



FEEDBACK REPORT ON POLICY INSTRUMENTS

17
Jan.
2018

Peer eXchange & Learning Workshop
Seville (Spain)

Representatives from Emilia-Romagna (IT), Northern Netherlands (NL), and Wielkopolska (PL) presented their current work on policy instruments for Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) in a Peer eXchange & Learning Workshop organised by the Smart Specialisation Platform (S3 Platform) of DG JRC. The presentations and following peer discussions provided the basis for this report.

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PART 1 | WORKSHOP FINDINGS AND KEY LESSONS

KEY LESSONS

- The design of effective policy instruments requires a better understating of SMEs innovation needs. Periodic surveys, direct consultation and studies, as well as audits might help fill the knowledge gap.
- The existence of a sound and effective monitoring system is essential for reshaping and introducing new policy instruments.
- Soft instruments seem particularly adequate for nurturing collaborative, exploratory, initiatives. Their use should be encouraged.
- A more inclusive approach in policy design and implementation is needed. Stakeholder engagement in the design of policy instruments may certainly improve their effectiveness.
- More emphasis and work need to be placed on the coordination (combination) of different financial resources and measures.
- Greater flexibility is needed in ESIFs rules and project assessment criteria to allow for more experimentation.
- Public authorities need to approach negotiation processes with an open mind and design effective communication strategies to ensure an adequate circulation of information and build consensus.

This report summarises the debate and outcomes of the PXL workshop on policy instruments held in Seville, on 17 January 2018.

The workshop aimed at exploring the changes in policy instruments induced by Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) on the basis of the experiences of Emilia Romagna (IT), Northern Netherlands (NL) and Wielkopolska (PL).

Before the peer-review sessions, three presentations were given by the team from DG JRC and an external expert. These talks provided some conceptual and empirical insights that helped frame the "policy instruments for RIS3" topic.

More specifically, Carlo Gianelle and Fabrizio Guzzo (Territorial Development Unit, DG JRC, European Commission) framed the workshop programme around the following issues: whether and to what extent research and innovation priorities stated in policy documents are adequately reflected into policy instruments; consistency between selected priorities and the design and actual use of instruments; main problems and challenges associated to the reshaping of existing instruments and/or adoption of new instruments to better serve the innovation requirements of RIS3 priorities. The presentation also provided a brief account on the three large categories of policy instruments used in public policy (regulatory instruments, economic and financial instruments and soft instruments) and how these different typologies of instruments are used in smart specialisation strategies. Finally, on the basis of the results of an

analysis of the calls for projects launched under Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), some evidence on the use of policy instruments for RIS3 was debated¹.

In their presentation, Elisabetta Marinelli and Inmaculada Periañez-Forte (Territorial Development Unit, DG JRC, European Commission) discussed the possibility of launching a pilot initiative, together with interested regions and countries, regarding the creation of a database to map and offer a repository of policy instruments for RIS3 implementation focused on the continuous Entrepreneurial Discovery Process.

Finally, Palma Muñoz Morquilla (Andalusian Innovation and Development Agency) addressed some of the issues related to the application of state aid rules in the RIS3 context, by providing some concrete examples. In her presentation Palma debated the difficulties in reconciling policy instruments for RIS3 with EU legislation on state aid.

During the peer-review sessions that followed, it became clear that there are several challenges related to the design and implementation of policy instruments for RIS3. First of all, quite a few participants mentioned the difficulties encountered in trying to combine the RIS3 experimental approach with the regulatory framework of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs). Regions face important challenges in the experimentation of pilot initiatives, interregional projects and other exploratory initiatives through their Operational Programmes and call for more flexibility and changes in the regulations for the post-2020 EU Cohesion Policy. Secondly, the lack of adequate capacity in public administrations is seen as a major obstacle to the effective design and implementation of policy instruments tailored to the needs and objectives of the selected research and innovation priorities. The re-design (customisation) of policy instruments implies an additional burden in terms of human resources, policy intelligence and time. Many public administrations do not have the necessary capacity to adequately manage such complex processes. Normally public officials have experience in processing and allocating funding as such, but they do not have sufficient competences in designing and tailoring policy instruments. Thirdly, the introduction of vertical measures, targeting specific fields and technologies as well as particular sets or networks of actors, very often encounters strong opposition from politicians and stakeholders who push for the adoption of horizontal instruments that cover a wider array of beneficiaries. Fourthly, the use of demand-side instruments (influencing those requesting, buying or applying innovations), such as public procurement for R&D, have proven to be particularly challenging for public administrations. Demand side instruments seem particularly adequate for seeking and applying innovations to address grand societal challenges. However, their use is not yet common among national and regional authorities. Finally, innovation policy instruments are often designed and implemented at different levels of government posing specific coordination challenges to avoid duplications and the implementation of contradictory measures.

