responding to the interests of the three BRIDGES regions. The purpose of the testing is to better understand the strongest demand for interregional research-to-business partnerships and mainstream the criteria into on-going (RIS3 revision) and forthcoming structural funds programmes. Only transregional (interregional) aspects are anticipated in the pilot action. CENTROPE elements adapted & adopted include (a) interregional character of the actions; (b) supported activities; (c) resources needed. CENTROPE good practice description sections *Difficulties encountered & Potential for learning & transfer* are taken into account and addressed.

The following Table 2 and Table 3 summarise, respectively, how CENTROPE was transferred and is planned to be tested by the BRIDGES regions, with attention paid to the supported activities. Table 3 indicates how 9 out of 10 CENTROPE -based supported activities are adopted, however there are 7 more supported activities, proposed by the BRIDGES partners, based on the experiences of the MAs.

Table 2 Learning from the CENTROPE good practice to transferred elements to the pilot action

CENTROPE	Pilot action
<p>Transnational innovation voucher system and testing implemented in the context of the Interreg Central Europe CENTROPE project.</p> <p>Priority was given to technology-oriented projects, while all supported activities had to demonstrate innovative and scientific approach.</p>	<p><i>Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships</i> especially addressing research-to-business demand.</p> <p>Priority is given to technology-oriented projects; all activities have to demonstrate innovative and scientific approach.</p>
<p>Supported activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. development of new products/prototypes; ii. preparation of a Business Plan for innovative products iii. development of new concepts, iv. pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, studies for problem solving; v. development of a new service; vi. tailored training in new technologies; vii. product/service testing; viii. economic impact assessment of new technologies; ix. analysis of technology transfer potential; x. purchase of raw materials 	<p>The business-to-research focus of innovation vouchers is complemented by the research-to-business option which is in fact also a RIS3 priority.</p> <p>All supported activities are the same as in items 1 to 9. In addition, they are associated to technology readiness levels (TRL). Each value offer by research units and each application by SMEs will select to address one or more of these activities.</p> <p>Integrating the TRL into the pilot introduces effectiveness criteria, allows for follow up projects and longer-term innovation partnerships; it also prepares actors for interregional innovation projects such as the SME Instrument.</p>
<p>Resources needed</p>	<p>5000€/case</p> <p>We have anticipated 6 000€ per case when it comes to research-to-business mini-projects.</p>
<p>Difficulties encountered</p>	<p>Low motivation of SMEs & R&D service providers at the programme start. In many cases the value of vouchers is too small, only enough to cover part of research costs.</p> <p>Regulations of CENTRAL EUROPE program provided a strict time & financial frame; administrative burden higher than expected.</p>
<p>Potential for learning or transfer</p>	<p><i>Follow up and continuity:</i> it is anticipated that the criteria for the mini-projects, filtered by the testing and evaluation exercise of the pilot action, will impact the RIS3 revision of PP2 and PP4, and the calls will continue for PP5. The possibility of ensuring continuity of the pilot is one of the main reasons it was decided to transfer & test CENTROPE.</p> <p><i>Better marketing:</i> CENTROPE points out the need for stronger stimulation of connection between (small) SMEs and (big) R&D institutes, the scheme also introduces a change of mindset.</p> <p>In the pilot action access to SME pools and activation of SMEs across the BRIDGES partnership & the respective member states (MS) is also addressed. PP5 is supporting this activation, but after the pilot the process will be more localised. The activation of research units is done by PP2, PP4 and PP5 and the mini-project process they have set up.</p> <p><i>Less administration</i> (less & shorter documentation, e-application system): the pilot action addresses this</p>

⁵ EEN= Europe Enterprise Network.

