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Technical Assistance for Capacity Enhancement for Development and Implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies in Türkiye's Regions (CEDIS3)

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Follow-up Report

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Meeting Report – Panel: Collaboration Opportunities Under Smart Specialisation

The joint panel discussion regarding collaboration opportunities under smart specialisation strategies (S3) took place on 25 July 2024 with the participation of Bernhard Fabianek, Senior Expert at the Directorate-General of Research and Innovation (DG RTD); Alessandro Rainoldi, Head of Unit for Territorial Development, Joint Research Centre (JRC); Arnault Morisson, Thematic Expert for a Smarter Europe at Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform, European Territorial Co-operation (InterReg); and Nikos Maroulis, Technopolis Group, Partner, member of the Secretariat of the S3 Community of Practice (S3 CoP) as speakers. The event was attended by over 180 participants, including experts from Turkish development agencies and representatives from the Ministry of Industry and Technology. The session was hosted by the Deputy Director General of the Directorate General of Development Agencies, Mr. Mustafa İşık, who underscored the significance of the gathering.

The expert speakers provided a comprehensive overview of S3 practices across Europe and how their initiatives are driving these strategies forward. The discussions began with Mr. Nida Kamil Özbolat (PhD) presenting the CEDIS3 project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Technology, which focuses on developing smart specialisation strategies in collaboration with the Development Agencies (DAs) of the Turkish regions. Mr. Özbolat emphasised that the project is not only an economic tool but also fosters complementarity and cooperation between regions.

As the first speaker, Mr. Bernhard Fabianek opened his speech by discussing the pivotal role of research and innovation in advancing the smart specialisation process. He underscored the involvement in European regional strategies, focusing on the digital transition and sustainable development. Mr. Fabianek noted the supportive role of S3 in providing regulatory contexts tailored to regional needs, alongside local universities, technology transfer centres and innovation hubs that facilitate knowledge transfer from academia to business. He emphasised the potential of interregional collaboration, citing examples such as the electrification of railway systems, where implementation challenges require concentrated efforts in specific regions.

Afterwards, Mr. Fabianek highlighted the critical role of skills development in the successful implementation of smart specialisation strategies, stressing the necessity of a well-trained workforce capable of not only executing but also refining and overseeing initiatives. Finally, he emphasised that, within the framework of S3, informed decision-making is essential for advancing strategic progress towards sustainable regional development.

Mr. Alessandro Rainoldi, the second speaker on the panel, commenced his address by underscoring the vital importance of both institutional and political commitment at the international level, highlighting their pivotal role in translating policies into action and achieving tangible outcomes for regional communities. He also stressed the equal importance of technical expertise in effectively driving the implementation of these initiatives. Mr. Rainoldi stressed the need to understand common challenges,



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priorities, and integration. The objective, he suggested, is to translate these insights into concrete project frameworks and to facilitate discussions through joint meetings.

The concept of smart specialisation, as articulated by Mr. Rainoldi, revolves around recognising the capabilities and potential of each territory. In practice, smart specialisation encourages communities to focus on specific thematic sectors or economic domains to enhance knowledge exchange. This approach has led over the years to the establishment of the S3 funding source for regional innovation investments.

He proposed promoting an innovation ecosystem in line with the skills of local human capital and the aspirations of communities. Mr. Rainoldi emphasised the autonomy of each entity in developing an effective smart specialisation strategy, regardless of additional requirements such as patents or research infrastructure. He concluded his speech following the points outlined above.

Following this discussion, Mr. Arnault Morisson commenced his presentation, "Designing S3 and Mobilising Stakeholders: Insights from Interreg Europe Good Practices" ([Presentation Link](#)), by outlining the objectives of Interreg Europe in terms of "capacity building" and the "improvement of regional development policies." He then gave examples from Interreg Europe projects, stressing the importance of utilising and learning from existing knowledge available online¹ and showcasing good examples of S3. Additionally, he promoted Interreg's Policy Learning Platform ([Link](#)) and its open-source database as valuable resources.

Mr. Morisson explained on the organisation's peer review process, which involves selecting peers from across Europe to offer tailored policy recommendations to a host region grappling with a specific policy challenge. He presented three exemplary practices from the regions of Catalonia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria, underscoring their innovative approaches to regional innovation governance and entrepreneurial discovery processes. He concluded his presentation by reiterating the crucial role of leveraging existing knowledge in the development of S3.

Following Mr. Morisson's remarks, the final presentation was delivered by Mr. Nikos Maroulis, entitled "Learning and Collaboration Opportunities in S3CoP" ([Presentation Link](#)). He explained that the S3 Community of Practice (S3CoP) is an initiative launched by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) with the primary objective of supporting regions in the design and implementation of their Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).

¹ Good practice database - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policy-solutions/good-practices>

Interreg Europe Policy brief on S3 - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/find-policy-solutions/policy-briefs/smart-specialisation-strategy>

Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships for S3 (SRIPs) - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/strategic-research-and-innovation-partnerships-for-s3-srips>

S3 governance - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/find-policy-solutions/webinar/webinar-on-better-ris3-governance>

Interreg Europe projects on S3 <https://www.interregeurope.eu/search-approved-projects?keywords=&topics%5B2007%5D=2007&topics%5B1434%5D=1434&programme%5B1993%5D=1993>



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Mr. Maroulis detailed how the initiative operates through six pillars to assist regions and stakeholders. He also introduced the Thematic Platforms, which are joint initiatives between several Directorates of the European Commission, emphasising their services and partnership opportunities for Turkish regions and stakeholders. He highlighted the significant role of the S3 CoP in providing guidance, guidelines, and exemplary practices to address major issues in strategy development and implementation such as innovation diffusion, entrepreneurial discovery, and S3 governance.

The meeting was concluded with all points considered and their gratitude for the insights shared and anticipating future collaborations.

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