



**MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN
THE CLEAN HYDROGEN JOINT UNDERTAKING
AND
KOŠICE SELF-GOVERNING REGION**

1. The **Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking**, hereinafter referred to as **Clean Hydrogen JU**, represented for the purposes of signing this Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) by Mrs Valerie Bouillon-Delporte, Executive Director.

And

2. The **Managing Authority “Košice Self-governing Region”** hereinafter referred to as **Managing Authority or as MA**, represented for the purposes of signing this MoC by Mr. Rastislav Trnka, President of Košice Self-governing region,

hereinafter referred to individually as "Party" and collectively as "Parties"

HAVING REGARD TO:

- The European Hydrogen Strategy¹;
- The RePower EU Plan²
- Regulation (EU) No. 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe³ – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No. 1290/2013 and (EU) No. 1291/2013 (“HE”) and in particular, on synergies, recitals 33, 34, 43, 68 and Articles 6, 7 and Annexes III and IV;
- Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the revision of the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan and in particular, on synergies, section 4 “Governance, monitoring and reporting”⁴ and on skills, section 3: “cross-cutting issues”;
- Council Regulation 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 (“Single Basic Act”) establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe⁵ and in particular, on synergies, recitals 10, 11, 12, 14, 31, and Articles 4, 5 paragraph 2 letter c), and 83;
- The Clean Hydrogen JU Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) 2021-2027⁶ and the Clean Hydrogen JU Annual Work Programme (“AWP”) 2024⁷;

¹ COM (2020) 301 final, Brussels, 8.7.2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ‘A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe’

² COM (2022) 230 final, Brussels, 18.5.2022. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ‘RePowerEU plan’

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0301>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0634&qid=1698315020718>

⁵ Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe and repealing Regulations (EC) No 219/2007, (EU) No 557/2014, (EU) No 558/2014, (EU) No 559/2014, (EU) No 560/2014, (EU) No 561/2014 and (EU) No 642/2014, see here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R2085&qid=1678954616013&from=en> OJ L 427, 30.11.2021, p 17-119

⁶ https://www.clean-hydrogen.europa.eu/about-us/key-documents/strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda_en#modal

⁷ https://www.clean-hydrogen.europa.eu/system/files/2024-01/Clean%20Hydrogen%20JU%20AWP%202024%20-%20all%20chapters_Final_For_Publication.pdf

- The European Commission Notice on Synergies between Horizon Europe and European Regional Development Fund (“ERDF”) programmes⁸;
- Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, in particular, Articles from 2 to 6⁹;
- The National Hydrogen Strategy of Slovakia adopted by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic [National Hydrogen Strategy Prepared for the future, 23.06.2024]¹⁰;
- Action plan of measures for the successful implementation of the National Hydrogen Strategy until 2026 adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic [Action plan of measures for the successful implementation of the National Hydrogen Strategy until 2026, 12.06.2023]¹¹
- Hydrogen strategy for Košice region adopted by council of Košice Self-governing region [Hydrogen strategy for Košice region, 19.02.2021]¹²
- ERDF – Program Slovakia 2021-2027 adopted by the European Commission [Program Slovakia 2021-2027, 22.11.2022]¹³

WHEREAS:

Due to its multiple possible uses, clean or renewable hydrogen is expected to play a key role in a future climate-neutral economy, enabling the decarbonisation of the energy and transport sectors as well as of industrial processes when clean hydrogen is used as a feedstock. Hydrogen also allows the large integration of renewable power generation in the energy system due to its ability to offer long term storage of renewable energy.

The EU Hydrogen Strategy stresses the need to accelerate the development of clean hydrogen so that it becomes part of the EU's energy supply by 2050. It also mentions that all actors, public and private, at European national and regional levels, must work together, across the entire value chain, to build a dynamic hydrogen ecosystem in Europe.

Research & Innovation (“R&I”) is a priority for the programming of European Funds 2021-2027¹⁴.

The European Commission Communication on the revision of the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan specifies that Member States should include national objectives stemming from the SET Plan, as well as R&I activities, in their national energy and climate

⁸ Commission notice on synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes (2022/c 421/03) [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1104\(02\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022XC1104(02)&from=EN)

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1058>

¹⁰ <https://www.enviroportal.sk/dokument/narodna-vodikova-strategia-pripraveni-na-buducnost>

¹¹ <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Material/28497/1>

¹² https://web.vucke.sk/files/sk/kompetencie/regionalny-rozvoj/koncepcne-materialy/hydrogen_strategy_ksg.pdf

¹³ <https://www.minedu.sk/program-slovensko-2021-2027/>

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/available-budget_en

plans (NECPs), including exploring synergies between other relevant national funds and activities.