¹ Gianelle, C., Guzzo, F. and Mieszkowski, K. (2017) Smart Specialisation at work: Analysis of the calls launched under ERDF Operational Programmes, JRC Technical Reports JRC106974. Available at: http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/222593/Smart+Specialisation+at+work_Analysis+of+the+calls+launched+under+ERDF+Operational+Programmes/ed9f9e8d-c2e1-4667-832f-f1551f62f583

Besides the abovementioned challenges, the peer-review sessions provided an interesting snapshot of some of the efforts deployed by national and regional authorities to reshape their existing policy instruments, or create new ones, in alignment with the RIS3 features. Particularly interesting are the support measures for the activities of network of actors aiming at promoting collective action and exploring opportunities for regional companies in global value chains and market potentials for innovative products and services (see for example Emilia Romagna). Noteworthy are also the pre-commercial procurement instrument, launched in Northern Netherlands (Open Innovation Call), the experimentation of integrated support measures in Latvia, the attempts to seek intermediate institutions' financial support (cluster and business organisations, industrial platforms, etc.) for the establishment of joint support scheme for RIS3 initiatives (Andalusia) and stakeholders' consultation for designing measures and calls that better address regional and local innovation needs (Wielkopolska).

The issues/questions posed by the representatives of Emilia Romagna, Northern Netherlands and Wielkopolska fostered a lively debate in the smaller group discussions. Specific recommendations and lessons learnt for each question are presented in detail in Part 2 of this report.

PART 2 | PXL QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[EMILIA-ROMAGNA]

Questions/issues posed by the region for peer discussion

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| QUESTION 1 | How is the effectiveness of S3 implementation conditioned by the ERDF rules and availability of regional/national complementary resources? |
| QUESTION 2 | How is the effectiveness of S3 implementation conditioned by the typology of pressures on politicians and regional administrative organisations? |
| QUESTION 3 | What are, in other experiences, the steps for generating a stronger awareness of stakeholders in order to share a common strategy? |
| QUESTION 4 | How to evaluate the structural impact of the strategy? |

During peer discussions, participants were divided in four groups/tables, all of which had representatives from various EU Member States and regions. A facilitator from DG JRC was present to steer the work of each table. Each table was offered to choose one of the questions prepared by the representatives. A summary of these discussions is presented below.

EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 1

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| QUESTION | How is the effectiveness of S3 implementation conditioned by the ERDF rules and availability of regional/national complementary resources? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Develop funding (pilot) schemes for integrated projects to address the specific innovation needs of selected RIS3 priority areas (example from Latvia).</p> <p>Negotiate the introduction of greater flexibility in ESIFs rules to accommodate the experimentalist approach envisaged by smart specialisation (general recommendation to the European Commission).</p> <p>Seek intermediate institutions' financial support (cluster and business organisations, industrial platforms, etc.) for the establishment of joint support schemes for RIS3 initiatives (example from Andalusia region).</p> <p>Increase the level of coordination of different policy instruments to enhance policy effectiveness (examples from Latvia).</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>Build administrative capacity and foster coordination among different levels of government.</p> <p>The full deployment of the RIS3 experimentalist approach is constrained to a certain extent by ESIFs regulations. Changes in the regulatory framework would be helpful for the following programming period.</p> |
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EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 2

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| QUESTION | How is the effectiveness of S3 implementation conditioned by the typology of pressures on politicians and regional administrative organisations? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Develop an inclusive continuous Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) and bring RIS3 implementation into the sphere of public debate to increase accountability and transparency of public intervention.</p> <p>Ensure that the RIS3 review process is evidence-based.</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>The importance of providing specific support measures to the continuous Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) in regions.</p> <p>The role of an effective and well-functioning monitoring system in promoting greater transparency and accountability of public intervention.</p> <p>The importance of involving politicians and other relevant actors in the creation of the RIS3 narrative in the region.</p> |
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EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 3

