

# International research collaboration opportunities fostering EU Clean Energy transition in Romania

## *PANTERA / SUPEERA joint workshop*

**Date:** Thursday, 23 March 2023

**Time:** 14:00 - 18:30 EET

**Location:** Bucharest, Faculty of Electrical Engineering

**Mode:** Hybrid

The [SUPEERA](#) and [PANTERA](#) projects jointly organised a workshop as part of a series of events dedicated to the EU-13 countries. The aim of the workshop was to promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices with the goal of increasing the involvement of Romanian entities in Research and Innovation (R&I) activities. Additionally, the workshop sought to expand the participation of Romanian stakeholders in the Implementation Working Groups of the [SET Plan and the related initiatives](#).

**Ivan Matejak**, SUPEERA coordinator from [EERA](#), presented the European Energy Research Alliance, the SET Plan and the benefits of being actively involved in it, and the SUPEERA project. He highlighted the importance of aligning research and innovation (R&I) as a pillar of



the SET Plan, and the disparities in engagement among different countries in the SET Plan and stated the importance that Romania's National Energy and Climate Plan addresses how to SET Plan objective policies are being translated to a national context. He also discussed Romania's energy sector, its energy mix and dependencies, as well as its participation in the SET Plan and the Clean Energy Transition (CET). He presented data showing the low engagement of



Romanian entities in H2020 projects, along with the underlying reasons for this performance gap compared with EU15 countries. He rounded up listing the benefits of becoming an EERA member and the opportunities that Romanian

entities can seize by increasing their participation to the SET Plan.

**Mattia Cabiati** from RSE presented the PANTERA project's findings and activities, highlighting the regional desk approach set up to address the EU countries less involved in EU level activities. During the presentation, he also emphasised the importance of local stakeholder engagement, and that the lack of networking, R&I facilities, and national policy in supporting R&I are limiting a deep integration of research activities at EU level. It has been pointed out that, to tackle these issues, the PANTERA project is performing several activities and has developed the [EIRE platform](#)<sup>1</sup>. Mr. Cabiati then gave an overview of the EIRIE functionalities and explained the potentialities for researchers, R&I organizations, and policy makers. In fact, the platform is an open tool for collaboration among all the stakeholder of the energy system innovation value chain. Moreover, collecting data directly from the database of the European commission, EIRIE can really support in finding key updated information about EU level outcomes, best practices and policies thus incentivizing further investments in smart grids and clean energy technologies.

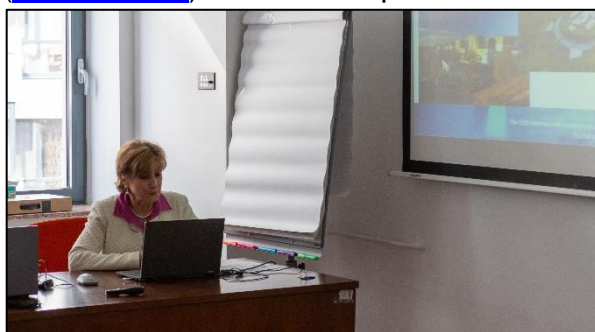
**Rad Stanev**, PANTERA project (TU Sofia), concluded the presentation by emphasising the platform's collaboration opportunities and inviting participants to explore ongoing collaborations and research funding opportunities.

**Mihai Paun**, President of the Energy Security and Investments Commission and Member of the Supervisory Board of [TRANSELECTRICA S.A.](#) presented the strategies and priorities of the Romanian TSO (Transmission and System Operator). During his presentation, he emphasised the priority of integrating renewable energy, highlighting the key infrastructure, mid-term (10 years) development plan, and financing structure. He also mentioned the strategic priorities of Transelectrica, including the integration of renewables, energy system transformation and cooperation with other transmission and distribution system operators. Mr. Paun provided an overview of the Romanian energy production mix, indicating that the country is well balanced in terms of technologies contributing to the mix, and the [Romanian Transmission Grid Map](#). He concluded with some examples of European projects on renewable energy integration led by Transelectrica.



<sup>1</sup> EIRIE, developed by PANTERA, aims to provide a comprehensive overview of renewable energy projects and policies across Europe. The platform facilitates information sharing and networking among stakeholders in the renewable energy sector and supports the development of effective strategies for the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable energy system in Europe.

**Daniela Diaconu**, Scientific Deputy Director, Institute for Nuclear Research ([RATEN ICN](#)) started her presentation with RATEN's mission and values on



nuclear research and underlined that her institute is very active in international cooperation on energy research. After giving an overview of the ambition plans for the next years, she discussed RATEN's participation in EU Platforms such as SNETP,

EURAD, ENSII, and the SET Plan (Implementation Working Group – Nuclear), especially in the security and nuclear safety components. She also emphasised the importance of being a member of EERA to promote national priorities in European projects and drive forward the clean energy transition in Romania and throughout Europe.



