

Combining Regional Innovation Strategy and Foresight: Experiences with the FOR-RIS approach

Magdalena Buczek

Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum Stuttgart, Germany
Regional Strategies and Innovation

buczek@steinbeis-europa.de

Borovets, Bulgaria, 11 October 2007

Contents of the presentation

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

- I. Background
- II. The FOR-RIS approach
- III. Case study – the UPRIS Foresight exercise



About the momentum of the FOR-RIS approach...

The policy and economic context



Challenges for Europe's regions cause growing complexity for regional policy-making:

- ❖ struggle for competitiveness in the global economy
- ❖ social and economic cohesion
- ❖ transition towards knowledge-based society
- ❖ more and better RTDI investments
- ❖ increased importance of regional actors



→ Thus, effective decision-making and strategies at the regional level are needed

The 'Blueprints Expert Group' addressed these challenges in 2004...



Blueprints for Foresight Actions in the Regions

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
 Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

... are practical guides to support the planning, design and execution of foresight exercises



- ❖ to conduct or enhance a regional innovation strategy, i.e. RIS/RITTS (the FOR-RIS blueprint)



- ❖ to support regions characterised by a considerable share of traditional industries and a need to adapt industry structures (the UPGRADE blueprint)



- ❖ to develop international networks and support structures to technology transfer (the TECHTRANS blueprint)



- ❖ to encourage neighbouring regions to develop trans-regional development approaches (the TRANSVISION blueprint)



- ❖ to support rural areas in the transformation away from traditional primary industries towards a knowledge-based society (the AGRIBLUE blueprint)

A brief look at the FOR-RIS approach

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

- ❖ **RIS:** strategy that provides a framework for optimising innovation policies and infrastructure at the regional level (needs of SMEs!)
- ❖ **Regional Foresight:** implementation of anticipation, participation, networking, vision, and action at a reduced territorial scale, where proximity factors become determinant (FOREN)



FOR-RIS: Regional Foresight for RIS

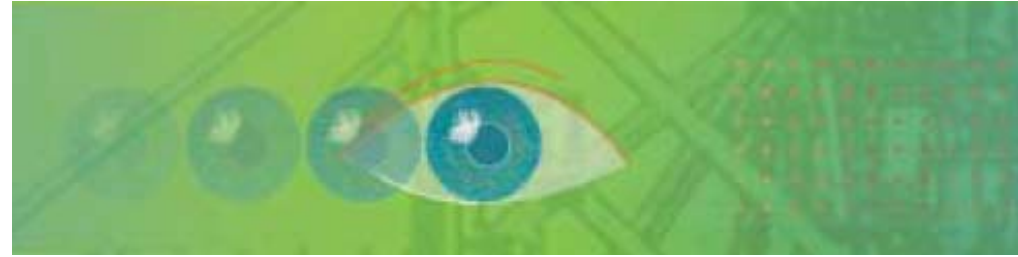
- ➔ Methodologically, both processes can be integrated, as differences between them complement each other

Why Foresight works well in connection with RIS?



STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

Regional Foresight and RIS: differences and complementarities



The most important distinctions between RIS and Foresight are:

