

# Smart Spec

Newsletter 2

01/10/2014

## *Regions with less favoured innovation systems*

### Challenges for smart specialisation strategies

Over the past few decades the EU has witnessed a certain level of convergence between nations, alongside widening disparities between its richest and its poorest regions. As a new round of regional innovation policy is delivered, it will be important for regional policy makers to reflect on the specific challenges faced by regions with less favoured innovation systems and how smart specialization can contribute to unlock their growth potential.

In order to deal with their systemic issues smart specialisation strategies will need to address a few

fundamental challenges: the fact that these regions tend to have weaker economic structures, either dominated by branches of foreign firms (particularly Eastern Europe) or by relatively uncompetitive SMEs (particularly Southern Europe). The question then arises about how to promote specialisation in regions that do not have strong endogenous sectors.

The second challenge relates to the weakness of knowledge producing institutions (particularly Universities) in these contexts. Their shortcomings relate both to the lack of capacity and poor management

structures, but also the lack of national and regional governance structures that would encourage links with the surrounding economy.

Finally the third challenge lies in the quality of governance in less favoured regions, caused by a lack of trust, limited institutional capacity and unstable political environments. Understanding better these challenges and how to address them is one of the aims of Smart Spec.

#### **Reference**

Blazek et al. (2014) 'Regions with less developed research and innovation systems', *Reflection Paper: Work Package 3, Smart Spec*

As part of the Smart Spec project, Jiri Blazek from Charles University in Prague is organising a **seminar** on '*Regions with Less Favoured Research and Innovation Systems*'. This seminar will take place in Prague on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October.

#### Call for Papers

#### **'Smart Specialisation and regional innovation: challenges and opportunities facing less developed innovation systems'**

Prague, 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2015

This one-day conference will provide an important opportunity to explore the concept of Smart Specialisation and to reflect on emergent practices from across the EU. Confirmed speakers include: Professor Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University, Professor Philip McCann, University of Groningen, Professor Ron Boschma, Lund University, Professor John Goddard, Newcastle University, Dr. Jiri Blazek, Charles University.

## Monitoring Smart Specialisation strategies: starting the learning journey

The first of Smart Spec's 10 "Learning Journeys" was held in June. Involving the project's 10 partner regions, each meeting focuses on different topics analysing how the concept of Smart Specialisation is being developed in the Regions and how it's effectively helping the regions in better delivering their strategies for Innovation.

Organized by the Instituto de Fomento de la Región

de Murcia, Spain the meeting discussed the issue of monitoring. It provided a great opportunity for regional policy makers to share their experiences about how to measure policy outcomes and their impact on their regions. The 'journey' continues with a meeting in Slovenia at the end of September, on the theme of social innovation.

### Project news

**Activities:** SmartSpec, together with the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies in Seville and the Regional Studies Association is organising a session at the next Open Days in Brussels on operationalising smart specialisation

**New staff:** Pedro Marques joined the team at Cardiff University as a Research Associate.

*The Smart Specialisation Platform, part of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies located in Seville, has been providing important advice to regions across the EU on how to design their smart specialization strategies. More information can be found here: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>*

Project website: [www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/research/smartspec](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/research/smartspec)

This project is funded by the European Union under the FP7 Cooperation Programme:

Social Sciences and the Humanities - Grant number 320131.



This Project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme