

**MLE Alignment and Interoperability of Research Programmes:  
"National Coordination"  
Phase I**

Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility

**Modus Operandi**

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## 1. CONTEXT:

### a) Policy Support Facility:

To support countries in reforming their research and innovation (R&I) systems, DG Research and Innovation has set up a 'Policy Support Facility' (PSF) under Horizon 2020, aimed at "improving the design, implementation and evaluation of R&I policies". The PSF provides best practice, leading expertise and guidance to Member States and Associated Countries (on a voluntary basis) through a broad range of services to address their specific needs.

In this way the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility replies to the strong need expressed by the Member States (i.e. ERAC consultations) to offer more customer-oriented services to support evidence-based policymaking.

There are three main services offered by the Horizon 2020 PSF to the Member States and Associated Countries:

- ✓ Peer reviews of national R&I systems which are in-depth assessments of a country's R&I system carried out by a panel of experts and leading to concrete recommendations to the national authorities on reforms necessary to strengthen their R&I system.
- ✓ Specific support to countries which can take form of 'pre peer review' (providing a solid evidence-base and focus areas for a subsequent full peer review), 'post peer review' (providing concrete advice on how to adjust and strengthen the implementation of peer review recommendations) and 'ad-hoc requests' (providing a set of concrete recommendations on how to tackle a specific issue R&I policy issue and how to implement the accompanying reforms).
- ✓ Mutual learning exercises which are demand-oriented, focused on specific R&I topics of interest to several volunteering countries, more hands-on, and translated into a project-based exchange of good practice.

### b) Alignment and Interoperability of Research Programmes

The Joint Programming Process was intended to be one of the building blocks of the European Research Area (ERA) when it was launched in 2008. The logic was that it should result in a systematic way of programming research policy between Member States.

Joint Programming was conceived within the context of the revised Lisbon Strategy and regarded as a process whereby Member States engage on a voluntary basis in the definition, development and implementation of common research agendas addressing a specific field or topic. This could involve the coordination of existing programmes (e.g. the ERA-NET Scheme) or the setting up of entirely new ones with the aim of improving the efficiency of public funding and addressing major societal challenges. This should start with a joint definition of common societal challenges, mobilising the necessary resources to adequately tackle the challenges and leading to a clear division of labour between the national, transnational and EU-level. If considered successful, the Joint Programming process could also be expanded to new societal challenges.

Between 2009 and 2011 the EU Council endorsed, based on the recommendations of the High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC), the set-up of ten Joint programming initiatives (JPI's).

Since their inception, the Joint Programming was twice subject of an external evaluation, once in 2012 and more recently in 2015.

Already the results of the first evaluation in 2012 (Acheson Report) highlighted the issues of "alignment" and "interoperability" as main barriers for a more effective Joint Programming process. As a consequence, GPC set-up a dedicated working group (WG) on these topics.

The GPC WG provided the following definition of "alignment" and the following recommendations:

*“Alignment is the strategic approach taken by Member States to modify their national programmes, priorities or activities as a consequence of the adoption of joint research priorities in the context of Joint Programming with a view to implementing changes to improve efficiency of investment in research at the level of Member States and ERA”.*

The relevant GPC WG recommendations were:

- The MS should (i) create stronger inter-ministerial coordination involving commitment and funding, (ii) develop a coordinated approach for institutional and project-based funding, and (iii) support alignment activities when there is a national top-down programme;
- The JPIs should look into aligning all actions spanning the programming cycle (from joint foresight to implementation and ex-post evaluation) and further develop good practices;
- The GPC should develop a common approach and monitor the alignment activities;
- The EC should facilitate the process of alignment by mapping, monitoring and evaluating the synergistic actions taken in the domains of societal challenges

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The GPC expressed an initial interest in undertaking a Mutual Learning Exercise via Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility on Alignment and Interoperability in **summer 2015** with a view to implement the recommendations of the GPC WG and achieve progress on these topics.

**On 30th September 2015 the GPC** agreed that the MLE should take place as a follow-up to **the Lund Declaration**, thereby ensuring momentum for alignment to societal challenges by Member States.

**The Lund Declaration 2009** called upon Member States and European Institutions to focus research on the Grand Challenges of our times by “moving beyond rigid thematic approaches and aligning European and national strategies and instruments”. Several steps were taken to align and coordinate resources and shift the focus to society’s major challenge but further efforts were needed. The Lund Declaration 2015 emphasised the urgency for increased efforts in alignment at national and European level and that investments in research and innovation should more rapidly be exploited to the benefit of society.