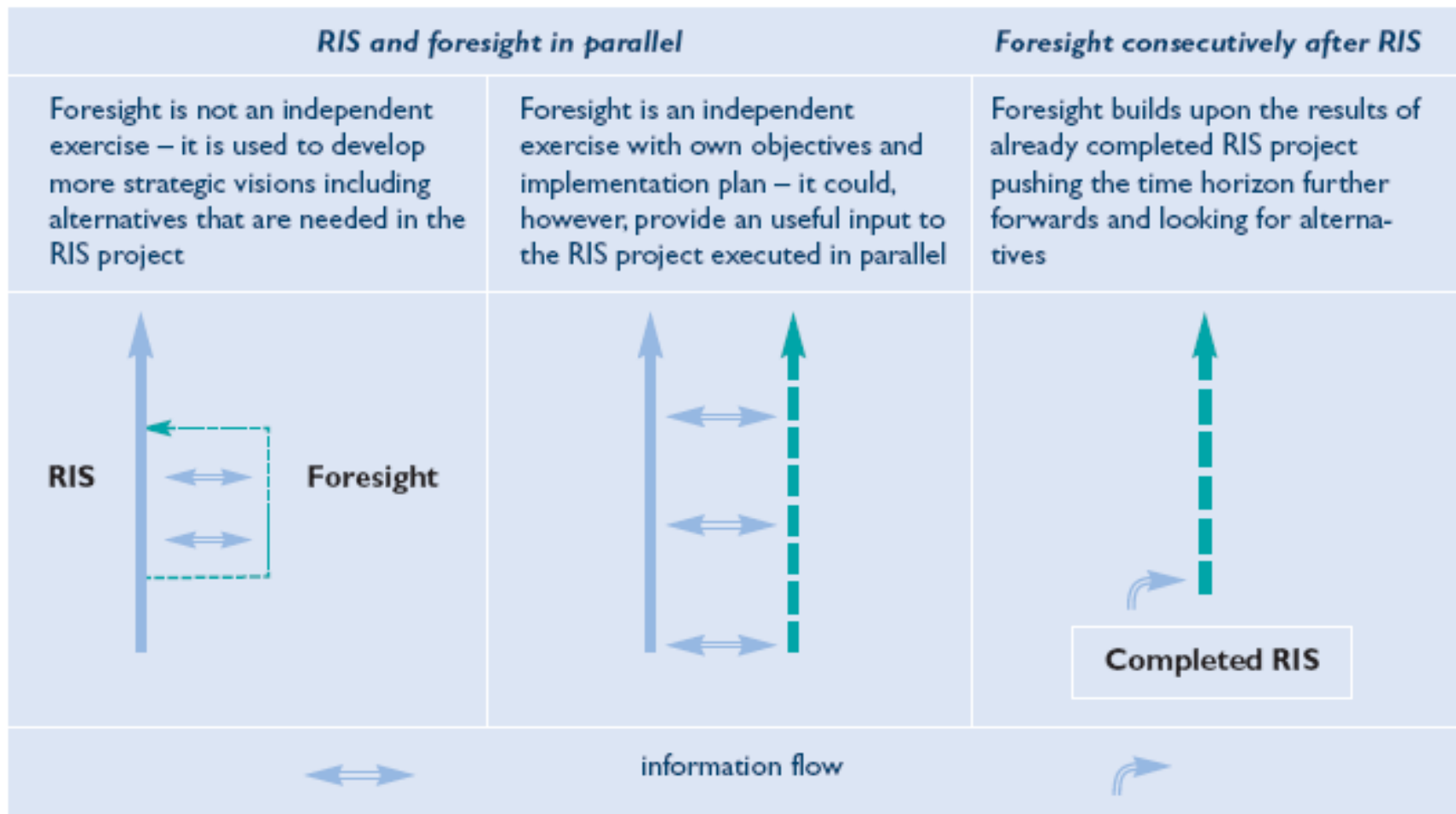
- ❖ **time horizon** (short-to medium/ longer term)
- ❖ **stakeholder groups** involved (industry sector/ all regional actors)
- ❖ **perspectives** taken into consideration (innovation system/ broader regional development)
- ❖ **methodology** used (methods to think about the future)
- ❖ spectrum of **recommendations** given (concrete development measures for innovation infrastructure/ links to other innovation-related policies)

FOR-RIS: advantages of Foresight

- ❖ unlocking new information on long-term developments, global trends, and on competitive advantages in comparison to other regions – might not be detected by RIS methods
- ❖ facilitating co-operation and consensus-building around the common vision and objectives between regional actors (long-term → more neutral view) – the RIS becomes more accepted, endorsed and more sustainable
- ❖ enabling better understanding of the challenges and problems, and therefore realising the need for action – in this way stakeholder commitment for the implementation of RIS can be secured
- ❖ working out alternative policy options and strategic suggestions that can be fed into RIS and its Action Plan

How can Foresight and RIS be combined?