**Mihaela Albu**, Professor, Polytechnic University of Bucharest, started her intervention by pinpointing the need to organise more workshops/project meetings as the one she was part of to keep on mobilising EU-13 countries towards the EU Clean Energy Transition, SET Plan and Horizon Europe. In her

presentation, she underlined the correlation of national, European and International R&D efforts in the evolution of power systems. She also introduced the [MicroDERLab](#) and shared some successful results of research and innovation projects in Romania's emerging power system, also highlighting the gap between R&D efforts in Romania and in other countries. One major challenge she emphasised was the management of the power control system, especially in handling the large-scale data involved. She spoke about multi-scale data analytics for power profiles and advocated for funding schemes at all levels, from local to European. A second major challenge Professor Albu noted was the lack of collaboration among several disciplines. While acknowledging the launch of the National Research Development and Innovation Plan 2022-2027, she reminded the need for more funding in Romania.

## Panel discussion and Q&A

During the panel discussion, Ms Diaconu from RATEN expressed her satisfaction with the SET Plan Steering Group, as a very useful and powerful collaboration network to show, promote and finance some of their



projects / activities, and highlighted the importance of being member of EERA. Mr. Matejak asked Professor Albu about the balance of funding sources and the lack of collaboration between industry and research, which she attributed to the low national investment in R&I, missing collaboration among national entities and hence lack of strategy at national level. Ms. Albu suggested strengthening collaboration between entities and disciplines and identifying missing points to improve national level work. Further, Ms. Albu mentioned that at the national level, MicroDERLab is only running one national project; all other projects are international. This indicates a clear unbalance in resources and different sources of funding. She stressed that the national efforts to finance R&I in the past have been extremely low, and they have had to rely on international financing sources to promote research. Ms. Albu attributed this poor national R&I engagement to volatile collaboration, unfair competition, and lack of collaboration among national entities and local stakeholders, particularly, but not exclusively with the Ministry of Energy. According to her this is because limited resources led to a lack of time and understanding, and interests often clash, highlighting a structural problem. In her opinion it would be of added value to receive feedback from this Ministry on the current national energy challenges Romania faces in their view.

When asked about what could be done to increase the activity of Romanian players in the EU, Mr. Paun emphasised the need to enhance collaboration between universities and industries and to have a more understanding of the evaluation process for EU-funded projects. The lack of cooperation at national and international level was also attributed to limited resources and structural problems. Mr. Paun was also asked for the challenge Romania has and will continue having in accommodating all the new renewable energy, especially in the three regions with most renewable energy production capacity. He was certain that hydrogen will play a pivotal role in the future energy mix in Romania and will be truly part of the solution.



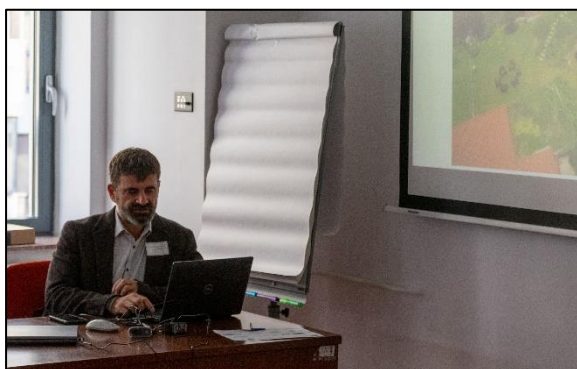


**Spyridon Pantelis**, Project Manager at EERA led the second session of discussions. He provided an overview of some of the available funding opportunities under Horizon Europe, elaborating on open calls under Cluster 5 of Pillar 2 and those on Widening. He underlined that this information together with application tips are available online.

**Francesco Matteucci**, Programme Manager from the [European Innovation Council](#) presented an overview of the funding available for Clean Tech, and the work of the European Innovation Council (EIC), including the EIC strategic approach and the Innovation fundings, such as the EIC fund and VC (venture capital) fund, which bridge the equity funding gap at an early stage and aims at crowding in other investors. He also introduced the main EIC Support Schemes for clean tech projects and invited the audience to watch the latest [Info day](#) organised by the EIC on the topic.