**The Lund Declaration 2015** identified four priority areas, each with defined priority actions, and called on all stakeholders to take these priorities into account in their field of responsibility. The first priority addressed the alignment: “Europe needs clear political commitment to step-up efforts to align strategies, instruments, resources and actors at national and European level in order to address the grand societal challenges.”

### Excerpt from the Lund Declaration 2015 on ‘Alignment’

“The research and innovation funding landscape in Europe is diverse and a relatively small share of the public funding is coordinated through European initiatives or aligned across borders. Despite an ever-greater need for efficiency and effectiveness, resources across Europe aimed at societal challenges are still spent sub-optimally. In many countries challenge-based research is not highly prioritised or is often an integrated part of the institutional funding for public research organisations. It makes it difficult to bring together a truly critical mass of resources for the societal challenges we are addressing today. In this context the use of smart specialisation strategies should be considered.

While there are valuable experiences from on-going initiatives (JPIs, ERA-NETs, Art.185 initiatives), these are limited in scale and scope. These experiences have not yet been translated into a strategy and process with sufficiently flexible options of instruments and processes. This makes it difficult for Member States and associated countries to select and implement new areas of cooperation, and eventually the uptake of results for the benefit of citizens across Europe.

(...) Priority actions for alignment:

- ✓ Provide high-level political support ensuring active participation of all Member States and associated countries in addressing grand societal challenges;
- ✓ Step-up efforts to align national strategies, instruments, resources and actors to ensure an efficient and effective European approach including smart specialisation strategies;
- ✓ Improve Framework Conditions within the European research and innovation landscape and speed up necessary structural adaptation in Member States to increase interoperability and openness of programmes, notably in the context of national ERA roadmaps;
- ✓ Agree on a common approach and design a process for “smart alignment” that allows Member States to jointly identify and address new challenges.”

In parallel, the report of the Expert Group<sup>1</sup> established by the European Commission in June 2015 to carry out an Evaluation of Joint Programming to Address Grand Societal Challenges recommended:

*"the GPC should (...) utilise the proposed Mutual Learning Exercise to explore new ideas and solutions to address the key issues highlighted in this report; improve the communication channels with the JPIs; and establish a common monitoring & evaluation framework for JPIs".*

Based on the work of GPC, ERA-LEARN 2020 and the Expert Group for the evaluation of the JPI, it can be concluded that the way how Member States are managing internally their participation in the JPP and the JPI in particular has a significant impact on the level of alignment and interoperability between their national programming activities towards societal challenges and the JPP.

As alignment and interoperability are broad issues, a **first workshop to narrow the scope of the MLE took place on 11th February 2016** in Brussels. The aim was to identify focussed topics within "alignment and interoperability".

<sup>1</sup> Evaluation of Joint Programming to Address Grand Societal Challenges, Final Report of the Expert Group, DG RTD

The workshop was attended by 16 MS/AC. Participants identified three blocks of issues that could be addressed and upon which mutual learning could take place:

- Topics related to efficient and effective national coordination of participation in the European Joint Programming process (JPP) including JPI, ERA-Net CoFunds, Art. 185. MLE activities under this block might look at good practice for national JPP/JPI coordination structures under a given national innovation system and decision making and consultation structures that provide the basis for an efficient and effective participation in the JPP/JPI. This block includes also issues like national preconditions for participation in JPP/JPI, cooperation/coordination with other (sectorial) ministries and opportunities for improved communication and visibility of JPP/JPI on national level.
- Topics related to efficient and effective activities at national level that provide added value to the participation in the JPP. MLE activities under this block might look at good practices examples for national toolboxes that are either integral or complementary national parts of the European JPP/JPI process, ultimately leading to an improved level of alignment and interoperability.
- Topics related to the resources needed for an efficient and effective participation in the JPP, leading to added value to both, national and EU-level. MLE activities under this block might look at good practice examples on how to make best use of national and European funding sources for an adequate participation in JPP/JPI. More precisely, a smart interplay between JPP/JPI and the opportunities from the Structural funds as well as a strategic alignment between JPP/JPI and H2020 were identified as key issues here. Good practices at national level might include issues like the positioning of JPP/JPI within the national funding system (both competitive and institutional) towards societal challenges or good practices for raising funds for the required administrative and coordination costs of national participation in JPP/JPI.

