REPORT

on Cohesion Policy and Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)
(2015/2278(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Cohesion Policy and Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)

(2015/2278(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in particular Articles 4, 162 and 174-178 thereof,


– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal,

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings,


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having regard to its resolution of 14 January 2014 on smart specialisation: networking excellence for a sound Cohesion Policy2,

having regard to its resolution of 9 September 2015 on ‘Investment for jobs and growth: promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union’3,

having regard to the Commission brochure of 22 February 2016 entitled ‘Investment Plan for Europe: new guidelines on combining European Structural and Investment Funds with the EFSI’,

having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2014 entitled ‘Research and innovation as sources of renewed growth’ (COM(2014)0339),

having regard to the Commission’s sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion, entitled ‘Investment for jobs and growth’, of 23 July 2014,

having regard to the Commission communication of 26 November 2014 entitled ‘An Investment Plan for Europe’ (COM(2014)0903),

having regard to the Commission communication of 14 December 2015 entitled 'Investing in jobs and growth - maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds' (COM(2015)0639),

having regard to the guide published by the Commission in 2014 entitled ‘Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes’,

having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2010 entitled ‘Regional Policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020’ (COM(2010)0553),

having regard to the Commission communication of 13 September 2013 entitled ‘Measuring innovation output in Europe: towards a new indicator’ (COM(2013)0624),

having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 27 July 2012 entitled ‘Active ageing: innovation smart health – better lives’ (2012/C 225/05),

having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 30 July 2013 entitled ‘Closing the Innovation Divide’ (2013/C 218/03),

having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 20 November 2014 entitled ‘Measures to support the creation of high-tech start-up ecosystems’ (2014/C 415/02),

– having regard to the Commission staff working document published in 2014 containing guidance for policy-makers and implementing bodies on "Enabling synergies between European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other research, innovation and competitiveness-related Union programmes" (SWD (2014)0205),

– having regard to the pilot project ‘Cohesion Policy and the synergies with the research and development funds: the stairway to excellence’,

– having regard to the European Parliament Preparatory Action in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (REMTh),

– having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A8-0159/2016),

A. whereas in these times of economic, financial and social crisis the EU must step up its efforts to create smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth;

B. whereas strengthening research, technological development and innovation (R&D&I) is one of the investment priorities under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for 2014-2020; whereas support for innovation varies widely across the EU and within Member States, especially for the exploitation of knowledge and technology in promoting innovation;

C. whereas for the 2014-2020 programming period, Member States are required, for the first time, to develop national and/or regional smart specialisation strategies by involving national and regional managing authorities and stakeholders, such as higher education institutions, industry and social partners, in an entrepreneurial discovery process;

D. whereas smart specialisation combines and brings together different policies, including those for entrepreneurship, education and innovation, in order for regions to identify and select priority areas for their development and related investments by focusing on their strengths and comparative advantages;

E. whereas RIS3 should help make the European economy more competitive, develop European added value in innovation, create more and better high-quality jobs, and take on board a wide range of new experiences; whereas they should contribute to the dissemination of good practices and to the development of a new entrepreneurial spirit, combined with a functioning digital single market and smart specialisation that could lead to new skills, knowledge, innovation and employment in order to better exploit research results and take advantage of all forms of innovation;

F. whereas the development of a RIS3 strategy involves a process of developing multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms identifying the place-based areas of greatest strategic potential, setting strategic priorities and designing efficient support service for enterprises in order to maximise the knowledge-based development potential of a region;
G. whereas RIS3 contribute to the efficient use of EU funds, affect all Member States and regions of the Union, and unlock the potential of all regions, thus helping the EU to fight its innovation gaps both internally and externally in order to become more competitive at the global level;

H. whereas the timely and successful development of RIS3 in the Member States is to an important degree dependent on their increasing administrative capacity for programming, budgeting, implementation and evaluation within the policy framework with the aim of enhancing private investment in R&D&I; whereas this development has to take account of the fact that the initial assessments of smart specialisation strategies have delivered a mixed picture, notably regarding the choice of priorities, which is often seen as too generic or insufficiently connected to regional economic and innovation structures, meaning that smart specialisation strategies need to improve in this regard;