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
 Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich



Source: FOR-RIS Blueprint

Different regions – similar challenges, problems, objectives

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich



Lower Silesia
Poland
UPRIS

South-West Region
Bulgaria
RIS BRIDGE

Case study UPRIS

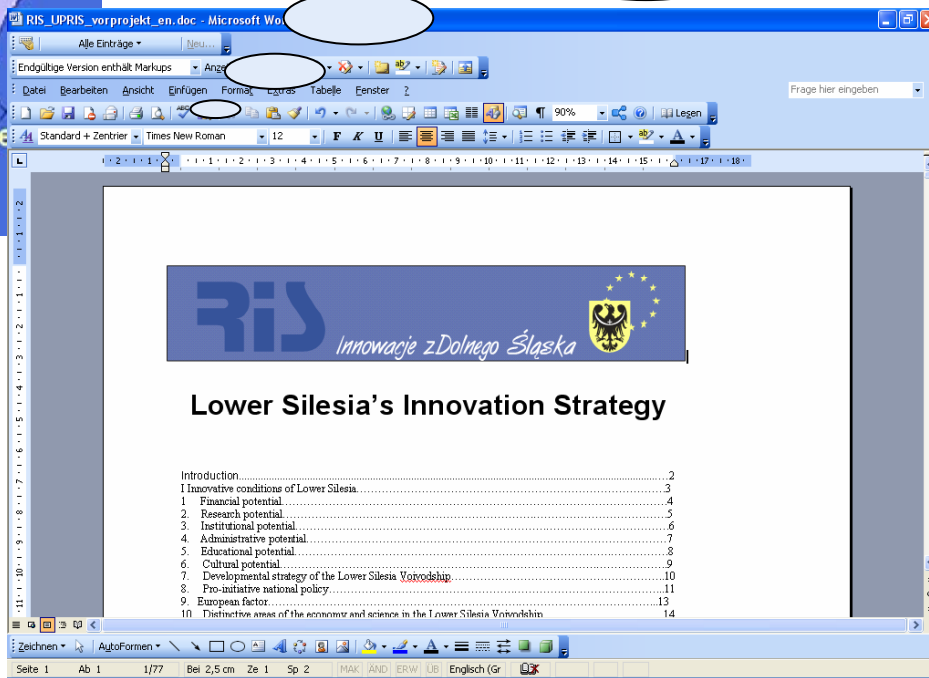
Upgrading the regional innovation strategy of Lower Silesia (Poland) by using foresight

The underlying question of UPRIS

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
 Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

How to make the **existing regional innovation strategy** more sustainable, applicable and suitable to guide decision-makers?

?



A means...

