

Mainstreaming Smart Specialisation across European Union policies: challenges, opportunities and tools"

A proposal for a Special Session at the ERSA Lyon Congress (27-30/8/19)

Smart specialisation is a European policy innovation that prioritises investment in research and innovation, by aligning regional assets with EU strategic priorities. However there are presently concerns about unnecessary duplication, fragmentation and a lack of critical mass of public R&I investment in Member States for building an effective European Research Area. Smart specialisation has been enriched by a place-based perspective on investment priorities for cohesion policy, derived from an entrepreneurial discovery process, and has lately evolved to include interregional smart specialisation partnerships for co-investment in regional and European priority areas. Although smart specialisation has been placed at the forefront of EU research, innovation and industrial policies, its impact on mainstream policy development and its potential role as an integrative mechanism for aligning innovation investments according to local capacities and strengths, has been more limited.¹ One reason for this is the fragmentation of innovation policy frameworks in the EU, not only across Member States, but also across a range of EU policy fields. Together with a lack of shared vision, there is no real shared ownership of a coherent policy framework for the European Innovation System. Therefore, there are reasons to believe that we need a truly 'European' approach, both to maximise EU innovation investment capacity, and respond better to the challenge of international competition.

The session will focus on the issue of mainstreaming the concept of Smart Specialisation across EU policies in order to get the best possible and consistent results by its adoption and deployment. It will portray the basic issues about design and delivery of Smart Specialisation and will question its integration in other seemingly uncoordinated policy areas of the EU, identifying potential barriers and possible solutions. Featured speakers have strong backgrounds in analysis and policy making in the fields of EU Research and Innovation and Cohesion policies. The Special Session is convened by *Dr Dimitri Corpakis, former European Commission official (Head of Unit, in DG Research and Innovation), Senior Research Fellow SEERC (South East European Research Centre)*. Proposed interventions and speakers are as follows:

1. "Theory and practice of Smart Specialisation: a reality check" *Alasdair Reid, Advisor on innovation systems for sustainable futures, Policy Director, European Future Innovation System (EFIS) Centre*
2. "Mainstreaming Smart Specialisation in the EU R&I Framework Programme: challenges and opportunities" (Dimitri Corpakis)
3. "Strategies for regional co-investment through Smart Specialisation" *Jan Larosse, Independent Adviser at VANGUARD INITIATIVES Consult & Creation*
4. "Rethinking place-based strategies for integrated development: the challenge of institutional thickness" *Richard Tuffs, Former Director and Senior Advisor at ERRIN, the European Regions Research and Innovation Network*

¹ *Smart specialisation: From academic idea to political instrument, the surprising career of a concept and the difficulties involved in its implementation* Dominique Foray, Paul A. David, Bronwyn H. Hall, MTEI Working Paper, November 2011