I. whereas the RIS3 platform assists bottom-up and peer-to-peer exchanges and transfers of knowledge among participating regions; whereas this process needs to be prioritised with respect to the future design and practice of smart specialisation initiatives;

*The central role of RIS3 in the contribution of cohesion policy to the Europe 2020 goals*

1. Underlines that smart specialisation strategies support thematic concentration and strategic programming of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) and lead to increased performance orientation on the ground, thus contributing to the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives; emphasises that the aim of these strategies is to create knowledge-based, sustainable growth, balanced development and high quality jobs in all regions, not only in well-developed areas but also in regions in transition as well as in less developed, rural and island regions;

2. Requests that the new ex ante conditionality provisions for the attribution of ESI Funds be fully respected in order to make smart specialisation strategies work;

3. Calls on all actors involved to develop RIS3 on the basis of analyses of each region’s existing capabilities, assets and competences, and to focus on entrepreneurial discovery in order to detect emerging niches or comparative advantages for smart specialisation, avoid forced and artificial overspecialisation, and enhance a stronger partnership between public and private sectors while always avoiding possible conflicts of interest between the private and public sectors;

4. Supports a broad definition of innovation as signifying the transformation of an idea into a new or improved product or service introduced on the market, into a new or improved operational process used in industry and commerce, or into a new approach to a social service;

5. Asks regions to design schemes for innovative support services aimed at complementing or replacing existing support services, in order to allow a given region to achieve its full competitive potential, help enterprises absorb new knowledge and technology in order to remain competitive, and ensure that research and innovation resources achieve critical mass;

6. Asks the Commission to align the general block exemption regulation in order to allow
the Seal of Excellence conditions to be offered by the ESI Funds;

7. Asks national authorities to invest in regional intelligence and big data mining so that they are enabled both to demonstrate their unique competitive advantage and to understand trends relating to regional enterprises in the global value chain;

8. Is of the opinion that the S3 platform, established by the Commission’s DG REGIO and located at the JRC in Seville, plays a key role in advising regions and setting benchmarks on their innovation strategies, helping lagging regions and enhancing multi-level governance and synergies between regions, by providing information, methodologies, expertise and advice to national and regional policymakers; stresses that this platform should make a continuous effort to update its database, taking into account the local needs, specificities and priorities of regions and cities;

9. Takes the view that the S3 platform in Seville should pay particular attention to lagging regions and, in particular, should help them to shape and direct their strategies;

10. Believes that smaller regions have more problems in developing and implementing strategies, and calls for the development of proposals to increase support for such regions in order to enhance the implementation of the S3 strategies and the exchange of best practices;

11. Welcomes the Commission's latest focus on lagging regions in the form of a recent pilot project relating to the European Parliament Preparatory Action in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, scaled up to regions from eight Member States until the end of 2017;

12. Welcomes the continuation of the Regional Innovation Monitor Plus platform (RIM Plus), established by the Commission’s DG Growth, the creation of a Research Innovation Observatory (RIO), established by DG RTD, and the different policy-related Knowledge Centres at DG JRC (EC), providing comprehensive data, indicators and guidelines to national and regional S3 stakeholders;

13. Looks forward to future details regarding the European Innovation Council (EIC), aimed at creating a 'one-stop shop' for innovators and, therefore, a bridge between the achievements of science and the needs of businesses and public authorities in Europe;

14. Recalls that public funding remains a powerful engine for innovation; calls on the authorities concerned to exercise caution as regards putting a stronger focus on financial instruments, since innovation should not only be focused on grants but should also be able to identify alternative means of finance such as loans and guarantees and to strike a balance between grants and alternative means of funding (public and private financing);

**Multi-level governance and its capacity**

15. Regrets that some Member States have decided to opt for national RIS3 without giving local and regional authorities a chance to develop their own views, thus undermining the bottom-up entrepreneurial discovery process that RIS3 should enshrine; underlines the importance of a regional approach, as the implementation of RIS3 can only be successful if based on local and regional assets; calls on the Member States concerned
to reconsider replacing the national RIS3 by regional ones in order not to miss out on
growth opportunities, and calls for a better coordination between national and regional
S3 strategies wherever appropriate, in order to adapt them if necessary to future needs
and requirements for sustainable development, in particular in the food and energy
sectors; regrets that the partnership principle enshrined in Article 5 of the CPR has not
always been respected; calls on Member States to respect the partnership principle at all
stages of the preparation and implementation of the Partnership Agreement and
Operational Programmes;