The Clean Hydrogen JU is a unique European public private partnership supporting research and innovation (R&I) activities in hydrogen technologies in Europe aiming to accelerate the development and improvement of advanced clean hydrogen applications across Europe. To this end, the EU will support the Clean Hydrogen JU with €1 billion euro for the period 2021-2027, complemented by at least an equivalent amount of private investment (from the private members of the partnership), raising the total budget to above €2 billion euro. In addition, the European Commission in its communication “REPowerEU Plan” announced an additional investment of EUR 200 million available for the Clean Hydrogen JU for doubling the Hydrogen Valleys in the EU by 2025”.

The Single Basic Act requires the Clean Hydrogen JU to develop close collaboration and synergies both at Union, national and regional level. Moreover, Article 5.2 (c) requires the Clean Hydrogen JU to seek and maximise synergies and where appropriate, possibilities for additional funding from relevant activities and programmes at Union, national and regional levels, in particular, with those supporting the deployment and uptake of innovative solutions, training, education and regional development, such as Cohesion Policy Funds or the national Recovery and Resilience Plans. In doing so, as per Article 20.7 (c) the Clean Hydrogen JU may consult the States’ Representatives Group which can provide information on links to Horizon Europe and other Union, national and, where relevant, regional initiatives, including cohesion policy funds in line with smart specialisation strategies.

The European Commission Notice on Synergies between the Horizon Europe (HE) and European Regional and Development Funds (ERDF) programmes underscores the importance of synergies between the R&I framework and cohesion programmes in maximising investments in research and innovation by aligning strategic plans and leveraging diverse funding streams. HE and ERDF in particular, are pivotal EU instruments for advancing innovative, smart, and sustainable economic transformation and fostering excellence in research and innovation, while addressing the persistent innovation divide among Member States. Promoting an integrated approach and strengthening synergies between these key EU instruments and their respective pillars and policy objectives can offer new win-win situations benefiting all stakeholders.

The Clean Hydrogen JU Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) 2021-2027¹⁵ highlights that further efforts in Research and Innovation into breakthrough technologies are needed to ensure a full hydrogen supply chain that will serve the European economy. It also stresses the need to reinforce synergies among European actions and funding instruments to pull together resources, align priorities and ultimately maximise the impact of clean hydrogen R&I investments, therefore contributing to closing the innovation gap in Europe¹⁶.

The MA has a decisive role to play in the development of a hydrogen economy. By investing in the clean hydrogen sector, the MA can support the transition to a green economy, boost innovation, stay competitive in the future, stimulate economic growth and create new jobs. In particular, its detailed knowledge of local circumstances, of public procurement and of various national and regional funding and incentive opportunities, connections with local players and

¹⁵ https://www.clean-hydrogen.europa.eu/about-us/key-documents/strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda_en#modal

¹⁶ See in particular section 4.1 “Interface with EU policies and other programmes (Synergies)” of the Clean Hydrogen JU Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (“SRIA”) 2021-2027 - <https://www.clean-hydrogen.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/Clean%20Hydrogen%20JU%20SRIA%20-%20approved%20by%20GB%20-%20clean%20for%20publication%20%28ID%2013246486%29.pdf>

with actors in vocational and academic education and training, as well as supervision of planning and authorisation processes uniquely position the MA to drive market development. However, the MA needs to optimise the use of its resources to materialise projects in fuel cell and hydrogen (FCH) technologies. Access to technical and legal information and expertise in the field of hydrogen is therefore necessary to achieve this.

The MA acknowledges the role of hydrogen as a relevant energy vector to decarbonise the regional/national economy and support economic development. To facilitate clean hydrogen-related research and innovation activities within and across its territory, the MA will leverage the following programmes:

- Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy (European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – Program Slovakia 2021-2027 adopted by the European Commission [Program Slovakia 2021-2027, 22.11.2022]¹⁷

The Parties wish to strengthen their cooperation and coordination in support of research and innovation in the field of clean hydrogen solutions. In this regard, the parties welcome the set-up of a cooperation mechanism aimed at facilitating dialogue and promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience, including valuable expertise, best practices and lessons learnt throughout the entire hydrogen value chain, as well as at fostering collaboration for hydrogen research and innovation projects, facilitating access to state-of-the-art technology advancements and encouraging different types of funding synergies for clean hydrogen-related research and innovation activities.

