

Smart specialisation strategies are a cornerstone of EU's sustainable recovery



The European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre organized a joint online workshop on 15 April to underline the role of regional Smart Specialisation Strategies as a cornerstone of EU policies, from the post-pandemic recovery plans to the delivery of the European Green Deal, digital transition and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Smart Specialisation is an essential part of EU's cohesion policy: a place-based approach characterised by the identification of the strengths and assets of each region and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process with wide stakeholder involvement.

Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, underlined in her [speech](#) the close link between growth and R&I and emphasized that the EU's cohesion policy and smart specialisation are key tools to tackle Europe's innovation divide and avoid a "K shaped" recovery, where some regions recover fast and others risk stagnating or falling behind.

"Over the 2014-2020 programming period, more than €65 billion of cohesion policy funds were invested in R&I. While the new programmes are still in preparation, it is likely that at least half of new cohesion policy investment will target smart and green projects. Innovation is place-based and smart specialisation strategies help regions build their capacities around their assets. We are aiming to further strengthen links between our investments and smart specialisation strategies, to improve synergies with Horizon Europe and to simplify procedures", Commissioner Ferreira said.

This view was shared by the representative from Commissioner Mariya Gabriel's cabinet, who underlined that "smart specialisation will continue playing a major role supporting research and innovation to ensure sustainable and resilient development of all regions in Europe over the next programming period 2021-2027. In the light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this helps consolidating a sustainable, smart and inclusive Europe".

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, stated that "overcoming the crisis triggered by the pandemic requires unprecedented cooperation and innovation capacities. Building efficient partnerships to deliver inclusive innovation processes is the essence of Smart Specialisation. This is why in the current scenario, Smart Specialisation is not a luxury or a best practice, but a powerful method to mobilise available investment."

Bernard Magenmann, Deputy Director General of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, spoke about the concept of S4 – Smart Specialisation Strategy for Sustainability and inclusiveness – “an innovation-driven policy for competitive sustainability leaving no place and no one behind. It builds on the Smart Specialisation approach that we have developed over the past years, adapting it to the new context.”

SEDEC chair Anne Karjalainen (FI/PES), Member of Kerava City Council, underlined that “Smart Specialisation Strategies empower regions and cities to take responsibility for their own development potential, including the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to effectively build much-needed social resilience at local and regional level.”

Mayor of Seville Juan Espadas (ES/PES), who chairs the CoR's ENVE Commission and the Green Deal Working Group, concluded that “Smart specialisation is an excellent tool to assist policy-makers in guiding the resources to the projects offering the best opportunities for jobs and growth in the post-pandemic recovery. Strategies must be oriented towards sustainable development to improve citizens' quality of life, for instance through new models for energy and mobility at local and regional level. In this regard, the Joint Research Centre, which has one of its seats in Seville, is doing an important work to reach out to every corner of Europe and provide information about all available tools.”

Watch the [recording](#) of the event ([agenda](#))

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