16. Believes that the quality of cooperation between government and the relevant actors in
the regions will have a decisive influence on the RIS3 strategy, and will markedly
reduce the risk of wrong priority choices being made; underscores, in this connection,
the importance of consulting with businesses, and with SMEs in particular, since a
‘vision of innovation’ will only be successful if businesses have the appropriate
potential to put it into practice;

17. Highlights the importance of better coordination between all levels of governance in
order to foster a bottom-up vision of the regional strategies, including all smart
specialisation authorities and stakeholders, as well as experts, civil society and end-
users, in order to break down ‘silo mentalities’; points out that the failure to adapt
relevant Member State regulations is creating barriers to the implementation of
investments in research and innovation;

18. Points out the limited role that civil society has played in RIS3 strategies, and calls for
the enhancement of its participation through platforms and collaborative partnerships, as
this can help better shape strategies, enhance cooperation with society and lead to better
governance;

19. Highlights the importance of close coordination throughout the whole implementation
phase between the operational programmes and the RIS3;

20. Calls for closer dialogue and cooperation between EU institutions (the EP and the
Council) as well as at executive level (the Commission and the national implementing
authorities), in order to achieve a favourable framework for innovation and research and
a reinforcement of the RIS 3 implementation in the context of the upcoming review of
the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014;

21. Calls on the Commission and the other bodies concerned to provide additional
assistance to those Member States in need of it for the implementation of the RIS3
strategy;

22. Calls for continued efforts to encourage a change of mentality and to promote
innovative policy approaches to boost intra-regional, inter-regional, extra-regional,
cross-border and transnational collaboration, including through macro-regions, by
means of existing tools such as INTERREG, in order to continue boosting European
added value in the strategies;

23. Recalls the importance of stressing social innovation, since it can help establish new
business models and cultures, thus creating an appropriate environment for the
implementation of the circular economy;
24. Calls on the Commission to come forward with an integrated communication on the added value of the RIS3 strategies and their implementation in the operational programmes, to be followed by proposals for further action in the 7th Cohesion report;

25. Regrets the lack of interregional cooperation on the basis of the smart specialisation theme; notes that the Common Strategic Framework offers the possibility of using up to 15% of the funds under the Common Provisions Regulation (the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) for such cooperation outside one’s own region; emphasises that the Article 16.3 report 'Investing in jobs and growth - maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds' shows that these possibilities have been under-used until now; calls on Member States and regional authorities to make increased use of the possibilities offered;

26. Calls for the development of flexibility and coordination mechanisms to link the results of the RIS3 process to the implementation of Horizon 2020 and other programmes; encourages regions to engage in forms of transnational cooperation such as the Vanguard Initiative, the Seal of Excellence, the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP), the S3 platforms, the Stairway to Excellence, and the regional innovation schemes for the co-location centres of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT); calls for facilitation of the development of strategic cluster partnerships, with a view to boosting investment, enhancing coordination, creating synergies and promoting exchanges of views in order to avoid duplication and inefficient spending of public resources;

27. Encourages national and European institutions to continue monitoring the ‘innovation divide’, not only among EU Member States and across NUTS 2 regions, but, also and increasingly, within Member States;

28. Believes that procedures should be simplified and bottlenecks in the administrative process of the strategies should be reduced;

29. Calls on the relevant authorities at all levels to simplify procedures and reduce bottlenecks in the administrative process of the strategies; encourages investment in human capital, including via EU interregional partnerships, with a view to boosting administrative capacities and managing, implementing and monitoring the RIS3 process successfully while avoiding creating additional layers of administration; encourages authorities to give priority to research and innovation in regions that have the corresponding potential but where investment in this area is sparse;

30. Urges regions and Member States to intensify the use of the budget available for technical assistance to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the RIS3;

31. Recalls that smart specialisation strategies should also be a powerful instrument for tackling social, environmental, climate and energy challenges and promoting knowledge spillover and technological diversification;

**Better synergies for growth and job creation**
32. Criticises the lack of synergies across ESI Funds and other EU financing instruments, which hinders coordination, coherence and integration in EU funding, as well as reducing its results and impact; calls for more attention to and research into how to achieve an improved strategic approach to synergies and take account of the combination, complementarity and potential of funding instruments in such a way as to ensure full use of EU guarantees to finance investment platforms;

