

Executive Summary

Status quo of regional Smart Specialisation Strategies for innovation of the German Länder with specific view of the link to support via the ERDF 2014-2020

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'A goal without a plan is just a wish' – following this principle, the German Länder intensively worked as from 2013 on the preparation of "Regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation" (RIS3 strategies), in line with the requirements of the ex ante conditionality 1.1. by the European Commission for the programming period 2014-2020 of the ESI funds. As the present meta-study showed, in many cases the RIS3 ex-ante conditionality led to regional innovation policy being enshrined more extensively than in the past as a strategic cross-cutting task of the Länder.

To summarise, the following crucial findings regarding the RIS3 of the Länder emanated from the study:

- **improve relevance** and placing greater emphasis on innovation support by the Länder, as the RIS3 strategies had - thanks to their link to the ESI Funds 2014-2020 programming period - greater legitimacy beyond the political cycles.
- **institutional anchoring** of the RIS3 strategies through reinforced inter-ministerial co-ordination between the relevant Land departments (economic, science, and sometimes energy and environment) and in many cases, comprehensive Stakeholder involvement ('entrepreneurial discovery process').
- **strengthened coherence** of the regional innovation support through RIS3 strategies, , inter alia, often by means of a close and direct link between RIS3 strategy and funding to increase the innovative capacity in the Länder (note: however, in most cases limited to financing through the ERDF 2014-2020)
- process led from wide thematic focuses ("moderated wish lists"; see discourse on Cluster policy) to a **limited number of focussed and evidence based priorities**, often taking into account future potential developments (e.g. from Automotive Cluster to the RIS3 priority "mobility").
- Depending on how to draw the lines, there emerged 4-5 identical priority fields at the level of the Länder. These could be considered as nationwide priorities, so that within the overall perspective the focus areas of the national innovation system are well reflected in the RIS3s. In the sub-regions of the

Länder and in the "Cross-Innovations" the challenge is now to develop the specific smart specialisation actions.

Overall, it can be stated that the basic approach of the RIS3 strategies can be useful to prepare a strategic approach to regional innovation and to further develop place-based innovation policies. At the same time, it has become apparent that the path from strategy development to implementation was in many cases lengthy. Indeed, on the one hand, existing Governance Structures in the Länder had to be adjusted to the new strategic priorities, on the other hand, in particular the state aid conform preparation of funding schemes under the ERDF caused for delays in many Länder.

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