In order to ensure effective participation by MS and achieve the best outcome and impact, Commission services proposed MS to implement the MLE: a) in a sequential manner and b) limiting the number of topics to be addressed in each block.

To this purpose a **survey was sent to MS on 8<sup>th</sup> April asking GPC members** which block and topics should be prioritised.

### 3. SCOPE:

**On 29 April**, on the basis of the results of the survey sent to GPC member, **the GPC agreed to implement a sequential approach, starting with a first MLE addressing the priority block "National Coordination" and focussing more precisely this first MLE on the following topics a) National preconditions for participation in JPP/JPI, b) National governance structures, c) Communication flows and visibility.**

Interested countries were asked to provide their input to further define the scope of the MLE. Slovenia, Austria, France, Sweden, Portugal, Estonia and Norway provided specific input as a contribution to the drafting of the scope of this MLE.

At the kick-off meeting on 7 July 2016 (attended by participants from these seven countries; additional participants from Denmark, Lithuania and Turkey; and observers from Germany and Romania) a number of 'main issues' were proposed for consideration within the scope of each topic. These were based on a synthesis of the national inputs, namely:

National preconditions for participation in JPP/JPI:

- ✓ Insight into the decision-making process and selection criteria applied – national Added Value vs. EU Added Value
- ✓ National JPP framework; overall strategy on international cooperation and JPP position here
- ✓ Compatibility: Articulation between national programmes/funding systems and SRIAs and with smart specialisation
- ✓ Balance between bottom-up programmes and top down JPP and corresponding funding structures
- ✓ Scope: Articulation between competitive and institutional programming on societal challenges, including underlying sectorial policies

National governance structures:

- ✓ Inter-ministerial coordination and joint JPP monitoring and impact assessment
- ✓ Division of labour between government, funding agencies, research community and their incentives for JPP participation
- ✓ Embedding: Involvement of society, industry and regional policy makers (smart specialisation)
- ✓ Resource provisions: Financial commitments and funding of JPI governance and networking structures
- ✓ Positioning of JPI's SRIA's within H2020 governance and planning structures

Communication flows and visibility:

- ✓ Science-Society communication and (potential) role of JPP/JPIs
- ✓ Outreach measures towards end-users industry
- ✓ Visibility and Commitment: Communication flows of JPP/JPI's towards policy community
- ✓ Measures and instruments to raise visibility of JPP/JPI's, including acknowledgements and branding
- ✓ Provision of resources for outreach and communication

It was agreed that these provided a good basis for the three topics and could be further elaborated, perhaps with some hypothesis, within the first of the Challenge Reports. Also, the Experts need to give due consideration to overlaps and inter-relationships between the three topics as they are not mutually exclusive.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The final aim of this MLE is to support MS in designing, implementing and/or evaluating different policy instruments in relation to the three focussed topics on "national preconditions for participation in JPP/JPI", "national governance structures" and "communication flows and visibility". The exercise will adopt a hands-on "*learning by doing*" approach supported by external expertise so that each of the national participants is able to develop some bespoke options for their own country.

In addition to the tacit learning, in the end there will be:

- a) A Final Report drawing lessons for policy design/implementation/evaluation covering the three topics. The report will identify good practices, include a set of concrete operational recommendations, lessons learned and success factors based on robust evidence about the impacts of the measures and the contextual factors that may explain the impacts.

- b) In addition to the final report, the MLE will produce an initial report on ‘national coordination’ and three independent self-standing reports on ‘national preconditions for participation in JPP/JPIs’, ‘national governance structure’ and ‘communication flows and visibility’.

## 5. PRELIMINARY TIME SCHEDULE

Based on previous MLE experiences, the following tentative time line is proposed:

Preliminary time schedule	
7th July 2016	Kick off meeting MLE with MS and independent experts (complete)
September/October 2016	Meeting in Brussels (actual date to be decided through a Doodle poll)
3 <sup>rd</sup> week October 2016	1 <sup>st</sup> country visit (Austria): National preconditions for participation in JPP/JPIs
4 <sup>th</sup> week November 2016	2 <sup>nd</sup> country visit (Slovenia): National Governance Structure
2 <sup>nd</sup> week January 2017	3 <sup>rd</sup> country visit (Norway): Communication flows and visibility
4 <sup>th</sup> week February 2017	Meeting in Brussels
Meeting GPC (June 2017)	Presentation to GPC. Based on the feedback and success from the first sequence and priorities from MS, discussions on concrete topics for the second sequence of the MLE will be launched.