33. Emphasises the need to continue and deepen the triple and quadruple helix approaches to smart specialisation at the regional level, involving public administrations, businesses, universities and citizens; stresses that the role of the latter two sets of participants (i.e. higher education/research institutions and citizens' organisations) should be reinforced in terms of the new EU programming and types of financing;

34. Calls for increased support for SMEs and start-ups, as the vast majority of these are at the forefront of disruptive innovation, as well as contributing significantly to identifying local talent in a variety of fields and employing young people;

35. Encourages continuous attempts to seek reliable indicators for monitoring innovation performance at all levels of governance, by better mobilising and coordinating the resources of Eurostat and other relevant Commission DGs, also taking account of the achievements of the OECD, ESPON and other players in this field such as national statistical offices;

36. Underlines that the coordinated and complementary use of ESI Funds together with Horizon 2020 and EFSI funds, in accordance with the guidelines on complementarities between EFSI and the European Fund for Strategic Investment issued by the Commission in February 2016, provides excellent options for boosting innovation at regional, national and EU levels by enhancing the attractiveness of investment in research and innovation in order to attract private capital to complement public funding; calls on local and regional authorities to make the most of the possibilities for combining these tools;

37. Calls for action to obtain the necessary information for achieving synergies between the various policies and instruments available in the RIS3, such as the cohesion policy for 2014-2020, the smart specialisation platform, the European Cluster Observatory, the European Innovation Partnership, the European Strategy Forum, the Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) and the research infrastructures;

38. Encourages regions, when implementing their RIS3, to strengthen the open innovation mentality and ecosystem collaboration on the basis of the quadruple helix model;

39. Stresses the importance of tailoring education and research to the real needs of the market, in an effort to ensure that new innovations meet demand and lead to economic growth;

**Smart cities as catalysts for RIS3**

40. Reiterates the key role that EU urban areas have to play in the economic and social development of the Union by acting as hubs for various actors and sectors, combining the challenges and opportunities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and serving
as frontrunners in the integrated and place-based policy approach; emphasises the importance of urban areas in catalysing human resources, infrastructure and investment potential for the development of innovation clusters;

41. Calls on the Commission to take into account RIS3 and other programmes of innovation, with special regard to the Integrated Territorial Investments, when developing the European Urban Agenda in order to create synergies and strong links for an efficient use of resources;

42. Underlines the importance of facilitating innovative cross-sectoral, triple helix and cross-border cooperation related to European challenges in order to make regions and cities smarter, greener and more enjoyable places to live and work in;

43. Stresses the need for the further development and extension throughout Europe of the concept of 'smart and connected cities'; welcomes the intention of the Dutch EU Presidency to create a bottom-up approach empowering cities in coordination with regional authorities, to develop the EU Urban Agenda, and to evolve from smart to excellent cities; supports, in this context, the preparation of the Pact of Amsterdam, with its focus on sustainable growth and job creation, on fostering connections between all parties, citizens and social organisations, and on promoting sustainable and socially inclusive development;

44. Draws attention to the promotion of different city-to-city cooperation and knowledge exchange schemes in the field of smart specialisation and innovation, such as the ‘Open and Agile Smart Cities’ scheme supported by the Commission;

45. Supports the initiatives on the part of the Commission and the Council in favour of the EU Urban Agenda in the context of the Pact of Amsterdam; calls on the Commission to foster coherence between urban and regional policies; asks the Commission to come forward with proposals to align the initiatives and methodology of ‘Smart Cities’ and RIS3 in the 7th Cohesion report;

**Monitoring and evaluation**

46. Notes that, although most regions have adopted a RIS3, a considerable number of them still need to work on complying with the ex ante conditionality requirements, the main challenges being the monitoring mechanism, the budgetary framework and the measures to stimulate private-sector research and innovation investments;

47. Reminds local and regional decision-makers of the importance of their commitment to use the RIS3 as an economic transformation instrument within their own region, thus also influencing EU policy;