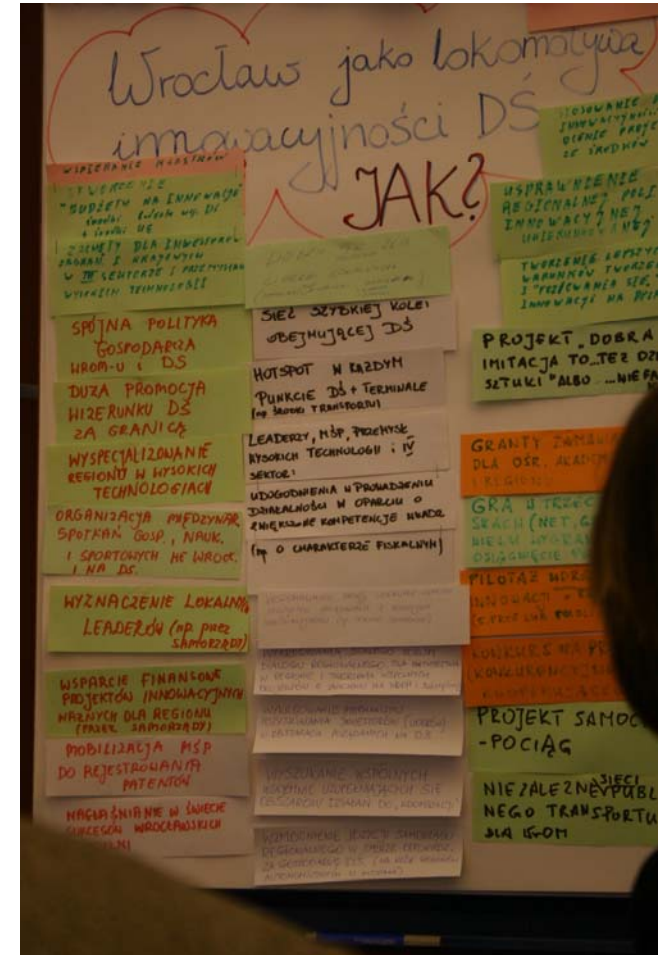
Regional Foresight

UPRIS Foresight exercise

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
 Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

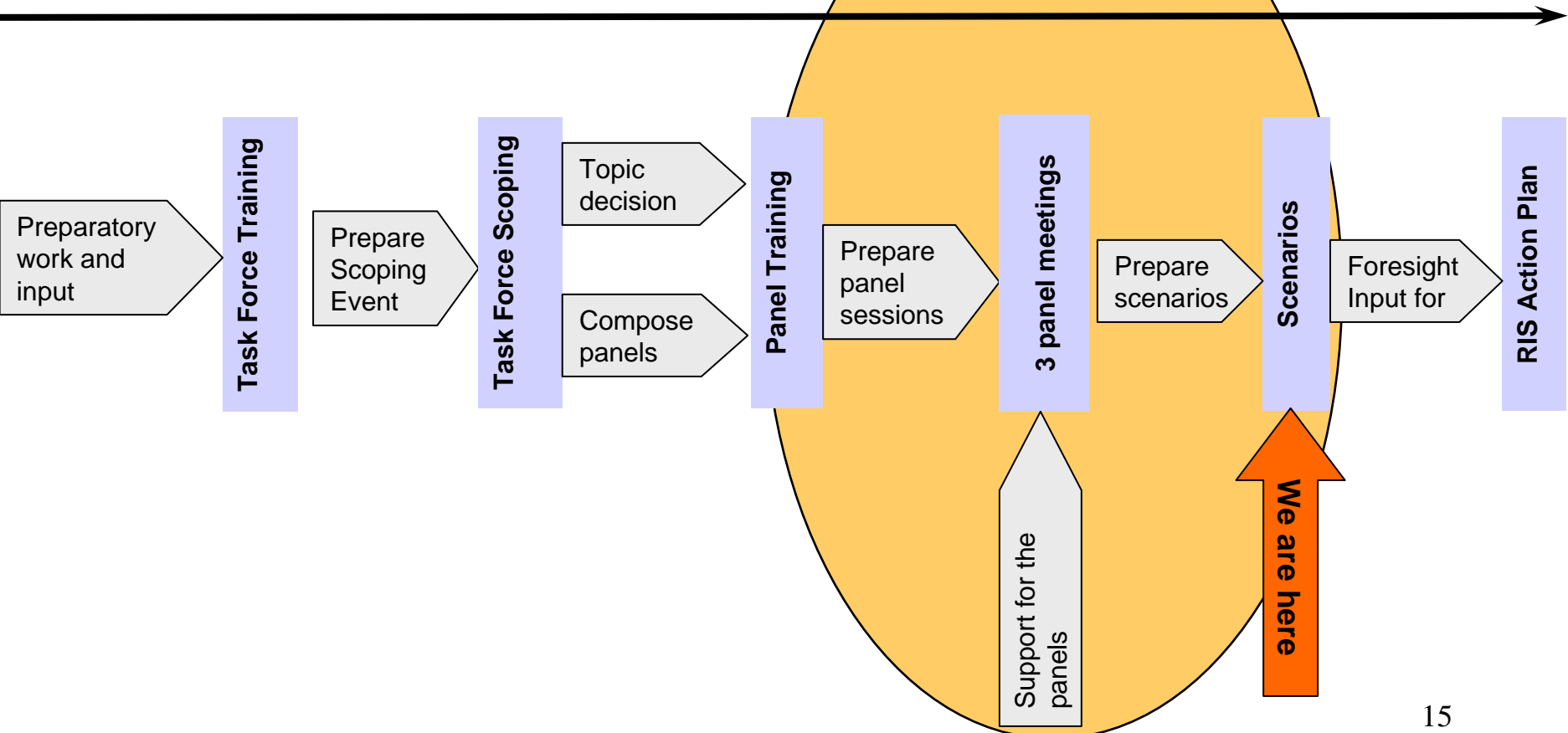
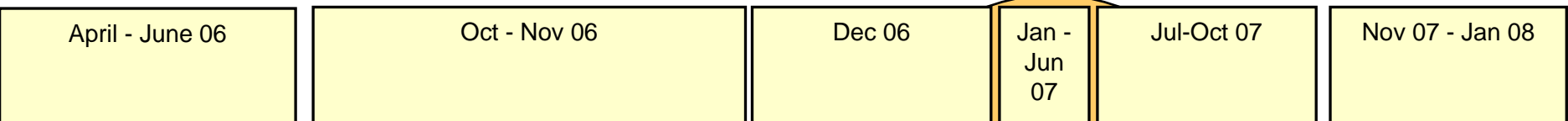
Objectives