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| QUESTION | What are, in other experiences, the steps for generating a stronger awareness of stakeholders in order to share a common strategy? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Promote the development of "soft policy instruments" (creation of platforms, networks, partnerships, etc.) to keep stakeholders involved in the RIS3 process.</p> <p>Sustain greater stakeholders' involvement in the design of policy instruments.</p> <p>Involve local actors to check the appropriateness of public calls in addressing local needs (example from Wielkopolska region).</p> <p>Promote an open-minded approach of public authorities when negotiating with stakeholders.</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>Improve communication and "reaching-out" activities through the use of new communication channels and media.</p> <p>Share "policy imperfections" with stakeholders. Make stakeholders aware that something cannot be done or achieved.</p> <p>Foster contacts among stakeholders and help stakeholders develop their own work dynamics (also without the presence of the public administration).</p> |
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EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 4

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| QUESTION | How to evaluate the structural impact of the strategy? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Promote counterfactual evaluation studies (but be aware of data requirements for these studies).</p> <p>Promote yearly surveys among regional companies to assess policy results and companies' satisfaction in relation to RIS3 policy instruments (example from Northern Netherland region).</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>Explore the opportunities provided by new data analysis methods to assess policy impacts.</p> <p>The role of surveys targeting beneficiaries (and stakeholders) for assessing public intervention.</p> <p>The importance of promoting an early involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation activities.</p> <p>The importance of introducing more flexibility in the RIS3 monitoring system to take into consideration emerging issues and areas.</p> |
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[NORTHERN NETHERLANDS]

Questions/issues posed by the region for peer discussion

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| <p>QUESTION 1</p> | <p>Open Innovation Call a horizontal measure to foster continuous EDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of the Call? • Do you have instruments to foster EDP? • Where do you see room for us to improve? |
| <p>QUESTION 2</p> | <p>From horizontal to vertical support instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to recognise new promising activities? • How to identify potential niches? • At what stage to verticalise? |
| <p>QUESTION 3</p> | <p>From horizontal to vertical support instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to design vertical instruments? • How to make the segmentation? Based on what? |
| <p>QUESTION 4</p> | <p>Optimal use of ESIFs for Smart Specialisation Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to create flexibility within Operational Programmes? • What improvements in ESIFs framework are needed, to accommodate for effective S3-strategies? |

During peer discussions, participants were divided in four groups/tables, all of which had representatives from various EU Member States and regions. A facilitator from DG JRC was present to steer the work of each table. Each table was offered to choose one of the questions prepared by the representatives. A summary of these discussions is presented below.

EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 1

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| <p>QUESTION 1</p> | <p>Open Innovation Call a horizontal measure to foster continuous EDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think of the Call? • Do you have instruments to foster EDP? • Where do you see room for us to improve? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Provide a favourable environment for stakeholders' participation, networking, and capacity building.</p> <p>Use different communication strategies and channels to reach out to all relevant actors (including also students).</p> <p>Use ERDF - technical assistance financial resources to promote networking events.</p> <p>Explore similar instruments (for example, Horizon 2020 calls, 'RIS3 Communities' in Catalonia, Spain).</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>Need to study more innovative policy instruments such as the Open Innovation Call of Northern Netherlands and other Horizon 2020 funding schemes, which are unknown for many regions.</p> <p>Provide more accessible and easy information to increase SMEs participation in research and innovation calls.</p> |
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Evolution of Question 2

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| QUESTION 2 | <p>From horizontal to vertical support instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to recognise new promising activities? • How to identify potential niches? • At what stage to verticalise? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Design calls around specific research and innovation challenges.</p> <p>Identify promising ideas (pilot projects) together with stakeholders from the quadruple helix (example of the Emilia Romagna's call on associations).</p> <p>Strengthen regional positioning in global value chains by exploring complementarities with the themes identified by the partnerships of the S3 thematic platforms (agrifood, energy and industrial modernisation).</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>The importance of establishing adequate criteria/steps to select/support promising ideas.</p> <p>A good indicator of a promising investment project is the willingness of private actors to invest money in it.</p> <p>Projects' assessment should be done by appropriate experts/banks, taking</p> |
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into account the level of private investment and excellence.