48. Welcomes the focus of these regional strategies on energy, health, information and communications technologies, advanced materials, food, services, tourism, sustainable innovation and transport, the bio-based economy, manufacturing systems, and cultural and creative industries, as well as other specialisations and particularly competitive sectors of a given region; regrets, however, a lack of granularity in many of the strategies, and calls for the refinement of the prioritisation process, thus avoiding the risk of focusing all strategies on the same topics; calls for the development of strategies
not only in high technology but also in low technology and social innovation, and encourages all stakeholders to seek crossovers between sectors, since such crossovers can foster innovation;

49. Believes that the promotion of national observatories for smart specialisation strategies can help build stronger indicator systems for monitoring RIS3, especially regarding methodology and training;

50. Observes that some RIS3 are poorly documented when it comes to demonstrating the unique competitive advantages of the region concerned, while others do not provide evidence regarding the capacity of stakeholders to support enterprises in innovation or of researchers to supply applied research or find commercial applications for results; notes also that some regions have wide strategies and simplistic monitoring indicators; urges, therefore, an increase in the capacity of public authorities to collect and assess the relevant information received, as well as boosting a coordinated effort by regions and central authorities to identify and standardise existing databases and make them accessible to stakeholders;

51. Calls on the EU and the Member States to use existing tools such as the Community Innovation Survey (CIS) to carry out periodic (annual and mid-term) monitoring – both quantitative and qualitative – of the implementation of the strategies, and to involve all stakeholders, including civil society, in the process; notes that both regions and Member States face similar problems in terms of evaluation of monitoring, and calls on the regions to publish regular reports on the achievement of their objectives, in order to better analyse the impact of RIS3 and guarantee transparency and public access to monitoring information; is, however, aware that strategies will take many years to bear fruit and that early monitoring should thus be tailored to reasonable expectations;

52. Encourages regions and Member States to be proactive with the timely implementation of the action plans, in view of the target date of December 2016 for compliance with the ex ante conditionality; asks them to set and implement their monitoring mechanism in a continuous review of the RIS3, focused on specifying investment niches where the regional innovation actors can gain or sustain a competitive advantage;

53. Is of the opinion that joint participation in the monitoring and evaluation of relevant instruments under the RIS3, as well as an alignment of monitoring and evaluation for reporting of different instruments, can help considerably in this field; calls, therefore, on all stakeholders and decision-makers to create synergies and develop arrangements that collect and synthesise data from policies and instruments included in specific RIS3;

54. Recalls that a good ‘paper strategy’ will not generate the expected results without the implementation of support services for enterprises;

**Main lessons and the future of RIS3**

55. Regrets that RIS3 often recognise the need to help enterprises exploit all forms of innovation, but then only support innovation based on technological knowledge; suggest in this regard that the RIS3 should also consider innovation in other areas, such as services and the creative sector, and recalls the importance of all kinds of innovation systems and institutions regardless of their size, as well as of their linkage to local and
regional clusters;

56. Points out that RIS3 have to be well implemented if they are to tackle the innovation gap and boost jobs and growth in Europe; stresses that, to this end, it is essential to promote bottom-up strategies and to enhance scrutiny regarding the potential of RIS3 at all governance levels; considers, in this regard, that Member States should involve their national statistical office(s) in order to help the regions develop their evaluation and monitoring mechanisms;

57. Believes that the participatory approach in the strategies has to be included in all processes, including the monitoring and evaluation process, as this will increase the scope for cooperation in achieving RIS3 objectives;

58. Urges the EU and the Member States not to forget that this instrument must be viable, operational and efficient so as to avoid burdening beneficiaries with bureaucracy;

59. Calls on the Commission to push for a review of the strategies in 2017 in order to boost their efficiency and effectiveness, and to provide information on their contribution to both future cohesion and research and innovation policies after 2020, taking into account the experience acquired from the first years of their implementation; calls on the Commission to launch a public consultation and to organise a Europe-wide conference prior to the 7th Cohesion Report, with Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and other stakeholders;

60. Recognises that smart specialisation strategies could be powerful instruments for tackling energy challenges, resource efficiency and energy security;

61. Calls on the Commission to continue to support the role of the S3 platform, to help increase the granularity of the strategies, and to remain focused on the importance of leverage of private investments;

62. Asks DG REGIO and the S3 platform to draft, and widely disseminate, a short policy paper on the past RIS3 experience, focused on the following areas: 1) a SWOT analysis of the experience; 2) lessons learned by regions and main pitfalls observed for each of the six steps described in the RIS3 guide; 3) recommendations and standardised templates for a continuous improvement of the RIS3 with a view to better designing the strategies after 2020; and 4) human capacity needed to successfully design and implement an RIS3; considers that regional networks concerned with research and innovation should be encouraged and supported in actions to promote the successes and the lessons learned, in order to embed the relevant thinking in the regions at all levels;

63. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

I. Political background to the report

At a time of economic recession and resulting budget constraints, and in an increasingly competitive global environment, it is crucial that the European Union keep improving its capacity to innovate.