Have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1 – PURPOSE

1.1 This Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) aims to establish a cooperation channel to foster and facilitate synergies between the Parties in the areas of research and innovation and exploitation of results on clean hydrogen technologies.

ARTICLE 2 – SCOPE AND CORE AREAS OF COOPERATION

2.1 The parties agree to create by means of the present Memorandum a cooperation mechanism, as a vehicle for generating synergies and in particular in relation to knowledge management, capacity building as well as programme management and funding and financing.

2.2 With respect to **knowledge management**, the Parties propose to develop a two-way collaboration approach in the collection, exchange and dissemination of information and data, supporting among others the role of the Clean Hydrogen JU as a knowledge hub for hydrogen and an enhancer of synergies between EU, national and regional funds regarding clean hydrogen research leading to value chains creation and deployment in Europe. Within this context, cooperation between the Parties could encompass activities such as the ones described in Annex 1, Part A.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

2.3 With respect to **capacity building**, the Parties propose to cooperate in the activities described in Annex 1, Part B.

2.4. With respect to **programme management, funding and financing**, the Parties propose to initiate a process of exchange of information and establishing a good and structured coordination between different funding schemes. Such information exchange and cooperation will cover the aspects described in Annex 1, Part C.

ARTICLE 3 – GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 This MoC will be implemented by mutual agreement.

3.2 The Parties will ensure the protection of any sensitive information and the confidentiality of any document and information related to the parties or the participants to technical activities (if any).

3.3 This MoC will be coordinated by one Point of contact for each Party. Each Party will identify Points of Contact (PoC) who will perform the coordination activities on each side.

3.4 Further aspects of the cooperation between the Parties, as well as working methods under this MoC, may be developed and agreed between the Parties.

ARTICLE 4 – CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 The Parties agree that no intellectual property rights (IPR) are expected to be created throughout their cooperation. However, pre-existing IPR should be considered and respected by the Parties in their exchange of data, know-how, information, or materials needed for the realisation of the objectives and activities included in this MoC.

4.2 Each Party agrees to ensure the proper use and protection of any information that is marked as sensitive or confidential and is shared by the other Party throughout their cooperation.

ARTICLE 5 – NON-BINDING NATURE

5.1 The present MoC is a statement of intent with non-binding, non-enforceable intentions declared therein. The Parties will fulfil their tasks under this MoC on a best-effort basis.

ARTICLE 6 - ENTRY INTO FORCE, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

6.1 This MoC shall enter into force on the date of last signature of the Parties.

6.2 This MoC may be amended in writing at any time with the consent of both Parties.

6.3 Each Party may terminate this MoC by notifying the other Party in writing, or by mutual agreement provided in writing by the Parties, at least two months before the date of termination. The termination will be in force on the first day of the following calendar month after the period written notice is delivered by one Party to the other.

Signed in two originals in English.

Signed in Brussels, on _____

Signed in Košice, on _____

ON BEHALF OF THE CLEAN HYDROGEN
JOINT UNDERTAKING

ON BEHALF OF THE MANAGING
AUTHORITY

Mrs Valerie Bouillon-Delporte, Executive
Director

Mr. Rastislav Trnka, President of the Košice
Self-governing region

ANNEX 1 – ACTIVITIES

Part A: Knowledge Management

1. The Clean Hydrogen JU and the MA wish to initiate a two-way information exchange on hydrogen technologies and market trends and developments, on policy and regulatory frameworks and approaches, and on hydrogen projects planned and implemented across the entire hydrogen value chain, including hydrogen valleys, at regional/national and EU levels as well as on stakeholder engagement activities and research findings and solutions implemented by these projects. Such mutual information exchange will have the dual aim of assisting the MA in enhancing the content of its knowledge base as well as providing support to the Clean Hydrogen JU with regard to the content population and enhancement of the European Clean Hydrogen Knowledge Hub.

To facilitate this, both Parties may contribute with knowledge and expertise, covering the entire hydrogen value chain.

