



# Enhancing Riinvest's EU Project Capacities: Insights from the DLR Projektträger Fellowship

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## 1. Background and introduction

The main goal of this short-term fellowship was to explore and learn from DLR Projektträger's best practices in managing EU-funded projects, with the intention of adopting similar approaches at Riinvest to strengthen its project administration capacities. The fellowship placed a strong emphasis on building Riinvest's expertise in successfully applying for, securing, and managing EU grants and funding programmes. Beyond knowledge transfer, this mobility experience also aimed to foster long-term institutional collaboration between Riinvest and DLR.

Organised within the framework of the POLICY ANSWERS project, specifically under the Regional Pilot Activities Work Package, the fellowship took place from 17 to 28 February 2025. During the fellowship, interactive sessions enabled direct engagement with experienced project managers and policy advisors from DLR Projektträger, offering valuable insights into best practices for grant application processes, consortium building, and project implementation. These exchanges not only enriched professional understanding but also strengthened personal networks, laying the groundwork for potential future collaborations between Riinvest and DLR.

## 2. Review previous DLR Projektträger's experience with EU-funded projects

The short-term mobility started with a detailed presentation by the head of the department, who shared DLR's Projektträger's substantial involvement in Horizon Europe and other EU framework initiatives. She provided an overview of DLR's structure, core activities, and strategic approach to European research collaboration, emphasizing its role in fostering European and international cooperation. DLR Projektträger, as an important actor in administering and executing research financing, supports international cooperation, facilitates access to EU funds, and strengthens Germany's scientific diplomacy. She emphasized DLR's contributions to international research networks, information transfer mechanisms, and capacity-building programmes, particularly those involving Horizon Europe. She also announced the BMBF initiative "Research in Germany," which promotes German research institutes and fosters international collaboration by providing financing opportunities, knowledge, and networking platforms. These activities demonstrate Germany's commitment to global research excellence and emphasize the need of structured collaboration within the European Research Area (ERA).

Furthermore, the value of organized research support systems was underlined with a suggestion that Riinvest Institute follow DLR Projektträger's lead in helping regional

researchers and SMEs apply for EU funding possibilities. By implementing such a framework, Riinvest could provide targeted support for grant applications, partnership development, and project implementation within EUREKA, the Hop On Facility, and Horizon Europe programmes.

### 3. What can we (Riinvest) do better in the future?

#### 3.1. Hop On Projects

Kosovo's participation in the Hop On Facility within Horizon Europe presents a significant opportunity to enhance its research and innovation framework while conforming to the overarching objectives of the European Research Area. Although Kosovo has historically been underrepresented in EU-funded research initiatives, its potential in key sectors like ICT, renewable energy, agriculture, and health sciences is undeniable. The Hop On Facility offers a pathway for Kosovar institutions to join established consortia, promoting knowledge transfer, scientific advance, and capacity building.

As one of Kosovo's leading research institutions, Riinvest Institute is uniquely positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. With its strong expertise in economic policy, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development, Riinvest can serve as a crucial link between research and policymaking. Engaging in Hop On initiatives would bolster the institute's research skills and augment its capacity to contribute to evidence-based policymaking and innovation-driven economic growth. A key advantage of Riinvest is its team of highly skilled professionals with extensive experience in managing and implementing research projects. Additionally, its deep understanding of Kosovo's socioeconomic landscape and its comprehensive database on Kosovo's business environment make it a strong candidate for impactful research collaborations.

Kosovo can better align with EU priorities like the Green Deal and Digital Agenda, while also strengthening its European integration aspirations. Furthermore, Kosovo's young and highly qualified population provides new insights and innovative ideas that can benefit international research cooperation. For Riinvest, applying for Hop On projects is about more than just getting funds; it's also about developing research-driven policy solutions, forming new international connections, and obtaining access to cutting-edge methodology and knowledge

Further involvement in these programmes would establish Riinvest as a major influence on regional and European policy debates, in addition to accelerating Kosovo's economic and scientific advancement.

### *3.2. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and Researcher Mobility in Horizon Europe*

In the continuation of our meetings with colleagues in Bonn and Berlin, we also discussed Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and EURAXESS, which play a crucial role in facilitating researcher mobility and career development within the European research framework. MSCA are a key part of the Horizon Europe framework, under the "Excellent Science" pillar. This initiative supports high-quality research projects that push the boundaries of knowledge. MSCA is a dedicated mobility programme, meaning researchers must relocate to another country as part of their grant. According to the European Commission, this is a crucial chance for researchers to broaden their professional networks, encounter various research cultures, and acquire new skills. During our discussions, it was strongly recommended that more young researchers at the Riinvest Institute should apply for MSCA opportunities, emphasizing that senior staff should actively support them throughout the application process and so on. The goal is to increase participation and ensure that early-career researchers have the guidance they need to succeed in securing these grants.

Moreover, we also discussed EURAXESS, a European initiative that supports the mobility and career development of researchers. It provides practical assistance for international researchers moving to or within Europe, including visa applications, residence permits, taxation information, and job opportunities. It operates across 41 countries, providing practical support for visa applications, residence permits, taxation information, and professional networking. Each country has a dedicated EURAXESS portal listing institutions that support international researchers and offer job opportunities. Germany, for example, has a well-structured EURAXESS network that assists both individual researchers and institutions in navigating legal and administrative procedures for researcher mobility. Researchers can create personal profiles on the EURAXESS platform, allowing them to track job offers, enhance visibility to potential employers, and connect with institutions seeking qualified professionals.

Currently, Kosovo does not have a national EURAXESS portal. It was recommended to establish one as it would increase researcher mobility and develop relations with the European scientific community. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) could initiate discussions with the European Commission to explore this possibility. This action would assist researchers in Kosovo and highlight Kosovo's dedication to scientific collaboration inside the EU.

#### 4. Recommendations

To strengthen Riinvest's participation in EU-funded initiatives, it is proposed that the institution actively pursue opportunities within the Hop On Facility, utilizing its experience in economic policy and sustainable development to join established consortia and increase research capacity. Moreover, promoting more involvement with the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) can help early-career Riinvest researchers as senior staff members offer active mentoring throughout the application process. It is also recommended to create a national EURAXESS portal for Kosovo since it would promote researcher mobility, enhance access to useful information and employment possibilities, and help Kosovo integrate more into the European scientific community. A national EURAXESS portal, among other things, would help the Riinvest Institute improve researcher mobility, gain access to EU funds such as Horizon Europe, and attract international talent. It would enhance Riinvest's research capacity, foster strategic partnerships, and raise its profile within the European research community, all of which would support its goal of driving innovation and contributing to Kosovo's economic development.

These activities taken together will strengthen Riinvest's position in European and regional research networks and help to create evidence-based policies for the progress of Kosovo.

#### 5. Concluding remarks

The short-term fellowship at DLR Projektträger in Bonn and Berlin was a unique experience for me but also for Riinvest in general. It provided us with valuable insights into many areas, especially in terms of EU research funding as well as researcher mobility programs. Learning from DLR Projektträger's experience will help me and Riinvest better project management, assist new researchers with MSCA applications, and investigate prospects such as EURAXESS for Kosovo. These linkages will be strengthened, enhancing Riinvest's involvement in worldwide research collaboration and policy creation.

#### 6. Acknowledgments

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