<p>CENTROPE Transnational innovation voucher system and testing implemented in the context of the Interreg Central Europe CENTROPE project.</p> <p>Priority was given to technology-oriented projects, while all supported activities had to demonstrate innovative and scientific approach.</p>	<p>Pilot action <i>Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships</i> especially addressing research-to-business demand.</p> <p>Priority is given to technology-oriented projects; all activities have to demonstrate innovative and scientific approach.</p>
<p>programme. Stimulating connection between (small) SMEs and (big) R&D institutes, the scheme also introduces a change of mindset.</p>	<p>through administrative demands by the MAs/IBs. Mainstreaming of the findings of the pilot into the forthcoming structural funds period addresses the comment on "...available financial sources for the implementation".</p> <p><i>Quick & smart system</i> (shorter lifetime of one application-realization process): the mini-projects are value offers based on excellence and leading to product development / product improvement plans. To make a product development / improvement plan, we anticipate 3 months.</p> <p><i>Different types of vouchers</i> (small & larger amounts): Western Macedonia, Kainuu and Uusimaa, are funding research-to-business mini-projects building on the market placement of excellence and leading to product development / product improvement plans. The anticipated cost is 6000€.</p> <p>Western Macedonia's funding business-to-research actions is anticipated. The highest eligible cost will be decided by the PP5 MA.</p>

Table 3 Supported (=eligible) activities for the mini-projects

Supported activities by the pilot action	TRL reference where relevant	Reference source
(1). Development of new products/prototypes	TRL 5 & 6	CENTROPE
(2). Preparation of a Business Plan for innovative products	TRL 3 & 4 TRL 5 & 6	CENTROPE
(3). Development of new concepts	TRL 5 & 6	CENTROPE
(4). Pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, studies for problem solving	TRL 3 & 4 TRL 5 & 6	CENTROPE
(5). Development of a new service		CENTROPE
(6). Tailored training in new technologies	TRL 7 & 8	BRIDGES
(7). Product/service testing	TRL 3 & 4	CENTROPE
(8). Measurement services for product development / improvement	TRL 3 & 4 TRL 5 & 6	BRIDGES
(9). Materials research for innovative product development	TRL 3 & 4 TRL 5 & 6	BRIDGES
(10). Economic impact assessment of new technologies	TRL 5 & 6	CENTROPE
(11). Analysis of technology transfer potential	TRL 3 & 4	CENTROPE
(12). Support for product development		CENTROPE
(13). Facilitating SMEs' access to KETs		BRIDGES
(14). Regional mapping of commercializing RDI		BRIDGES
(15). Market placement of innovative products		BRIDGES
(16). Standardisation and qualification of technology transfer services		BRIDGES

A.2.3 Additionality

Why can the pilot action not be financed by the policy instrument addressed or by other local / regional / national funds?
The pilot action per se, is co-financed by all the partners, but at different levels.

- Kainuu and Helsinki-Uusimaa: the two Finnish regions do not have ERDF available any more. Both Finnish partners are contributing own funds. PP2 and PP4 are already dedicating considerable own funding for the implementation of their respective action plans. Our Structural funds are used already, too. We need the project funding for ensuring the action plan implementation completely. The pilot action is unique and really a pilot for both regions, in terms of mindset and supported actions. Our action plans, with the inclusion of the pilot action sub component, imply considerable learning requirements and potential. Using transregional innovation vouchers is not a day-to-day tool yet. Secondly, while commercialisation of research is an important issue, supporting value offers of research units to be “sellable” as product development options is very new. For example, during the pilot action preparation, we had to confirm the feasibility of our approach by organising meetings with research institutions. Thirdly, supporting research units regionally and systematically to find customers through mainstream EU networks is forming new innovative regional development instrument. We are expecting to learn a lot from the pilot and use it as the base for evidence-based policy in our RIS3 integration (please see also the reference in section A 2.1/item 1.2). This is an important structural reason for which we are asking the funding from the BRIDGES project
- Western Macedonia: All transregional research-to-business and business-to-research actions will be funded by the current Western Macedonia 2014-2020 ROP. ANKO is requesting funds for running the pilot action, activating research units, and supporting access to pools of clients.