Sources of knowledge and expertise may include, but are not limited to:

- a) the European Hydrogen Observatory, including ad-hoc webinars if deemed necessary to delve into its details, which serves as a central platform for providing comprehensive information on technology trends, market trends, and technologies used in the entire hydrogen value chain.
 - b) when operational, the European Clean Hydrogen Knowledge Hub which aims to gather, encompass, and analyse information and data coming from the Clean Hydrogen JU projects and the available tools/platforms of the Clean Hydrogen JU, as well as other relevant platforms.
 - c) relevant material produced by the Clean Hydrogen JU and its stakeholder network, including that featured in the European Hydrogen Observatory.
 - d) information on hydrogen projects and valleys or other relevant initiatives and events supported by the MA as well as relevant data, documents and other materials produced by these projects and initiatives.
2. The Clean Hydrogen JU may support the MA's efforts in identifying EU funding opportunities for hydrogen-related projects, by:
 - a) providing relevant information on hydrogen-related calls for proposals and related events, including lessons learnt.
 - b) sharing any new EU policy development that may impact funding opportunities or synergies related to hydrogen projects and valleys.
 - c) when possible, establishing links with relevant EU stakeholders and information exchange platforms and networks, including the National Contact Point (NCP) networks of EU Funding Programmes.
 3. The Clean Hydrogen JU and the MA may collaborate on activities aimed at promoting cooperation with stakeholders in hydrogen research and innovation activities and encouraging better acceptance of hydrogen projects and valleys among a wide audience. Such activities may include events such as workshops, conferences and summits, info days, exhibitions, and public debates.

In reference to the preceding paragraph, the MA places particular focus on promoting networking with suppliers of hydrogen technologies across the entire value chain, as well as hydrogen valleys across the EU.

Part B: Capacity Building

1. The Clean Hydrogen JU wishes to continue dialogue with the MA to enable activities that foster networking, cooperation, and knowledge exchange among interested parties, consisting initially of the 10 selected MAs in the framework of the Clean Hydrogen JU's Technical Assistance initiative¹⁸. Such activities may cover:
 - a) exchange of lessons learnt and transferability of best practices in areas such as development and implementation of hydrogen plans and projects covering the entire hydrogen value chain, development of regional/national hydrogen ecosystems, development and implementation of regional/national hydrogen-related policy and regulatory frameworks, instruments and approaches, including on overcoming delays in spatial planning, licensing, and permitting and approval processes as well as fast-track schemes to streamline administrative processes and accelerate the realisation of hydrogen initiatives across the entire hydrogen value chain, hydrogen-related certifications and standards applied in other EU countries, project management methodologies, stakeholder mapping, needs assessment methodologies and engagement strategies, business models and innovative procedures and solutions implemented throughout the entire hydrogen value chain.
 - b) promoting and strengthening collaboration and encouraging possible synergies among the MAs for the development and implementation of hydrogen-related research and innovation activities.
 - c) reaching out to other interested parties based on their interest, relevance, and commitment to advancing hydrogen-related initiatives.

In reference to points a) – c) above, the MA wishes to network with other MAs that have experience in legislative frameworks concerning public procurement procedures for hydrogen technologies with emphasis on applicable norms and standards related to those technologies, in regulatory and legislative frameworks regarding hydrogen-powered ships and IPR protection of hydrogen solutions and technologies developed by research and innovation projects, in educational and training programmes for hydrogen technologies, as well as in regional/national/EU funding and financial support mechanisms for the development of hydrogen-related research and innovation activities.

2. The Clean Hydrogen JU wishes to support the MA's endeavours to strengthen its hydrogen capabilities across the entire value chain by connecting with hydrogen projects, to enable the identification and utilisation of best practices, the development of relevant research and innovation activities and technologies in the MA's territory, as well as support the MA in tackling identified gaps or challenges in the development and implementation of relevant

¹⁸ In the framework of the "Technical Assistance to generate Synergies with the Clean Hydrogen Partnership" initiative of the Clean Hydrogen JU, a Call for Expression of Interest was launched by the Clean Hydrogen JU on the 6th of June 2023 aiming to develop cooperation with 10 selected regional and national Managing Authorities from the EU-27 and Horizon Europe associated countries in relevant key areas for hydrogen development. For more info see: https://www.clean-hydrogen.europa.eu/media/news/call-expression-interest-receiving-technical-assistance-generate-synergies-clean-hydrogen-2023-06-06_en

projects. Such knowledge transfer activities shall rely on publicly available information and may cover aspects such as project management and governance, stakeholder engagement, regulatory frameworks, business models and innovative procedures and solutions implemented.

