

In the Centro region of Portugal, the process of designing its S3 has greatly increased the level of participation in policy making. Instrumental to this was the integration of S3 design with a wider reflection on a new regional action plan that underpins the ESIF Operational Programme. Together the package is known as CRER2020, an acronym which includes competitiveness and resilience, and as a word means 'believe' in English. The regional vision was built through brain storming sessions with more than 700 people, including at least 300 from the innovation ecosystem. It was then articulated in a 'Regional Wikipedia' made up of 42 sections on different social and economic themes.

The S3 exercise emerged naturally from this wider regional process, with innovation actors coming forward to join the strategy's governance structure. This is made up of a coordination council, a management team, an expert advisory board and a wider regional forum. Over the last three years these bodies have together met about fifteen times. One of the defining features of the Centro S3 has been the high participation of sub-regional territorial representatives, such as from the Leader Local Action Groups from rural areas across the region.

Participation in S3 design is spilling over into the implementation phase. The strategy set up four 'Hubs': Sustainable industrial solutions, Valorisation and efficient use of natural endogenous resources, Technologies for the quality of life and Territorial innovation. The latter was a natural outcome of the strong participation of territorial interest groups. The hubs are regional innovation platforms, coordinated by well-known personalities capable of bringing people together and fostering cooperation. In fact, everyone agrees that they are the real protagonists of the Centro S3 so far.