During the last legislative period, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in support of Thematic Objective No 1, established that regions were required to focus their investment on R&D&I via smart specialisation strategies in the 2014-2020 programming period. Therefore, RIS3 is an ex-ante condition for member states and EU regions for receiving European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). All European regions have a RIS3 strategy. Those strategies have been shaped and are starting to be implemented during 2014 and 2015.

II. Legal framework for the RIS 3 strategy

In the case of absence of a national or regional innovation strategy for smart specialisation at the time of approval of the Operational Programmes, action plans were set up to ensure the establishment and implementation of such a strategy, as RIS3 are an ex ante conditionality under the 2014-2020 legislation.

Furthermore, the following preconditions must be complied with:

- the strategy has to be designed by a strong governance system;
- the strategy must be based on a SWOT analysis in order to focus resources on a limited number of research and innovation priorities;
- it must include measures to stimulate private investment in research, technology and development (RTD);
- it must include a monitoring and review system;
- Member States will adopt a framework outlining available budgetary resources for R&D&I, including a multiannual plan for budgeting and prioritisation of investments linked to EU priorities (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures – ESFRI).

During the year 2014, regions have started to develop and publish their RIS3 strategies. Now, after the publication and launch of its implementation, there are lessons to be learned and we can try to better focus the actions to be carried out in the coming years to make RIS3 strategies more effective and efficient. This report is focused on the main areas where improvement for RIS3 should be carried out.

III. Key aspects of the strategy from the rapporteur’s perspective

Central role of RIS3 for Cohesion Policy’s contribution to Europe 2020 goals

Taking into account the current state of play of RIS3 strategies in Europe, some points have to be highlighted in order to better shape strategies.
RIS 3 strategies should be in continuous review. We are talking about innovation, an area that is continuously changing. That is why it is essential that strategies are continuously adapted to the changes in the area of specialisation.

It is also important to highlight the areas where strategies should pay special attention: the analysis of priorities, strengths and potential of each region, the incorporation of the quadruple helix in the definition of the strategies, the use of methodology, the development of quantitative and qualitative periodic monitoring, the development of participatory processes, the invitation of stakeholders with special regard to the private sector, the creation of synergies between public and private actors, the coordination between all levels of governance and departments or the finding of alternative ways to finance.

To help with this, the role of the S3 platform in Seville is very important as it plays a key role in providing information, methodologies, expertise and advice to national and regional policy makers, as well as promoting mutual learning, transnational cooperation and contributes to academic debates on the concept of smart specialisation.

The S3 platform also plays an important role, not only in advising regions on their strategies, but also in helping lagging regions to better shape and focus their strategies. Together with the S3 platform, the promotion of national observatories of intelligent strategies can help to build stronger indicator systems for monitoring RIS3 to improve through its technical assistance the conception of the strategies focused in a concrete area, with special regards to methodology and training, to detect progress in entrepreneurial discovery in regions and avoid traditional and generalist strategies.

Last but not least, the simplification and reduction of bottlenecks in the administrative process is also vital. In this regard it is important to underline that the administrative capacity of public authorities and stability in the civil service is essential for the effective implementation of the strategies. It is also important to highlight that weak policy coordination may undermine a successful implementation of the strategies and pose a threat to effective policy management.

Innovative knowledge can be used to bolster the administrative capacity of public authorities in a significant way, especially at local and regional levels, including through greater use of new technologies and a drive for more streamlined procedures, so that their ability to offer quality services to the public is improved.

