

1. Sometime there is an absence of well-established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3s). How are we to evaluate the success of the strategies then?

The evaluation of the impact of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) raises important challenges for regions and countries at many levels. First, the governance dimension of S3 (Entrepreneurial discovery Process (EDP), multi-level governance) makes its impact difficult to capture only by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). A qualitative approach would be necessary to evaluate the broad impact of S3 (see theory-based evaluation). Concerning the capture of the socio economic impacts (number of jobs or companies created, introduction of new services or products to the market, productivity increase through the introduction of new processes/methods etc.) , target indicators linked to the ERDF thematic objectives 1 (S3 is legally linked to Thematic Objective 1 (TO1) through the Common Provisions Regulation

) could be a first level of indicators. In any case, KPIs to monitor and evaluate S3 should be designed at the beginning of the S3 implementation. In terms of funding absorption and generation of R&I related activities (projects, infrastructures & equipment) synergies between Horizon 2020 and ERDF can be monitored with an online tool provided by the JRC (<https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/synergies-tool>). A recent policy report explores the synergies between funding across EU regions (<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC123485>).

2. What are SDGs?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set in 2015 by the international community as part of the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) through which countries of the world collectively pledged to eradicate poverty, find sustainable and inclusive development solutions, ensure everyone's human rights, and generally make sure that no one is left behind in reaching 2030 milestones.

17 SDGs have been defined, with 169 associated targets, to be reached by 2030. They address the global challenges the world faces and tackle all dimensions of sustainable development, in a balanced and integrated manner.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/sustainable-development-goals_en

More information: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-development-goals>

3. How would you define a successful EDP?

The organisation of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) remains highly context-dependent. Recent evidence collected suggests that there seems to be significant heterogeneity across and within Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes. Nonetheless, some elements seem to influence their success. Some recommendations include: (i) design/implement mechanisms around the specificities of the regional context; (ii) re-consider using digital forms of engagement; (iii) increase the use of communication and dissemination tools.

Source: [jrc124101.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

4. @Tatiana/Jerker: very useful analysis of the EDP & challenges (collective action). On this process, who leads and makes things happen? How to systematize it?

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Jerker Johnson is an economist, specialised in international trade and development. His work as the International Coordinator of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia (Finland) has brought him to work in the context of European cohesion policies and Smart Specialisation. He is currently involved in different international partnerships drawing lessons for Smart Specialisation and policy development for the Green Deal.

Tatiana: "I would say that there is not an easy answer to this question. The answer will depend on the territory and the stakeholders' engagement culture.

If we are talking about Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), regional governments would be the ones leading/designing/coordinating the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), establishing the mechanisms to facilitate systemic analysis of the challenges and the articulation of shared agendas/coalitions of actors/missions to address them. In my view the tool should be an EDP regional program, to explore, co-develop and test new frames, methodologies, tools and mechanisms to address collectively systemic challenges in more effective ways. Capacity building should be a key element of this program, since many times our public administrations are not prepared to deal with complex challenges. This program could be co-financed by the new specific objective for capacity building on smart specialisation included in the new EU Regulation.

It would be helpful if the European Commission/ Joint Research Centre (JRC) would provide guidelines/support/capacity building to implement this kind of programmes. In any case it will be a learning process: some regions will be able to implement it, for others it will be more difficult. It is important to collect the evidence and lessons from "successes" and "failures" to elaborate new evidence-based and transformative narratives that inspire and encourage other regions."

Jerker: "I agree with Tatiana that the EDP is context bound in the sense that there are different challenges in different regions. The S3P team has already pointed out that there are very different understandings of the concept. We see that some regions are 'engaged' while others are exhausted.

Then, the question would be in what way regions are different. A very general answer would be 'culture'but that also has its roots in traditions and in the ways of organizing. I would argue that organisational structures and incentives play a great role. We need to have S3 written into the legislation (as is proposed in Finland); in any case this is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the organisational ownership needed for the process.

For such ownership capacity building is important, but I would also argue that you would need "visibility" i.e. you can see the benefits of the process in your context. Who were engaged in the S3 for recovery workshop? Our moderator Mr Markku Markkula has from the beginning been a very strong advocate of S3. Of course, he comes from the environment on the Aalto University and is Chairman of the Board of the booming Helsinki-Uusimaa capital region in Finland. It is not difficult for him to see the advantages. Tatiana comes from Catalonia, a highly industrialised high-income region in Spain, and, actually, we are not doing so bad in Ostrobothnia, either.

How to create "visibility" is as Tatiana says, a million dollar question. I would turn the question around and ask what impedes it. That brings me to Tatiana's point below of a comparative analysis of successes and failures. The learning is up to the individual and his/her motivation and the transfer to organisational EDP is up to the organisational structure and culture. It cannot be thought but you can motivate the stakeholders. One could argue that the EDP may echo in part Austrian Economics and the concept of "creative destruction". If I remember correctly, Schumpeter says that it often occurs when we are confronted with crisis.

Then one would welcome identifying, on an EU level, not only successes but also failures while keeping the issue on the agenda; all this together with communicating the challenges that we are facing with the Green Deal and digitalisation. If we are going to reduce emissions by 55% until 2030 this will hurt more in less advanced regions. Thus, the challenges are the largest where the resources are under pressure both in terms of skills, and in terms of capacity to invest. Of course, this cannot be done by "naming and shaming" but providing case studies and analysis of governance "traps". Policy processes and political processes are not the same thing.

I do not believe that we have "bad" or "good" regions but we do have competing mindsets within all regions. The change in going from a logic of "just distributing money" to "engaging in an EDP process" is gradual and continuous and keeping it on the agenda will support the more development-oriented stakeholders.

Apart from pointing out the traps, it is also important to point towards the direction that we would need to go. I think the JRC report produced on the logic-of- intervention approach by Mathieu Doussineau and Christian Saublens is a very interesting one. It is of course a simplification of the reality but it makes S3 very intuitive and thus it helps in winning the stakeholders over. Between every step in the report there are implicit assumptions. Can these assumptions be broken down with a qualitative flowchart of actions to be undertaken for the assumptions to hold? This would serve in pinpointing the weaknesses in the assumptions and in targeting measures. The trickiness of the EDP lies in the granularity pursued."

5. Are thematic platforms to be taken over by the new EU agency?

The Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms (TSSP) were launched by the European Commission in 2015 to support the creation of new European value chains, in areas associated with strategic growth as encouraged by the Cohesion Policy. These platforms have been put in place to provide an interactive and participatory environment supporting interregional cooperation in the context of smart specialisation areas related to Agri-Food, Energy and Industrial Modernisation.

In particular, the TSSP are contributing to increase interregional cooperation among European Regions and Member States. Around the TSSP activities diverse interregional partnerships across the EU have been established. These collaborative networks have the ultimate goal of establishing European ecosystems for transnational and interregional collaboration in regions and countries with similar or complementary S3 priorities. Together, partner regions analyse and tackle various obstacles related to the implementation of their smart specialisation strategies. Thematic partnerships help regions to improve their regional knowledge base, leading to new paths of development and a better position in global value chains and to transnational joint strategies of innovation.

The (TSSP) are supported by different EC services (mainly REGIO, GROW, AGRI, ENER and JRC). Since 1st April 2020, the newly created agency European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) is also backing interregional activities as the entity responsible for the Interregional Innovation Investments Initiative.

Source: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/index_en

Source: <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/thematic-platforms>