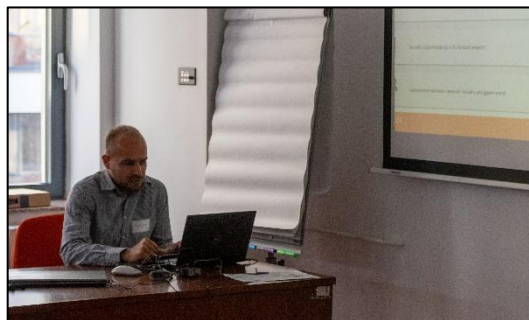
**Berta Matas Güell**, Senior Research Scientist at [SINTEF](#) introduced the [EEA](#) and [Norway Grants](#), which work through funding tools periods, and showed the beneficiaries countries. The eligibility criteria for funding were also discussed, and two examples of projects in Romania funded through these funding mechanisms were presented. She focused on successful proposals, the importance of collaboration in European projects, and the quality of research work. Overall, she highlighted the various funding opportunities available for research and innovation in Europe, with a focus on clean technologies and the energy transition.

**Marius Ienculescu-Popovici**, President of [GreenInitiative](#) provided an overview of the Association which promotes sustainable living and green buildings. The association hosts workshops, events, and discussions related to climate change adaptation and renewable energy production. He presented



two of their projects (i.e. [Green Mogo](#) and [I-GReta](#)), underlining that NGOs are natural drivers of innovation and they have an important role in R&I projects.

**Chrysanthos Charalambous**, Special Scientist at [FOSS Research Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) gave a presentation about the main research areas of the



Centre, underlining the benefits of participating in EU-funded projects. Apart from the financial benefits, he also highlighted the opportunities for R&D projects and for identifying new business opportunities. Participation in EU-funded projects also provides participants access to international

markets, and the chance to collaborate with experts to solve industry competitiveness problems.

**Andrei Daniel Groșeanu**, Management Consultant at [Măgurele Science Park Association](#) provided an overview of the association work in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in science and technology. He discussed the association's approach to engaging SMEs in the green transition and the EU-funded project [SME4Green](#). Finally, he



emphasised that participating in EU-funded projects like SME4Green can provide a range of benefits for organisations, including access to funding, networking and collaboration opportunities, and the chance to contribute to important initiatives in areas such as sustainability and innovation.

**Monica Florea**, Head of Unit of European Projects at [SIMAVI](#) introduced the company and its activities, underlining its long-lasting experience with EU funded projects, having participated in more than 60 Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 projects. She stressed that to secure EU funding opportunities, the company focuses on identifying relevant calls and developing strong



project proposals that can eventually yield to strong partnerships. She rounded up by stressing the importance of effective project management that is key to successful outcomes of a project.



## Panel discussion and Q&A

During the panel discussion, the participants highlighted the importance of collaboration for research and innovation.

### Mr. Ienculescu-Popovic

emphasised the challenges faced by NGOs engaged in research activities when it comes to forming partnerships. Initially, GreenInitiative focused on education and dissemination aspects within the projects rather than actively engaged in project research. As time went on, they were able to build collaborations with experts and stakeholders in the field, which increased their credibility and demonstrated their expertise. These collaborations provided also more opportunities for networking and active participation in project research.

**Mr. Groșeanu** discussed how they provide training to SMEs to access funding and improve innovation management. He also mentioned that the bureaucratic processes in the country can be sometimes challenging for SMEs, which may hinder their participation in national funding projects. **Ms. Florea** added that collaboration is key to success in EU-funded projects, and that the most difficult element is to keep the collaboration active throughout the project implementation phase. Finally, **Mr. Charalambous** underlined the importance of collaboration among research centres, ministries, and local stakeholders in driving research and innovation forward, underlining that such collaborations in Cyprus have been proven crucial to their success; adding that this could be replicated in Romania. He concluded, stating that by working together, organisations can access resources, share knowledge, identify local needs, build networks, and address complex challenges, leading to more impactful research outcomes and a more innovative society.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the SUPEERA and PANTERA projects organised a workshop aimed at promoting knowledge exchange and best practices among Romanian entities active in Research and Innovation (R&I) activities. The workshop sought to increase Romanian stakeholders' participation in the Implementation Working Groups of the SET Plan and attract them to participate in EU funded R&I activities. During the workshop the EIRE platform, developed by the PANTERA project, was also presented. The platform has been developed to support a deeper involvement at EU level of all the EU countries and functions as a reference point for R&I activities in the energy system. Speakers from various organisations discussed Romania's energy sector, its energy mix and dependencies, as well as its participation in the SET Plan and the Clean Energy

Transition (CET), along with Romania's engagement in H2020. The panel discussion touched on the lack of collaboration between national entities, low national investment in R&I, and limited resources and a structural problem. The session on R&I opportunities for collaboration and funding highlighted the funding available for Clean Tech through the European Innovation Council (EIC) and their EIC strategic approach and the Innovation funding. The EEA and Norway Grants were also introduced, focusing on successful proposals, the importance of collaboration in European projects, and the quality of research work. Overall, the workshop was a step towards enhancing collaboration and promoting research and innovation in Romania.