The need of developing soft instruments to support the identification of promising niches' activities.

Evolution of Question 3

QUESTION 3

From horizontal to vertical support instruments:

- How to design vertical instruments?
- How to make the segmentation? Based on what?



RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify specific problems that need to be addressed and define the goal related to the problem.

Tailor the different measures to the specific Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) (or crossover of Key Enabling Technologies and RIS3 areas) of mature and non-mature sectors.

Public procurement could be added to the mix of instruments.



LESSONS LEARNT

The need to better clarify what is meant by "vertical" instruments.

A qualified and flexible administrative structure and cooperative key knowledge actors (such as universities) are necessary to effectively target individual priorities and plan RIS3 instruments (i.e. vertical instruments).

Evolution of Question 4

QUESTION 4

Optimal use of ESIFs for Smart Specialisation Strategies:

- How to create flexibility within Operational Programmes?
- What improvements in ESIFs framework are needed, to accommodate for effective S3-strategies?



RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide clear information on ESIFs eligible costs.

Adopt simplified cost options as much as possible.

Explore the opportunity of combining different funding sources.

Provide specific support for project proposals' preparation and submission.



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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>The need to ensure flexibility in assessment criteria (emphasis on goal oriented criteria).</p> <p>The opportunity of combining different funding sources and different types of support measures.</p> <p>The importance of better coordination between the different public bodies in charge of designing and implementing the strategy.</p> |
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[WIELKOPOLSKA]

Questions/issues posed by the region for peer discussion

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| QUESTION 1 | What could be the effective instrument to increase the number of SMEs running R&D projects and implementing the results of such projects? |
| QUESTION 2 | What could be the most efficient way to use the monitoring of RIS3 to design and implement more innovative policy instruments? |
| QUESTION 3 | How to encourage public entities from the world of science to become more involved in commercial activities and cooperation with SMEs? |
| QUESTION 4 | How to support SMEs effectively through Business Support Organisations using the demand model? |

During peer discussions, participants were divided in four groups/tables, all of which had representatives from various EU Member States and regions. A facilitator from DG JRC was present to steer the work of each table. Each table was offered to choose one of the questions prepared by the representatives. A summary of these discussions is presented below.

EVOLUTION OF QUESTION 1

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| QUESTION 1 | What could be the effective instrument to increase the number of SMEs running R&D projects and implementing the results of such projects? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Design and implement a specific voucher scheme to promote the development of collaborative projects between SMEs and research and technology transfer organisations (TTO).</p> <p>Promote networking events, workshops and thematic working groups to increase the cooperation between the world of production and research and TTO.</p> |

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| | <p>Support the establishment and strengthening of links between large companies (big players) and SMEs.</p> <p>Provide specific support to SMEs for submitting projects' proposal (e.g. participation to Horizon 2020 calls, etc.).</p> <p>Launch periodic surveys to collect and better understand companies' innovation needs. Offer something in return to companies for participating in surveys: something that, for example, can give them some visibility (see the "innovation passport" provided by the Northern Netherlands region to surveys' respondents).</p> <p>Promote the use of Horizon 2020 funding for SMEs.</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>SMEs are mostly non-R&D innovators. This should be taken into consideration while designing policy instruments.</p> <p>There is a need to make calls for proposals more accessible to SMEs. This could be achieved by simplifying calls and provide easier and clearer information.</p> <p>Design specific incentives mechanisms (not only pecuniary ones) for research organisations to cooperate with companies.</p> |
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Evolution of Question 2