**Multi-Level Governance**

Taking into account the number of programmes and the necessity for an efficient use of resources, a change of mentality that will lead to a boost in inter-regional collaboration and a bottom-up approach is essential. There should be more flexibility and coordination mechanisms between the S3 platform and the H2020 programme in order to better align objectives and avoid dysfunctionalities. It is also essential to give the chance to regional and local authorities to develop their own views, as well as to enhance improved participation from civil society and a wider inter-regional cooperation, so as to avoid duplication of efforts and inefficient spending of public resources. It is of utmost importance that regions cooperate and create strong links to boost ambitious and well targeted strategies. To that end, tools such as the Vanguard Initiative, the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP), or the development of strategic cluster partnerships for boosting investment, enhanced coordination, creation of synergies and exchange of views, are essential.
Better synergies for growth and job creation

There are several instruments for boosting research and innovation at the EU level: Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, the Smart Specialisation Platform, the European Cluster Observatory, the European Innovation Partnership, the European Strategies Form, the Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) and the research infrastructures.

European authorities should make every effort to boost synergies between those instruments, and use the resources in the most efficient way.

Smart cities as catalysts for RIS 3

As the EU Urban Agenda is a priority for the Dutch presidency, it is important to make institutions aware of the fact that the Urban Agenda should also be taken into account to create synergies and strong links for an efficient use of resources.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation is one of the most important issues on which to focus. At this stage we cannot produce final tangible results concerning the implementation of the strategies, but we do have access to some information concerning the status of the RIS3 strategies in the EU regions. In general terms, we can see that the ex-ante conditionality has been an important step forward, as most of the regions have already adopted a RIS3 strategy. However, some regions still need to work to comply with the RIS3 ex-ante conditionality requirements, the main gaps being the monitoring mechanism, the budget framework, and the measures to stimulate private research and innovation investments.

Another important issue is specialisation. Although each region has developed its own combination of priorities, there are clusters of popular priorities such as renewable energy, sustainability, digital agenda, KETs or public health. It is important that there is no duplication of projects, and that there is enhanced cooperation through the existing platforms, in order to avoid an inefficient spending of resources. It is also important to note that the initial priorities should change with the development of the strategy itself, as they are required to become more specific and application-oriented in the coming years.

It is also very important that strategies develop appropriate result indicators to measure expected changes. For good evaluation, it is key to develop strong qualitative and quantitative measures, and to publish regular reports on the achievements of their objectives, in order to better analyse the impact of RIS3 strategies.

Main lessons

The rapporteur is of the opinion that RIS3 strategies are a valuable tool to tackle the innovation gap, and boost jobs and growth in Europe. For the time being, we can see that creation of the strategies still leaves room for changes to be made. Public authorities should try to pay special attention to the monitoring and review of the strategies in order to maximise its output on the one hand, and interregional cooperation on the other hand, in order to develop ambitious projects that create added value for the economy. Simplification, as well as coordination of the existing programmes, is also essential in contributing to a good implementation of those strategies in the years to come.

For this, a review of the strategies after 2017 seems mandatory in order to boost the efficiency
and effectiveness of RIS3 strategies, taking into account the lessons learned from the initial years of their implementation. The organisation of a Europe-wide conference prior to the creation of the 7th Cohesion Report with the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions and other stakeholders in 2016, seems to be a good forum for dialogue on these issues.

The development of a policy paper, which incorporates the main lessons from the already-existing experience in this area, would also be a very useful tool for continued improvement.
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>19.4.2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result of final vote</td>
<td>+: 33</td>
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<td></td>
<td>--: 3</td>
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<td>0: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members present for the final vote</td>
<td>Pascal Arimont, Franc Bogovič, Victor Boştinaru, Mercedes Bresso, Andrea Cozzolino, Rosa D’Amato, Bill Etheridge, Michela Giuffrida, Krzysztof Hetman, Ivan Jakovčić, Constanze Krehl, Andrew Lewer, Louis-Joseph Manscour, Iskra Mihaylova, Jens Nilsson, Andrey Novakov, Konstantinos Papadakis, Miroslaw Piotrowski, Stanislav Polčák, Julia Reid, Monika Smolková, Ruža Tomašić, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, Monika Vana, Matthijs van Miltenburg, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Derek Vaughan, Kerstin Westphal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitutes present for the final vote</td>
<td>Petras Auštreivičius, Daniel Buda, Salvatore Cicu, Viorica Dăncilă, Andor Deli, Ivana Maletić, Maurice Ponga, Davor Škrlec</td>
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