Table 4 Pilot action additionality

Partner	Funding sources		Comments on the funding sources
	Project funds	Own funds	
Regional council of Kainuu, PP2	52 000,00 €	46 500,00 €	BRIDGES under spending + partner own organisation budget; no structural funds available. Regarding the funding of the mini projects, PP2 requests 16 000€ from project funds and additional 12 000€ come from own funds.
Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (PP4), PP4	52 500,00 €	81 000,00 €	BRIDGES under spending + partner own organisation budget; no structural funds available. Regarding the funding of the mini projects, PP4 requests 16 000€ from project funds and additional 12 000€ come from own funds. PP4 commits in addition 69 000€ from own resources for the action plan of PP4 as a whole. It implies that PP4 commits a total of 150 000€ from own funds.
ANKO, PP5	23 200,00 €	18 000,00 € 360 000 €	PP5 requests funding for the participation in the pilot action as PP5 organisation budget does not allow committing own funds. Regarding the funding of the mini projects, all funding comes from Structural Funds of Western Macedonia 2014-2020. Regarding the funding of the follow up projects (360 000€), all funding comes from the Structural Funds of Western Macedonia 2014-2020.
Total	127 700,00 €	505 500,00 €	

B. Planned activities

Please describe precisely the different activities to be implemented for the pilot action during each semester of phase 2.

B.1 Summary of activities and timetable

A summary of Phase 1 activities related to the action plan are found in Table 4 and the implementation approach is found in Phase 2, Table 5.

Table 4, referring to the preparatory period of the pilot action is inserted here because during Phase 1 we addressed key operational issues of the pilot action that otherwise would be addressed during Phase 2, delaying the actual start of operations. Thanks to the extensive preparatory work completed during Phase 1, a smooth & fast start for the Phase 2 implementation is ensured, in case the pilot action is approved.

The preparatory activities implemented include:

- **1.- The concept of the mini-projects was opened up and agreed** and all three regions have a shared baseline approach: they fund mini-projects which commercialise and internationalise the respective regions' excellence in bio-based industries (see Table 1). This is done by formulating a detailed plan for development actions with businesses and (or) research units outside the programme areas, based on the supported activities listed in Table 3. The funding source of the planned development actions (called 'follow up' actions for short) is expected to be indicated in the application form for the mini-projects; a special template has been designed for this purpose. In addition, PP5 (the MA) is interested in to ensure also the funding from the structural funds for the implementation of the follow up actions. **Sufficient success criterion of the pilot action was agreed:** For the success of the pilot action it is important to reach a certain level of mini-projects (about 3 per region). While this is not a big number, it is still a measure of interest and orientation of interests that will be useful to the evaluation and the focus of the policy impact (item 6 in this list, below). **The duration of the mini-projects was discussed in depth and agreed:** In the case of typical innovation voucher operations (those that happen within the same national programme area), the preparation of the development plan for funding is usually no more than 2 months. Because our focus is on transregional partnerships, we consider that 3 months should be enough.
- **2.- Operational issues, i.e., how the mini projects will be implemented and monitored and coordinated were discussed among the partners and agreed:** PP2 will implement the pilot action through the internal project administration arrangements already in place; PP4 through the enhanced EU Office operation (this is also Action 1 of the PP4 action plan); PP5 will implement the pilot action through the supportive activities run by PP5 and the strong involvement of the MA of Western Macedonia.
- **3.- The policy instrument impact (mainstreaming) was exhaustively discussed and reviewed among the partners:** as already mentioned, the purpose of the pilot action, is to mainstream the most relevant and successful elements into the on-going 2014-2020 structural funds. This is achieved through the planned RIS3 revisions (PP2 and PP4) and the integration of a new action to include as a separate funding line with associated criteria in the forthcoming calls of the Western Macedonia calls (PP5). Western Macedonia will also fund the follow up actions that result from the mini projects. The Western Macedonia ROP is thus improved in the sense of interregional research-to-business and business-to-research partnerships. This is described in the Western Macedonia action plan as "two staged approach". The mainstreaming will happen in the following steps: (i) The concept of mini projects under the heading 'Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships' is included into the RIS3 revision agendas of PP2 & PP4 (spring 2019) and integrated into the ROP for Western Macedonia (spring 2019). PP2 and PP4 issue calls for mini projects, and PP5 issues calls for mini projects and follow up actions under the present. Western Macedonia ROP. (ii) Members of the RIS3 revision teams (PP2 and PP4) & the Western Macedonia ROP join the pilot action monitoring process to be able to have -to-day experience of the mini projects. (iii) Recommendations are made for the concrete provisions to mainstream of the mini projects to the RIS3 teams of PP2 and PP4, following the results and effectiveness of

the calls; the same process is followed by the regional board of the PP5 MA. (iv) ex post evaluation is prepared. Results are presented and discussed with the regional boards of the three partners. (v) Based on the successful part of the pilot, further modifications to the mainstreamed Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships are proposed to the regional boards and agreed.

