

EU's Smart Specialisation Strategies Platform

Smart growth in Europe 2020

In the European Commission's Communication regarding the contribution of the regional policy in the area of smart growth in the Europe 2020 strategy, the central role of European regions in this process is primarily recognised. In reality, regions are the primary institutional partners for universities, research and education institutes as well as SMEs and, therefore, they constitute the key to R&D and innovation making them an indispensable part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

R&D innovation in regional policy

The issue of specialisation in R&D and innovation is particularly crucial for regions and countries which do not present a leading history in any of the major scientific or technological sectors. The smart specialisation strategies are quite promising in this process as their objective is to encourage complementary combining regional productive assets associated with relevant sectors in the economy.

The knowledge and innovation capacity of regions depends on many factors such as business culture, education and training institutions, innovation support services, technology transfer mechanisms, R&D and ICT infrastructure, business incubators, new sources of finance or even local creative potential.

With 86 billion euro allocated to these policy areas, Member States and regions are committed to support this European strategy in order to maximise the impact of Regional Policy by ensuring a more effective use of public funds and by stimulating private investment.

What is smart specialisation strategy?

Smart specialisation is a concept for the development of the R&D and innovation policy of the European Union. Its aim is to promote efficient and effective use of public investment using the right synergies among countries and regions and strengthening their innovation capacity. This way, regional diversity can be developed even in less competitive areas by boosting their economic growth and prosperity. The process involves key factors coming from governmental, business, academic and other research institutions.

The smart specialisation strategy consists of a multi-annual strategy programme aiming to develop a functional national or regional research innovation system. Based on an analysis of the regional assets and technological studies, a developed strategy foresees potential partnerships with other regions and countries, and at the same time avoiding any overlapping or fragmentation of efforts. The whole strategy is based on the concept of a

strong partnership between private and public entities with the collaboration of academic and research institutions.

The need for a smart specialisation platform

The platform aims to assist the regions of the EU Member States to develop and implement new specialised synergies. The most important point in the process is the identification of high value added activities which offer better chances for competitiveness and integration in the market.

Among others, the smart specialisation platform will provide analysis, expertise, advice, research, practical technical support, and the necessary training for the development of the new strategy, as well as a comprehensive toolbox based on the relevant EU policy.

The platform will also carry out a number of tasks intended to facilitate the exchange of experience from all regional and national initiatives and to identify the potential of cross-border cooperation through joint investment opportunities in specific innovative sectors.

Clusters and innovation

A crucial element of smart specialisation strategies is the presence of clusters, geographic concentrations of companies, often SMEs, which interact with each other and with clients and suppliers and often share a pool of specialist labour, business and financial services.

Public procurement

A key driver to R&D and innovation is public procurement since it is able to provide innovative firms with speed up measures to integrate the market. Innovation Partnerships is a new legal model to be established in the European market. Therefore, the European Commission will provide the necessary legal framework to secure and to facilitate joint procurement connecting partners from different Member States.

Regional research infrastructure

Research infrastructure in knowledge based innovation systems needs to be developed in order to help regions realise their full potential. This approach could be supported by the establishment of networks, the development of Regional Partner Facilities and the creation of the necessary ICT and research infrastructure for this scope.

Cultural industries

Cultural industries, which have a strategic position at regional level, are able to boost local economies and create the links in order to stimulate new activities, create new and sustainable jobs and enhance the attractiveness of European regions.

Cultural industries have a catalyst influence to the regional development. Therefore, they should be integrated in the new R&D and innovation policy synergies.

Policy issues

The combination of these various aspects creates a new dynamic that goes beyond the specific sectors they represent. The pervasive impact of these synergies confirm the central role Smart Specialisation strategy can play in the world economy, the EU economy and the EU's economic recovery. Its effect will become apparent at the economic structure of the industrial compositions not only in advanced but also in emerging economies. The competitive asset of R&D and innovation will be fundamental as it is able to influence other sectors of the economy and develop key technologies on a global scale.

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