

PROPOSAL OF TOPICS - Portugal

1. How to measure/assess in a short/midterm period the long term transformational impact of S3 Research and Innovation strategies and related action plans (programmes, funding instruments, etc.)

In many cases, S3 strategies aim at transformations that will take long periods of time to be completed, like for example, the establishment of new and integrated value chains, the development of new sectors, the transition to circular economy models, etc.

This puts a challenge to policy makers and stakeholders related to the assessment of strategies and actions plans, considering that the time needed to confirm these transformations goes considerably beyond the political mandate of those deciding and implementing them (in the case of FP at European level or Programmes at national/regional level, typically between 4 – 7 years), particularly in those cases where research and/or mentality/behavior changes are needed. Apart from that, in most cases, we still have to consider intermediary evaluations, that can change the course or even reverse/stop the ongoing actions.

To tackle this, one should identify indicators/proxies that can be used to, at least, measure/assess if the processes are developing in the right direction at a certain point in time, typically at midterm evaluation and final evaluation (end of the programmes). Of course, this doesn't guaranty that the planned final objectives will be achieved, but at least, gives indications if the process is moving there.

One example to illustrate: one of the objectives of S3 in Portugal was the establishment of more complete and integrated value chains, gathering different sectors, integrating more knowledge domains, etc., to develop more complex and high value added products and services.

One main tool to promote this objective was the named "Mobilizing Projects", large scale R&D projects, aiming precisely at providing the appropriated "organizational" framework and support. Naturally, it will take several years to confirm if the results from these projects will match the stated objectives, but can we check if the process is moving in the right direction? And can we do it already in a midterm assessment stage?

So the challenge is: what can we measure/assess at that stage (a very early stage for such a process) that at least indicates if the process is moving in the right direction?

If the objective is to have more integrated value chains, we could compare the consortia in the proposals submitted and projects approved with the ones typical from previous FP (the instrument already existed before) and check if they are bigger and more diversified. This was the case, thus indicating that not only the instrument was adequate but also the other actions (dissemination, etc.) led to the creation of the necessary conditions for the stakeholders to develop their plans.

As a conclusion, we believe that it's important to be able to define long term objectives and related action plans but it's also very important to be able to measure and assess intermediary results and proxies that show actions plans are moving in the right direction.

2. The challenges of a multi-level strategy

For countries like Portugal, where we have a national plus regional S3s, the horizontal and vertical alignment and coordination is always a challenge. Complementary to that, already in the current FP but more intensively in the next one, complementarities and synergies between the European level and the national/regional levels will play an important role. Even in highly decentralized systems, where regions have a strong role, several challenges call for cooperation with other regions and countries and this demands for a multi-level strategy.

After the midterm evaluation of the different S3 in Portugal, ANI - the National Innovation Agency, identified the situations where, at least apparently, there was potential for coordination and classified them in 3 types:

- Different: no complementarities present, so no need for coordination
- Complementarity: in this case, there was a potential for joint actions, maintaining the different interventions.
- Overlap: where the same (or very similar) activities were developed. In this case, this overlap can be avoid or managed (sometimes, duplication is positive).

It was also important to identify which challenges can be tackled at regional level, those that call for an intervention at national level and also the ones that can only be dealt at European level.

As an example, we can use the case of Renewal Energy:

- a) One particular Region can focus on one or more types of renewal energy, pushing also for the development of related technologies (solar, wind, waves, etc.).
- b) But to build an energy system where those different types of energies can connect and serve users, we need an energy grid, and this cannot be dealt at regional level only, we need to consider, at least, the national level.
- c) Finally, current and future challenges in terms of energy networks will call for a smarter and more integrated energy network at European level, with well interconnected national networks and with a well establish energy market, and this call for actions at European level.

This example is just to illustrate the (growing) importance of multi-level strategies and regions need to be able to address them.

This work is the basis the ongoing process of S3 revision, currently coordinated by ANI, involving all the regions.