Mainstreaming items (i), (ii), (iii) take place during the 18 months of the duration of the pilot action, i.e. till end of September 2020. Mainstreaming items (iv) and (v) happen in 2020-2021, and these processes belong more to the regional boards. In *Table 6 Implementation steps and time plan* of the pilot action, there is distinct reference only to items (i), (ii) and (iii).

- **4.- Access to large pools of potential clients was clarified:** The pilot action will test excellence value offers across the BRIDGES programme areas and beyond. To be able to judge the success of the pilot, options for research-to-business offers to access larger pools of demand are necessary. Experience and the CENTROPE GP confirm that access to pools of clients requires qualified brokerage beyond awareness and information dissemination. PP5 proposed, for the duration of the pilot action, to involve for this purpose the EEN unit as the main matching service and this was accepted. This does not exclude partners and research units to also identify clients on their own.
- **5.- Demand for facilitation of research-to-business services by the research community was researched and confirmed:** bilateral meetings at regional level were organised for this purpose (PP2 with the university of Oulu; PP4 with VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and LUKE Natural Resources Institute Finland as examples of excellence and applied research operators; PP5 with the Centre for Research & Technology (CERTH), Western Macedonia unit. Discussions with the research units confirmed the usefulness of the pilot action as matching & (modest) funding *tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships*. It is very interesting that in spite of the fact that commercialisation of research methodologies have been intensely in focus for many years, the facilitation proposed by the PP2, PP4 and PP5 MAs/IBs was very warmly welcomed, i.e. the relevant sharing of the risk for the successful market-place of excellence is very much appreciated;
- **6.- The cooperation process and exchanges among PP2, PP4 and PP5 were also clarified:** as adopters of the CENTROPE good practice, PP2, PP4 and PP5 cooperate on the coordination, sharing of information, trouble shooting, activation of research and clients, evaluation and mainstreaming exchanges.

Table 5 summarises the implemented preparatory activities during Phase 1 and the partner involvement.

Table 5 Preparation activities of the pilot action and partner involvement

BRIDGES partners	Preparation of the pilot action application		
	Activity	Timetable of task	Funding sources
PP1	Writing, clarifications and coordination of the pilot action application. This includes methodology & criteria for the mini-projects; the evaluation methodology & questionnaires of the pilot action; revision of the pilot action application.	Phase 1	Phase 1 and some delayed Phase 1 staff costs (Phase 2 incurred)
PP2	Contribution and review to the pilot action application. Meetings with research units.	Phase 1	Phase 1 and some delayed Phase 1 staff costs (Phase 2 incurred)
PP4	Contribution and review to the pilot action application Meetings with research units Organising the service renewal as part of PP4 action plan ('Enhancement of the EU services').	Phase 1	Phase 1 and some delayed Phase 1 staff costs (Phase 2 incurred) Phase 1
PP5	Contribution and review to the pilot action application Meetings with research units Involvement of the MA	Phase 1	Phase 1 and some delayed Phase 1 staff costs (Phase 2 incurred)