Within this framework, the Clean Hydrogen JU may, where possible, enable various activities with hydrogen projects, including on-site visits to demonstrations and hydrogen infrastructure piloted within such projects, participation in thematic workshops and direct connections as well as bilateral or multilateral exchanges with hydrogen projects covering the following areas:

- a) Hydrogen production: this includes hydrogen production from renewable energy sources (RES), including electrolysis.
- b) Hydrogen storage and distribution: this includes hydrogen storage, hydrogen in natural gas grid, liquid hydrogen carriers, improving existing hydrogen transport means, compression, purification and metering solutions and hydrogen refuelling stations.
- c) Hydrogen end-uses: this includes use of hydrogen technologies in the transport sector, as well as clean heat and power generation applications.
- d) Hydrogen valleys.
- e) Hydrogen supply chains.
- f) Cross-cutting activities

In reference to the preceding paragraph, the MA wishes to put particular focus on hydrogen-powered vehicles such as, ships and buses and on hydrogen refuelling stations for such vehicles, as well as on hydrogen valleys.

3. The Clean Hydrogen JU may support the MA's efforts in enhancing its skills and knowledge as well as those of its actors across the entire value chain to facilitate the transition to a hydrogen economy. In this regard, the Clean Hydrogen JU may provide publicly available educational and training material to the MA, and / or facilitate contacts with training providers with the aim of helping the MA in the development of upskilling and reskilling programmes, by leveraging initiatives that include but are not limited to the European Hydrogen Observatory platform and the European Hydrogen Academy.

In reference to the preceding paragraph, the MA places particular emphasis on certain key areas for skills development. These include operation of hydrogen technologies and development and management of hydrogen research and innovation projects.

4. The Clean Hydrogen JU may support the MA's efforts in enhancing its capabilities in the development and implementation of hydrogen projects and valleys, by disseminating information on how to apply or use different possible instruments that include but are not limited to Project Development Assistance (PDA), including disseminating to the MA the material and best practices produced by those initiatives.

Part C: Programme Management, Funding and Financing

1. The Parties wish to jointly explore opportunities for synergies on funding and ways to materialise them in line with the relevant legal frameworks. Such synergies may include:
 - a) Alternative funding following the awarding of a Seal of Excellence or other similar mechanisms foreseen for calls for proposals in the Clean Hydrogen JU work programmes.
 - b) Co-funded actions that allow cumulative funding between different Union, national and regional programmes, in compliance with applicable legislation on cumulation of funding, including state aid legislation.
 - c) If possible, and subject to legal feasibility, transfer of Resources from Member States to the Clean Hydrogen JU Programme, which shall be used for the benefit of the Member State concerned only.

In reference to point b) of the previous paragraph, the MA wishes to explore jointly with the Clean Hydrogen JU the combination of Horizon Europe Funds with the Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy (ERDF), for hydrogen research and innovation activities covering the entire hydrogen value chain.

2. The Parties may engage in dialogue related to the development of regional calls for proposals that foster hydrogen development across the entire value chain. Within this framework, the Clean Hydrogen JU may assist the MA towards the alignment of regional I calls with its own calls. This alignment may cover aspects that include, but are not limited to, strategic objectives and priority areas, admissibility and eligibility criteria and conditions, regulatory requirements and standards, data collection and reporting requirements, evaluation and award criteria including evaluation procedure and methodology, as well as funding structure and mechanisms.
3. The Clean Hydrogen JU may provide guidance to the MA aiming to enhance its capabilities in the evaluation of hydrogen project proposals under the MA's own programmes, streamlining the evaluation process and improving the selection procedure. Such support may include, but is not limited to, leveraging the Clean Hydrogen JU's industry and research connections with project evaluation experience and expertise with the aim of fostering knowledge exchange, engaging in dialogues concerning lessons learnt from past calls, on the basis of publicly available information, disseminating MA's calls for expert evaluators, and collaborating on simplifying evaluation procedures for high-quality proposals awarded with EU quality labels.