- ❖ bring all relevant **regional stakeholders** together to discuss present and future possibilities and challenges
- ❖ identify the most important **fields and issues** relevant for Lower Silesia in the context of RIS that need to be handled
- ❖ generate a consistent view of how the **future** might look like in these fields and how to support their development
- ❖ consider and develop **options for action and policy-recommendations**



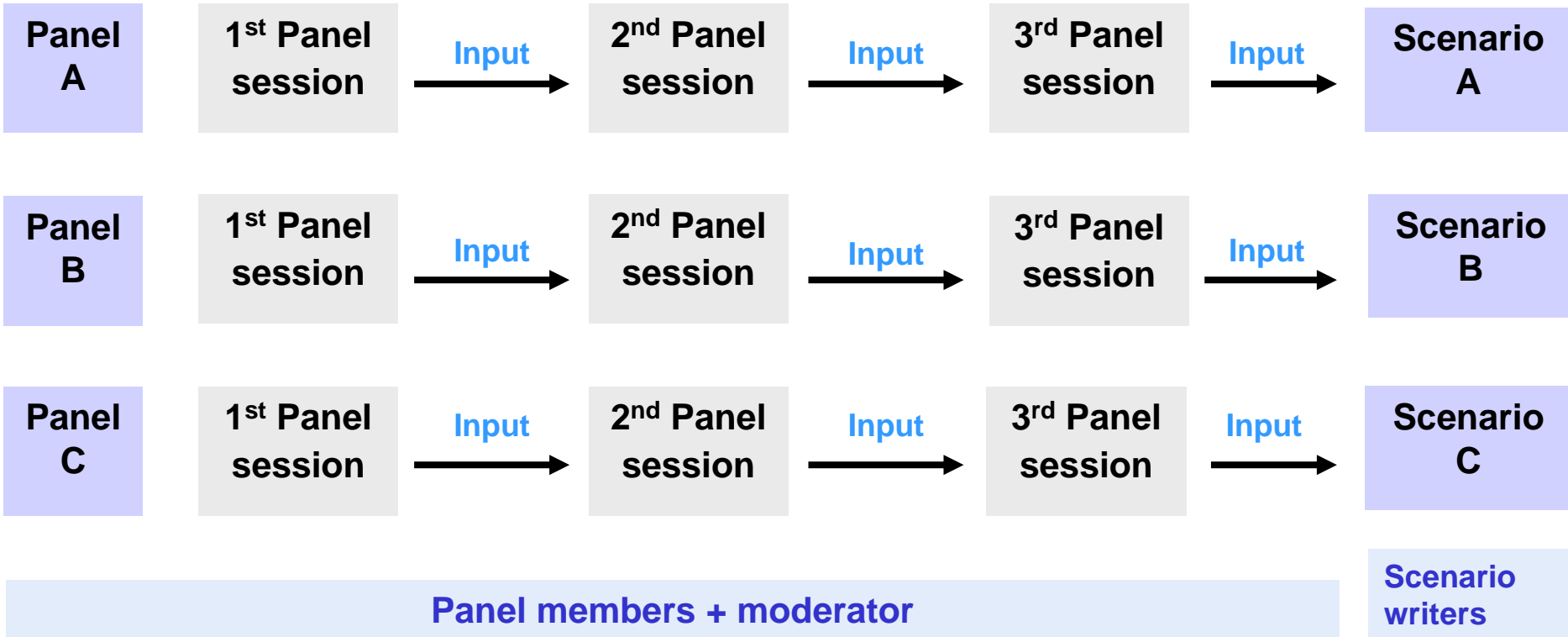
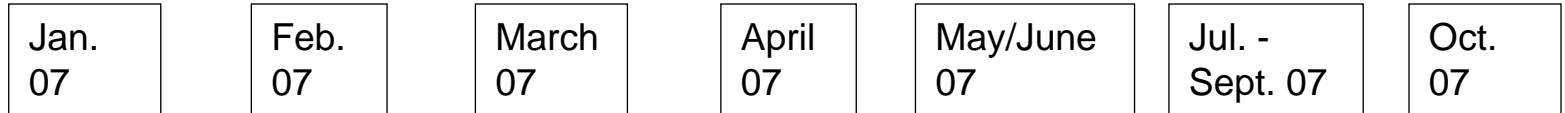
Timeframe of UPRIS Foresight

