



## Special Session Proposal

### Special Session on Smart Specialisation and Policy

Jason Deegan (University of Stavanger)

Tom Broekel (University of Stavanger)

#### Abstract

In recent years, few regional policies have received more attention than what is known as the smart specialization approach. Being a conditionality to apply for funding from the EU Cohesion fund propelled it into the focus of policy makers and researchers alike. Due to this and its compelling nature, it seems to have become the dominant approach to regional innovation policy in Europe.

However, contrasting the prominence of smart specialisation in policy and academic documents, there is considerable discussions about what the concept actually means in practice, and how it can operationalised in meaningful ways. For instance, recent conceptualizations translate this policy into a two dimensional diversification framework along the dimensions of relatedness and complexity, which makes it easily applicable in practice. Yet, this comes at the costs of reducing the theoretical richness of the original concept.

This special session invites scholars from different disciplines to contribute to this debate and exchange their perspectives on the concept of smart specialisation, its interaction with policy, empirical evaluation, and applications in practice. The session particularly welcomes theoretical and empirical papers relating to the following questions and topics:

- What is Smart Specialisation?
- What processes are essential in this context and which can be triggered or utilized by policy makers?
- How can smart specialisation be empirically described?
- How does the interpretation and implementation of smart specialisation differ between regions?
- What is the impact of smart specialization on regional development and how does it compare to other policy interventions?
- Does smart specialization allow addressing increasing inequality and growing demands for more sustainable development?