## 6. WORKING APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The MLE will follow the standard methodology for conducting Mutual Learning Exercises in the context of the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility "Mutual Learning Exercise- a new methodology"<sup>2</sup>.

As a *Member State driven* and *policy challenge*-based activity the MLE will promote mutual learning between the participating countries. With this in mind the methodology will remain flexible from milestone to milestone to maximise added value and policy learning.

The participating countries will get together to explore the best ways to tackle the identified policy challenges (national preconditions for participation in JPP/JPI, national governance structure and communication flows and visibility), acknowledging a need of change in the design and/or implementation of policy instruments and wishing to learn from experiences in other countries.

It will take the form of a project-type of collaboration for a set period of time, in principle, up to 7 months, with defined resources and goals. However, it is recognised that the number of national participants is relatively higher than previous MLEs and so it may be necessary to extend the timescale so long as the final report is produced in good time for the GPC meeting in June 2017.

Each participating country is expected to gain tailored information and expertise from the process, and is also open to other participants to learn from their circumstances/experiences. Thus, the project is based on open, frank, and confidential knowledge exchange between the participating countries. All participating countries are expected to participate actively, in a forthright manner, and to collect and synthesise the necessary empirical evidence in a timely manner and provide friendly peer support for

<sup>2</sup> Mutual Learning Exercises in the context of the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility "Mutual Learning Exercise- a new methodology, Terttu Luukkonen, DG RTD

mutual learning. The specific knowledge interests around the identified policy challenges may vary to some extent between the participating MS, but they are sufficiently close in order that the process can benefit all participants and that learning is mutual. This process is called *peer-supported learning*.

## 7. DISTRIBUTION OF WORK

MLE on Alignment and Interoperability of research programmes require:

- Participating countries: France, Lithuania, Denmark, Turkey, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Estonia, Sweden and Slovenia have expressed their interest to actively participate in the MLE. Romania and Germany have expressed their interest to be observers. The observers are welcome to participate actively if they wish. Participating countries will appoint as their participant a sufficiently high-level person with experience and knowledge on the policy challenge, providing resources -in terms of labour- to contribute, provide data and information as the process require, allotting time to attend meetings and potential country visits, among others.
- Independent Experts: The MLE will be supported by 4 independent experts: a Chair, selected by the Commission (Jana Kolar), a Rapporteur (Angus Hunter) and 2 more experts (Patries Boekholt and Thomas Teichler).
- Commission services. The Directorate General for Research & Innovation will actively support the work of this MLE. The Policy Support Facility Team within Unit A4 – ‘Analysis and monitoring of national research policies’, closely cooperates with Unit B2 – ‘Open Science and ERA Policy’. The contacts are Marta Truco from Unit A4 and Alexander Grablowitz from Unit B2.
- Rapporteur to GPC: Emmanuel Pasco-Viel, GPC Vice-Chair and participant from the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research will be Rapporteur to the GPC of the MLE on Alignment and Interoperability.
- PSF Contractor: The role of the PSF contractor is defined in the framework contract. In line with its provisions, the PSF contractor will provide full support to the Chair and the Rapporteur, and notably be in charge of the operational and logistic tasks in relation to the organisation of meetings, country visits and overall development of the MLE. This will include a project coordinator (Viola Peter) and a quality reviewer (Erik Arnold).