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| QUESTION 2 | What could be the most efficient way to use the monitoring of RIS3 to design and implement more innovative policy instruments? |
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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>At present, the Wielkopolska RIS3 monitoring system includes around 170 indicators which are difficult to populate with reliable data. It is highly recommended to review the existing indicators' system and reduce their number.</p> <p>Involve all relevant actors in the indicators' revision process to achieve consensus on what constitutes policy success, how to measure it and what indicators should be used to assess it.</p> <p>Launch periodic surveys to collect and better understand companies' innovation needs. Offer something in return to companies for participating in surveys: something that, for example, can give them some visibility (see the "innovation passport" provided by the Northern Netherlands region to surveys' respondents).</p> <p>Establish a cooperation agreement with an external entity to support RIS3 monitoring activities (for instance, the collaborative agreement for RIS3 monitoring between the University of Groningen and Northern Netherlands Alliance).</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>Result indicators need to be carefully selected. They should clearly reflect the desired changes, be specific (target a specific area for improvement), measurable, available and time-bound.</p> <p>Offer something in return to companies for participating in surveys. Something that, for example, can give them some visibility (see the "innovation passport" provided by Northern Netherlands region to surveys' respondents).</p> <p>Support stakeholder engagement in the design of policy instruments and monitoring activities to improve the effectiveness of public intervention, achieve greater consensus on the adopted policy and increase the level of transparency and accountability of public administrations.</p> |
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Evolution of Question 3

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| QUESTION 3 | How to encourage public entities from the world of science to become more involved in commercial activities and cooperation with SMEs? |
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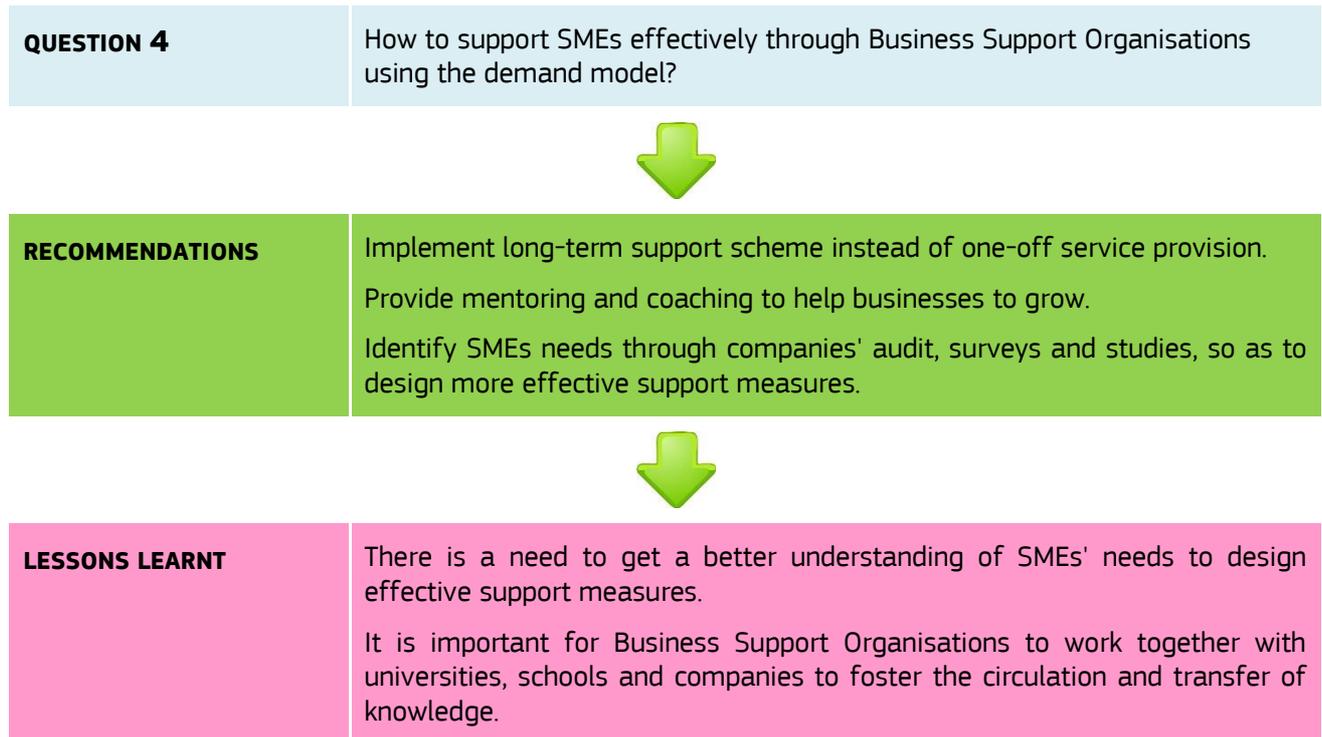


