S25 Ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of the Smart Specialization Strategy

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The implementation of the Smart Specialization Strategy introduced several novelties in regional innovation policy. Among them are: a) the emphasis on entrepreneurial discovery; b) the idea of promoting the connectivity between technological domains both within and between regions; c the prediction of quantitative indicators for monitoring the results of the strategy.

These novelties were introduced to improve the quality in strategy design and implementation. However, many regions struggled to adapt to theme because of the absence of consolidated methodologies or the lack of competences and experience.

The aim of this Special session is to provide theoretical and empirical contributions on two issues that are critical for S3 results.

The first issue is about the methodologies to assess the relatedness between specialization domains, both within the same region and between different regions. Despite the importance of related variety in S3 design, the analysis of S3 documents approved by EU regions reveals that only a few regions explicitly considered the relatedness between specialization domains and the connectivity with other EU regions. This can be a potential weakness in the implementation of the S3 since technological relatedness is considered a key factor for innovation and diversification.

Given the complexity of S3 design and implementation, the monitoring of its results is important not only to assess the fulfilment of its objectives but also to propose modifications during the implementation of the strategy. The Special session will discuss how regions are implementing the monitoring activity and the methodology to assess its efficacy for evaluating and revising the planned strategy.