## 8. MEETINGS

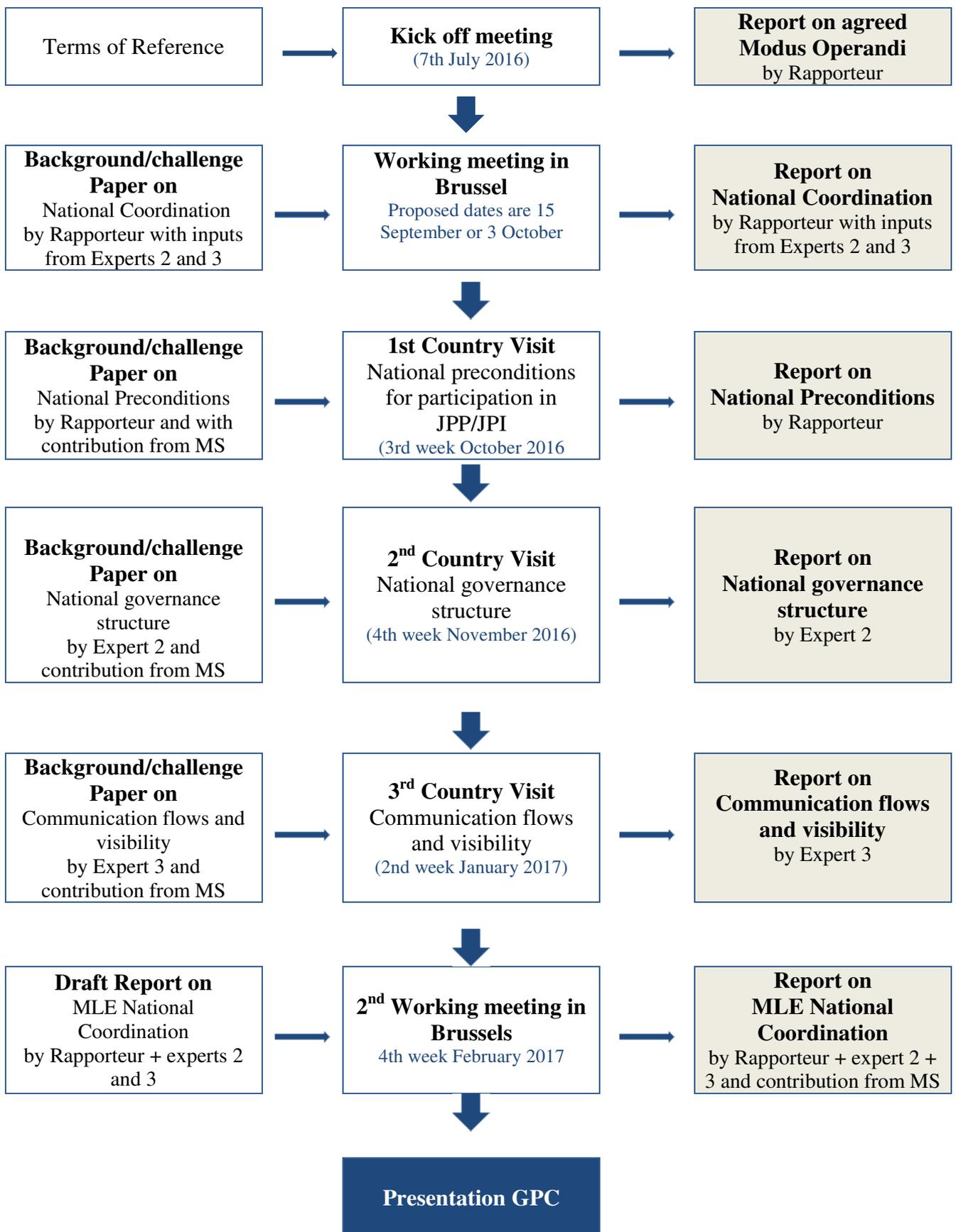
Indicative timetable to be further agreed at the Kick off meeting.

Preliminary meetings	Who	Month
<p><b>1st Working meeting (Brussels)</b> The MLE Rapporteur, on the basis of MS contributions, will present a more detailed background / challenge paper about the specific challenges that have been identified as focus of the MLE.</p> <p>Experts, participating countries discuss preliminary experiences. They highlight the need for specific information and methodology.</p> <p><i>Input</i>: Background / global challenge paper on "National Coordination": main policy challenge and practices and instruments in place in participating countries.</p>	<p>Chair Rapporteur PSF Team Expert 2 Expert 3  10 active countries</p>	<p>Proposed options are 15 September or 3 October</p>