B.2 Precise description of activities per semester of Phase 2

PHASE 2
Semester 1
<p>There are nine (9) main activities taking place during the 1st semester, i.e. 1.4.2019 – 30.9.2019:</p> <p>I. MINI-PROJECTS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The organisational arrangements of PP4 'Enhancement of EU services' are finalised.2. The results of the approval (or not) of the pilot action are informed to applicants. In case the pilot action is approved, then:3. Kick off events and information to the press in the PP2, PP4 and PP5 regions take place.4. One interregional meeting is planned to take place in Helsinki Finland, to finalise (any) pending issues among the pilot action partners. During the interregional meeting the supportive material (mini-project concepts, methodology, criteria and evaluation approach), that have already been prepared during Phase 1 are reviewed, finalised and adopted.5. Announcement of calls of the mini-projects and invitation to research units to participate is made by PP2, PP4 and PP5.6. Filling in of the value offer outlines by the research units starts. <p>II. POLICY IMPACT</p> <p>7. Mainstreaming item (i) The concept of mini projects under the heading 'Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships' is included into the RIS3 revision agendas of PP2 & PP4 (spring 2019) and integrated into the ROP for Western Macedonia (spring 2019). PP2 and PP4 issue calls for mini projects, and PP5 issues calls for mini projects and follow up actions under the present. Western Macedonia ROP.</p> <p>8. Mainstreaming item (ii) (Members of the RIS3 revision teams (PP2 and PP4) & the Western Macedonia ROP join the pilot action monitoring process to be able to have -to-day experience of the mini projects.</p> <p>III. MANAGEMENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Coordination of the pilot action activities (coordination is done by PP2).10. One online progress-assessment and trouble-shooting meeting.
Semester 2
<p>Ten (10) main activities are foreseen for the 2nd semester, i.e. 1.10.2019-31.3.2020.</p> <p>I. MINI-PROJECTS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Search for clients, and matching between research and businesses, starts. First partnerships are identified.2. Applications for mini-projects, evaluation and approval of mini-projects, start.3. Implementation of mini-projects starts. We expect that mini-projects will be implemented during approximately 3 months, i.e. a development plan of the follow up action is expected to be ready within 3 months.4. Filling in of value offers by research units continues. <p>II. POLICY IMPACT</p> <p>5. Mainstreaming item (iii) Recommendations are made for the concrete provisions to mainstream of the mini projects to the RIS3 teams of PP2 and PP4, following the results and effectiveness of the calls; the same process if followed by the regional board of the PP5 MA.</p> <p>III. EVALUATION</p> <p>6. The first data collection starts. The data collection is carried out by PP2, and inputs come from PP2, PP4, PP5, PP5 MA, research and any other beneficiaries.</p> <p>IV. MANAGEMENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Coordination of the pilot action activities.8. One online progress-assessment and trouble-shooting meeting.9. One face-to-face meeting, back to back with all other Phase 2 planned meetings. Preliminary planned to be held during the later part of Autumn 2019.

10. Phase 2 reporting.
Semester 3
Eight (8) main activities are foreseen for the 3rd semester, i.e. 1.4.2020 - 30.9.2020.
I. MINI-PROJECTS
1. Applications for the last mini-projects, evaluation and approval of mini-projects.
2. Implementation of mini-projects continues.
3. Closing of the mini-projects implementation. All follow up actions (= development plans) must be completed by the end of August 2020.
II. POLICY IMPACT
4. Mainstreaming item (iii) Recommendations are made for the concrete provisions to mainstream of the mini projects to the RIS3 teams of PP2 and PP4, following the results and effectiveness of the calls; the same process if followed by the regional board of the PP5 MA.
5. Revised RIS3 text and ROP actions with the mainstreamed title Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships and items included are available.
III. EVALUATION
6. Data collection for the evaluation report continues and the evaluation report is produced; deadline for the evaluation report is 30.9.2020.
IV. MANAGEMENT
7. Coordination of the pilot action activities.
8. One online progress-assessment and trouble-shooting meeting.
9. One face-to-face meeting, back to back with all other Phase 2 planned meetings and the final conference.
Semester 4
<i>No content related activities should take place in this semester. The last months of the project should be entirely dedicated to the project closure.</i>