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| RECOMMENDATIONS | <p>Design and implement specific measures to finance PhD research activities in companies.</p> <p>Support the establishment of specific agreements to foster collaboration between public research organisations and SMEs.</p> <p>Provide incentives to researchers to get them more involved in collaborative projects with companies.</p> |
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| LESSONS LEARNT | <p>There is a need to introduce some changes in the universities' regulatory framework to encourage the participation of researchers in collaborative projects with SMEs.</p> <p>There is a need to promote specific initiatives to promote an entrepreneurial culture among researchers (namely young researchers).</p> |
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Evolution of Question 4



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ANNEX | PEER EXCHANGE & LEARNING – PXL

[ABOUT THIS REPORT]

PXL Methodology

Peer eXchange and Learning (PXL) is a methodology for reviewing specific elements of innovation strategies for smart specialisation (S3) and territorial development strategies and tackling the associated implementation challenges. It is an important instrument currently offered by the S3 Platform of the European Commission to EU Member States and regions.

PXL builds on the well-established peer-review approach of the S3 Platform. It supports transnational learning by bringing together regions and countries for an exchange of knowledge and experience, mutual learning and the exploration of ways in which innovation and development strategies can be effectively implemented, adjusted and revised.

PXL creates an open and trusted learning environment where practical and conceptual issues can be discussed and explored through the experience of individual regions and countries. It engages peers and experts in focused discussions on important issues that the regions and countries under review raised and guides them to distil a range of collective suggestions and lessons into a coherent picture.

PXL especially aims to tackle the challenges emerging during the transition from strategy design to implementation. It does so by: (1) focusing the discussion among regional and country representatives, experts and European Commission staff around a *thematic frame* which is typically a single theme, process or element of the strategy; (2) preferentially targeting a community of policy makers and practitioners who are at the stage of transforming planned objectives into results through concrete actions.

PXL Workshop

A PXL workshop has a single thematic frame (e.g. governance settings, priority definition, monitoring, policy mix, etc.). It runs over one full day and includes peer review of two to four regions and/or countries. Individual PXL sessions focus on one region or country and last around one and a half hour.

The workshop is opened by one or more expert presentations and a debate around the framing topic. This opening session should set the scene and provide a broad set of views, approaches and insights for the individual PXL sessions. The debate can take the form of a dialogue between experts who will alternately provide arguments in support of and against common practices or believed-to-be-good practices in the field defined by the workshop's framing topic. This type of dialogue would help to stimulate the following discussion to go beyond traditional formulations of problems and solutions.

The workshop continues with individual PXL sessions. A presentation of each region or country's current work on the thematic frame is generally followed by a Q&A session. Specific issues identified by the regions and countries under review are then discussed at individual tables in two iterations, which ensure that participants can: *work together* to understand the actual problems; *propose solutions* to these

problems by discussing what worked well and what did not work; and *learn together* how to deal with new policy issues in new contexts.

An S3 Platform team member facilitates each PXL session in line with the participatory leadership approach. Such a participative approach encourages all participants to share or participate in the discussion and to identify key messages. It allows engaging participants in a dynamic and creative discussion, which benefits both the regions and countries under review and their peers.

PXL sessions are followed by a final session during which all participants (experts, representatives of the regions and countries under review, peers, and European Commission staff) summarise the results of the sessions, and discuss individually and mutually lessons learnt. At this point, the regions and countries under review have the opportunity to respond to any feedback collected throughout the workshop. Finally, they share their main insights with peers and may mention any short- to mid-term plans to apply them.

Building on the general structure described above, the format of the workshops is tailored according to the topic's requirements and needs expressed by regions and countries.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Regions and countries volunteer to be reviewed in an attempt to source both critical and well-timed advice addressing specific issues they are currently facing in the implementation of innovation and development strategies. Regional and national policy makers may also view PXL workshops as a good opportunity to build their networks of counterparts across Europe.

PXL sessions aim to achieve the following outcomes: (i) to better *understand* the thematic frame of the whole PXL workshop; (ii) to *provide* general feedback to each region and country under review; (iii) to *examine* the specific issues presented by each region and country under review and propose how they could be tackled or solved; and (iv) to *build up* awareness and knowledge about problems that are common across Europe.

During the workshop, the S3 Platform team collects any relevant information and data covering different elements of each PXL exercise. A brief summary/feedback report is drafted and circulated by the S3 Platform team as a final output of the workshop.