<p><i>Deliverable:</i> Report of the overall challenge on "National Coordination": an overview of the overall challenge, together with experts 2 and 3 and with inputs from participating countries.</p>	2 observer countries	
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Country visit: National Preconditions (Austria)</b> The Chair, Rapporteur, experts 2 and 3, participating countries and Commission representatives make an information acquisition and learning visit to a participating country. They discuss about the policy challenges and the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the instruments or a policy mix to tackle the challenges, to improve their understanding.</p> <p><i>Input:</i> Background / challenge paper on "National Preconditions" with the contributions from participating countries. The paper will identify the main policy challenge and those practices and instruments in place in participating countries. It may suggest preliminary assessment of their validity and relevance.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> Report on "National Preconditions" with identified good practices, lessons learned and success factors based on robust evidence about the impacts of the measures.</p>	<p>Chair Rapporteur</p> <p>PSF Team</p> <p>Expert 2 Expert 3</p> <p>active countries</p>	3 <sup>nd</sup> week October
<p><b>2<sup>st</sup> Country visit: National governance structure (Slovenia)</b> The Chair, Rapporteur, Expert 2 and 3, participating countries and Commission representatives make an information acquisition and learning visit to a participating country. They discuss about the policy challenges and the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the instruments or a policy mix to tackle the challenges, to improve their understanding.</p> <p><i>Input:</i> background / challenge paper on "National governance structure" with the contributions from participating countries. The paper will identify the main policy challenge and those practices and instruments in place in participating countries. It may suggest preliminary assessment of their validity and relevance.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> Report on "National governance structure" with identified good practices, lessons learned and success factors based on robust evidence about the impacts of the measures.</p>	<p>Chair Rapporteur</p> <p>PSF Team</p> <p>Expert 2 Expert 3</p> <p>active countries</p>	4 <sup>th</sup> week of November
<p><b>3<sup>st</sup> Country visit: Communication flow and visibility (Norway)</b> The Chair, Rapporteur, Expert 2 and 3, participating countries and Commission representatives make an information acquisition and learning visit to a participating country. They discuss about the policy challenges and the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the instruments or a policy mix to tackle the challenges, to improve their understanding.</p> <p><i>Input:</i> background / challenge paper on "Communication flow and visibility" with the contributions from participating countries. The paper will identify the main policy challenge and those practices and instruments in place in participating countries. It may suggest preliminary assessment</p>	<p>Chair Rapporteur</p> <p>PSF Team</p> <p>Expert 2 Expert 3</p> <p>active countries</p>	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of January

<p>of their validity and relevance.</p> <p><i>Deliverable:</i> Report on " Communication flow and visibility" with identified good practices, lessons learned and success factors based on robust evidence about the impacts of the measures</p>		
<p><b>2nd Working meeting (Brussels)</b>  The Rapporteur will present the report of the MLE and discuss it with participating countries and other experts to agree on the findings, experiences and conclusions or recommended ways to tackle the challenges that are the focus of the MLE.</p> <p><i>Input:</i> Draft and final Report on MLE "National Coordination" with contributions of expert 2 and 3 and participating countries  <i>Deliverable:</i> Report MLE on MLE National Coordination with identified good practices, lessons learned and success factors based on robust evidence about the impacts of the measures.</p>	<p>Chair  Rapporteur  PSF Team  Expert 2  Expert 3  10 active countries  2 observer countries</p>	<p>4<sup>th</sup> week  of  February</p>
<p><b>Presentation GPC / dissemination workshop:</b>  The Rapporteur of the MLE to the GPC will present the outcomes of the MLE. It will also highlight possible follow-up initiatives of the MLE, including a discussion on the second sequence of the MLE on Alignment and Interoperability</p>	<p>Rapporteur  of the MLE  to the GPC  PSF Team</p>	<p>Back to  back GPC  meeting</p>

**9. FLOW OF MEETINGS AND REPORTS (timetable is indicative)**



## 10. REPORTS AND DEADLINES

Reports	Expert	Deadline
Report on "Modus Operandi"	Rapporteur	Version 1 produced on 13/7/16
Background / challenge paper on "National Coordination"	Rapporteur with Experts 2 and 3	At least one week before the 1 <sup>st</sup> Working Meeting
Report of the overall challenge on "National Coordination"	Rapporteur with Experts 2 and 3	As a follow up of 1 <sup>st</sup> working in Brussels
Background / challenge paper on "National Preconditions"	Rapporteur	By 2 <sup>nd</sup> week October 2016
Report on "National Preconditions"	Rapporteur	As a follow up of 1 <sup>st</sup> country visit
Background / challenge paper on "National governance structure"	Expert 2	By 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of November 2016
Report on "National governance structure"	Expert 2	As a follow up of 2 <sup>st</sup> country visit
Background / challenge paper on "Communication flow and visibility"	Expert 3	By 1 <sup>st</sup> week of January 2017
Report on "Communication flow and visibility"	Expert 3	As a follow up of 3 <sup>st</sup> country visit
Final Report on MLE National Coordination	Rapporteur Expert 2 Expert 3	By 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of February 2017

Deadlines are related to the indicative timetable of sections 9 and 10 and would need to be adapted in case of changes in this timetable.

## 11. STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS

The MLE participants considered the potential involvement of JPIs in MLE Working Meetings to provide additional expertise which may contribute to the learning and purpose of this MLE. It was agreed that this would not be appropriate but they could be invited to participate selectively in specific meetings during Country Visits and/or be consulted by the Experts.