Table 6 Time plan of the pilot action

Implementation of the pilot action (only PP2, PP4 and PP5)		
Activities	Partner involvement	Semester
Organisational arrangements cleared (renewal of 'EU projects service')	PP4	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Approval of the pilot announced	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Kick off of the pilot, local meetings	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Interregional meeting (Finland & Greece) in Helsinki	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Mainstreaming item (i) The concept of mini projects under the heading 'Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships' is included into the RIS3 revision agendas of PP2 & PP4 (spring 2019) and integrated into the ROP for Western Macedonia (spring 2019). PP2 and PP4 issue calls for mini projects, and PP5 issues calls for mini projects and follow up actions under the present. Western Macedonia ROP. Mainstreaming item (ii) (Members of the RIS3 revision teams (PP2 and PP4) & the Western Macedonia ROP join the pilot action monitoring process to be able to have -to-day experience of the mini projects.	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Announcement of calls for the mini-projects	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019)
Filling in of value offers with research units	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019) 2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020)
Search for clients	PP5 primarily PP2, PP4, PP5	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Applications for mini-projects, evaluation and approval of mini-projects	PP2, PP4, MA of PP5	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Observation of the pilot action implementation	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019) 2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020)
Mainstreaming item (iii) Recommendations are made for the concrete provisions to mainstream of the mini projects to the RIS3 teams of PP2 and PP4, following the results and effectiveness of the calls; the same process if followed by the regional board of the PP5 MA.	PP2, PP4, PP5	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020)

Implementation of the pilot action (only PP2, PP4 and PP5)		
Activities	Partner involvement	Semester
Revised RIS3 text and ROP actions with the mainstreamed title <i>Tools facilitating transregional research-to-business partnerships</i> and items included are available.		3 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) at the latest.
Implementation of mini-projects	Research from PP2, PP4 and PP5 regions; clients across the BRIDGES partnership	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Data collection for the evaluation	PP2, collecting data from PP2, PP4, PP5 & PP5 MA	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Evaluation report	PP2	3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
The results of the ex post evaluation of the pilot action, indicating the most successful aspects of the pilot are annexed to the revised RIS3 and the Western Macedonian ROP.	PP2, PP4, PP5	4 (1.10.2020 – 31.3.2021)
Face-to-face meetings. (back to back with all other Phase 2 planned meetings)	All BRIDGES partners	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Closing conference	All BRIDGES partners	3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020)
Pilot action coordination	PP2, PP4, PP5	1 (1.4.2019-30.9.2019) 2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 3 (1.4.2020 – 30.9.2020) 4 (1.10.2020 – 31.3.2021)
Phase 2 reporting	All BRIDGES partners	2 (1.10.2019 -31.3.2020) 4 (1.10.2020 – 31.3.2021)

C. State Aid

Funds used to implement pilot actions have to comply with state aid rules, in line with article 107 of the TFEU. Therefore, the JS has to assess if the pilot activities proposed by the project can be considered as state aid relevant. The activity carried out within the pilot could be state aid relevant if it has a commercial nature, is market related, it grants an economic benefit to the beneficiary that the beneficiary would not have received without the pilot and is thus able to distort the competition within the EU. If the proposed pilot action falls under state aid rules, the aid will be granted under the de minimis regulation⁶. According to this regulation, an organisation cannot receive more than EUR 200,000 of de minimis aid in the last 3 fiscal years. This means that, if the pilot action is state aid relevant and the project partner will receive de minimis aid, there will be specific procedures to follow. If the pilot benefits directly the project partner, a self-declaration will have to be provided by the project partner. In cases where third parties receive benefits from the pilot, they will be considered as the recipient of state aid/de minimis and projects partners bear the responsibility to ensure that state aid/de minimis rules are respected by the third parties, by collecting such self-declarations from them. Further information on state aid can also be found in section "2.7.5 State aid" in the programme manual.

In order to allow the JS to assess whether the proposed pilot is state aid relevant, we kindly ask you to reply to the questions below.

- Can any of the pilot activities be considered as an economic activity, i.e. market relevant, profit oriented or likely to improve the financial situation of the partner? Please justify as much as possible your answer, and if applicable, please explain how the pilot action could improve the financial situation of the project partner.

<p>1) The pilot is not state aid relevant for the partner organisations.</p> <p>2) The pilot action is not bringing any economic advantage to the project partners or to third parties. The selection of the mini projects is done by open calls for all 3 partner regions. The purpose of the mini projects is to enable research units commercialise research through value offers and co-operation with businesses and jointly formulating "fundable" innovation and product development projects</p>
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⁶ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid'.

- Will there be a specific third-party organisation or a selected group of third-party organisations (other than the external experts sub-contracted in compliance with public procurement rules) involved in the pilot that could benefit from market related, or profit oriented activities, likely to improve their financial situation? If yes, please define the activities they will participate in and explain why you consider that they are market related and how they could bring an economic benefit to the third party.