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich



Timeframe of the UPRIS Panels

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich



UPRIS Panels: a brief overview

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

Panel mission

- to provide an input for **scenarios** that will be used as a basis for the
 - **RIS Action Plan**
 - **Plan for Transnational Co-operation**

Panel topics

- **Wroclaw as a metropolitan area**: the role of the regional capital in driving the development of the whole region
- **Knowledge-based economy**: human and social capital, linkages between science and business
- **Infrastructure**: support institutions, base for innovation, transport, data transfer

Some lessons learned from UPRIS

STEINBEIS - EUROPA - ZENTRUM
Innovation Relay Centre Stuttgart-Erfurt-Zürich

- ❖ **Preparation:** allocation of resources (personnel, time and money), working plan, definition of objectives, background information material on Foresight, RIS, etc.
- ❖ **Manage expectations:** first-time Foresight exercises should not overreach - don't try to be too sophisticated or ambitious, don't get fixated on "fashionable" techniques, keep focused on the headline steps:
 - scoping and planning
 - recruitment of participants and coalition building
 - management and execution of the project
 - implementation of the recommendations
- ❖ **Leadership and facilitation:** committed personalities are needed to keep things going forward: the moderator, thematic leaders, administrative secretariat, etc.

Some lessons learned from UPRIS

- ❖ **Balanced participation:** stakeholders from the key organisations and institutions driving development in the region; direct participation of decision-makers implies that they understand, own, and implement the results
- ❖ **Flexibility:** Foresight exercise must retain sufficient flexibility to be able to adapt to modifications in clients' needs and even to accommodate helpful suggestions from exercise participants that were not initially foreseen in the exercise plan
- ❖ **Analysis:** not only explore the trends and driving forces but more importantly derive from them implications, constantly keep in view RIS
- ❖ **Communication:** between the engaged participants, the moderator, and scenario writers, e.g. via an online forum, dissemination plans for the wider public, build links to other projects in the region
- ❖ **Follow-on:** the measure of a successful Foresight is its ability to “sell” its output results to the key decision makers in the region

**Be open, far-sighted and proactive, and
apply Foresight for the benefit and success of the South-West Region!**

Thank you for your kind attention

