

The European Commission's science and knowledge service

Joint Research Centre



Higher Education in Smart Specialisation The Case of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace

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Approach

- Exploratory meeting → discussed the engagement of universities in S3 and the main challenges faced in building a broader role for universities
- Background desk research → collected and contextualised evidence on the engagement of regional HEIs/PROs in S3 since 2014
- In-depth interviews → collected feedback on the findings of the desk research
- Analysis of the outcomes of the interviews and desk-research → extracted main key findings
- Final participatory workshop → validate findings & identify possible actions for 2021-2027

Research Objectives

1. To determine the objectives and motives for HEIs/PROs to contribute to the regional S3
2. To establish suitable effectiveness criteria for HEI/PRO contributions to the regional S3
3. To establish the extent to which the above effectiveness criteria have been met
4. To determine the factors associated with the effectiveness of HEIs/PROs contribution to S3 and to understand whether some of those factors are more influential than others

Effectiveness Criteria for HEI contribution to S3 and degree of fulfilment in Eastern Macedonia-Thrace

<i>Research activities to enhance regional regional innovation</i>	Good performance in national collaborative research projects and national national research infrastructures ; Many focal regional enterprises seek extra-extra-regional knowledge sources; the establishment of a regional research research centre cannot gain friction at the decision-making centres; underperforming in H2020 vs peer Greek regions (i.e., Thessaly and Ipirus)
<i>Promotion of an entrepreneurial culture (esp. among students, graduates and staff)</i>	Innovation and Entrepreneurship Units (MOKE) are facing resource shortages that inhibit their performance; ERDF-funded business incubators were launched rather late to make an impact by 2023
<i>Developing and re-skilling the regional human capital</i>	The recently introduced DUTH's lifelong learning centre has the potential to contribute, still too early to assess impact; Regional HEIs loosing the battle for talent in all fronts
<i>Community development and place building</i>	Limited evidence of performance towards this objective
<i>Leadership in S3</i>	Limited evidence of leadership in S3 and in improving the capabilities of other institutional stakeholders

Factors influencing the effectiveness of HEI contribution to S3

External/Contextual

- Location, geographic remoteness
- Legislation
- Structure of the regional economy

Financial

- Breadth of policy instruments and budgets
- Availability of institutional funding for HEIs

Organisational

- Weak collective governance
- HEI vision and strategy
- HEI policies, processes and organizational structures
- Intra-regional dispersion of HEI campuses

Human resources

- Limited availability of skilled personnel in the Region
- Personal traits of faculty members

Policy recommendations (1 of 3)

National Authorities: address institutional issues related to HEI third mission and multilevel governance

1. Improve focus on HEI third mission → KPIs (Hellenic Authority for HE) & partial linkage with institutional funding (Min Edu)
2. Facilitate a space for dialogue between HEIs & Regional Authorities (i.e. Academic Councils of HE & R, art 49 L.4485/2017)
3. Decentralise the design of education, skills provision and lifelong learning ESIF funded programmes to match regional needs
4. Provide technical assistance to reinforce skills of the regional administration
5. A clear mandate for RRICs to transform them into effective S3 steering groups

Policy recommendations (2 of 3)

Regional Authorities & key stakeholders: reinforce intersectoral governance and capacities of regional actors

1. Communicate S3 as the best available tool to develop long-term, evidence- and place-based development strategies → drive stakeholder engagement → identify & involve 'boundary spanners'
2. Improve S3 monitoring → manage the strategy AND build trust AND enable accountability
3. Extend the variety of policy instruments that support HE-industry collaboration
4. Strategic workforce planning
5. Learn from other regions facing, and solving, similar problems

Policy recommendations (3 of 3)

Higher Education Institutes: leading role in regional development

1. Increase ambition and lead the regional transformation process
2. Mobilise resources and use all available channels of interaction
3. Consider a mission-oriented problem-solving approach by building on their multidisciplinary character
4. Strengthen the organizational structures that are directly involved in delivering 'third mission'

Examples of policy instruments to be considered for 2021-2027

- **Industrial PhDs** (already present in covert mode!) and **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships**
- **Regional mission-oriented problem solving** (e.g. Northern Netherlands) or **Regional Shared Agendas** (e.g. Catalunya)
- **Regional structures to support inward mobility of researchers** (e.g., LE STUDIUM Loire Valley Institute for Advanced Studies, FR)
- Public Procurement of Innovation (at the national level)

To probe further



<https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/hess>