No

D. Partnership

Which partner(s) of the project will be in charge of the implementation of the pilot action?

Table 7 Involvement of the partners in the pilot action

Partner name:	Country:	Role in the pilot:
PP2 Regional Council of Kainuu	FI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Coordinator of the pilot action. 2) Pilot action implementer; 3 research-to-business mini-projects are anticipated. 3) Evaluation report coordinator; implementer of the evaluation exercise; writer of the evaluation report. 4) Policy impact through the RIS3 revision (integration of the successful part of the pilot action into the revised RIS3); recommendations for the interregional measures in the forthcoming period of the structural funds. 5) Participates in & contributes to the pilot action meeting organised by PP4 in May 2019 in Helsinki. 6) Contributes to the Phase 2 reporting. 7) Participates in & contributes to the closing conference of the project.
PP4 Regional Council of Helsinki-Uusimaa	FI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participant in and contributor to the pilot action. 2) Pilot action implementer; 3 research-to-business mini-projects are anticipated. 3) Contributor to the evaluation exercise (data inputs) and report (assessment of the report). 4) Policy impact through the RIS3 revision (integration of the successful part of the pilot action into the revised RIS3); recommendations for the interregional measures in the forthcoming period of the structural funds. 5) Organises & coordinates the pilot action meeting in May 2019 in Helsinki. 6) Contributes to the Phase 2 reporting. 7) Participates in & contributes to the closing conference of the project.
PP5 ANKO	GR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participant in and contributor to the pilot action. 2) Involves the MA into the pilot. 3) Pilot action implementer; coordinates and motivates the matching activities between the research units & business clients, through access to pools of potential business clients across the EU; 3 research-to-business mini-projects are anticipated. 4) Contributor to the evaluation exercise (data inputs) and report (assessment of the report). 5) Policy impact (through the MA involvement) by maintaining open calls to the 2014-2020 Western Macedonia ROP of the successful part of the pilot action as criteria for the calls; recommendations for the interregional measures in the forthcoming period of the structural funds. 6) Participates in & contributes to the pilot action meeting organised by PP4 in May 2019 in Helsinki. 7) Contributes to the Phase 2 reporting. 8) Participates in & contributes to the closing conference of the project.

Does the pilot action imply the introduction of new partners in the partnership?

No

Will other stakeholders be involved in the implementation of the pilot action?

- 1) The Managing Authority of the Western Macedonia ROP 2014-2020 plays key role in the pilot action. They do not require any additional funding. The 2014-2020 ROP still has funds and suitable calls will be applied.
- 2) Stakeholders of PP2, PP4 and PP5 will be mobilised during the pilot action, especially the research units.

E. Budget

Partner	Staff costs	Office and administration	Travel and accommodation	External expertise and services	Equipment	Net revenues	Total pilot action budget
Regional Council of Kainuu (PP2)	30,000.00 EUR	4,500 EUR	1,500.00 EUR	16,000.00 EUR	/	/	52,000.00 EUR
Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council (PP4)	30,000.00 EUR	4,500 EUR	/	18,000.00 EUR	/	/	52,500.00 EUR
ANKO (PP5)	18,000.00 EUR	2,700 EUR	2,500.00 EUR	- EUR	/	/	23,200.00 EUR
Total	78,000.00 EUR	11,700.00 EUR	4,000.00 EUR	34,000.00 EUR	/	/	127,700.00 EUR

1. JS final recommendations

State aid relevance		Yes	No
1/ Does the pilot action represent a service which allows to make profit and for which a market exists (i.e. is it considered as an economic activity in the meaning of the Commission notice on the notion of State Aid (n° 2016/C 262/01)?			No
2/ Could the financial situation of the concerned partner(s) improve as a result of the pilot (i.e. could the pilot action potentially distort the competition)?			No
3/ Will there be any economic benefit to third parties? (indirect state aid relevance)			No
Conclusion	The pilot action is not state aid relevant		

Fulfilment of criteria?		Yes	No
1/ Relevance		x	
2/ Additionality		x	
3/ Interregionality		x	
4/ Feasibility (including finance)		x	
Final recommendation	The pilot action request is recommended for approval		