

MINUTES

Webinar: [Innovative place-based Triple Helix approaches for regional development through Smart Specialisation](#)

Schedule: 4 June 2019 18:00 – 19:00 CET

OVERVIEW:

The main objective of the webinar was to **review practices supporting the Smart Specialisation process, and discuss the roles and engagement between regional authorities and other actors – shaping the future of innovation ecosystems**. The webinar is part of a series of three, each of which are addressed to the ways for boosting the dialogue among the key players of the societal progress process (universities, businesses and government together with the broader civil society) - identifying new ways for boosting key European Union policies on the ground. The webinar and related workshop tackle the important topic on “Supporting the European Union strategies on smart specialisation for a place-based innovative regional development, boosting growth and jobs”. Motivated by the abovementioned challenges, designated speakers, Jan Larosse and Richard Tuffs delivered presentations of how Smart Specialisation as a governance mechanism is a suitable tool for bringing academia, industry, policymakers and the community closer together for increased joint benefits and economic progress.

WEBINAR WELCOME SPEECH AND INTRODUCTIONS

Emanuela Todeva (Professor at the School of Business and Society at St Mary’s University and chair of the webinar welcomed the participants on behalf of the Triple Helix Association and delivered a short introduction about the topic and the forthcoming workshop, [Innovative place-based Triple Helix approaches for regional development through Smart Specialisation Strategies](#) being organized on the 28-29 June 2019, in London (UK) by the School of Business and Society at St Mary’s University. Last but not least, Prof. Todeva delivered a brief introduction of invited speakers ([Jan Larosse](#) and [Richard Tuffs](#)).

Jan Larosse has gained expertise in innovation support and cluster policies over the last 25 years working closely with the Flemish government and the European Commission (Directorates General for Regional Policy and Research and Innovation)). In his presentation, Mr. Larosse briefly explained his expertise in the field of Smart Specialisation that according to him can be seen as an instrument on the ways policymakers and policy shapers can make a contribution to future growth perspectives. Over the last decades, Mr. Larosse has been involved in the expert group that elaborated the concept of Smart Specialisation for the European Union on better bundling the public and R&D budgets. Later, he took part in the setting up of the so-called “Vanguard initiative” pioneered by a number of European regions and aiming to create direct links between industrial policies and regional policies. Last but not least, he was involved in the establishment of the Smart Specialisation Platform of the European Union in Seville. He explained the **key success criteria concerning Smart Specialization** (e.g. policy entrepreneurship, the role of civil servants, requirements for success, instruments and the opportunities for learning and adapting) for the successful practical application of the concept from a leadership and engagement points of view. Mr. Larosse stated that the usability of Smart Specialisation as a transformation strategy greatly depends on translating this policy approach into the European context and unlocking challenges for creating values. Cities as living labs play a key role in the implementation of innovative place-based solutions addressed by Smart Specialisation. He emphasized that quadruple-helix engagement of key actors (as well as city networks that go beyond the mutual learning and co-operations taking shape in strategic decisions) are needed for making

changes as well as to make the complementarities (by joint road-mapping through indicators, instruments) and opportunities (creating political capacity) understood by all the actors involved. As a closing remark, he invited all the participants of the webinar to further discuss with him the possibilities of Smart Specialisation in the forthcoming Q&A session at the end of the webinar.

Our next speaker was Richard Tuffs, former director of the ERRIN¹ network that brings together European regional innovation agencies. Mr. Tuffs pointed out that he took a different perspective of Smart Specialisation by discussing the concept of systemic innovation and place-based innovation. Similar to Mr. Larosse, he briefly explained the actors involved in Smart Specialisation as well as barriers and opportunities for the concept. Mr Tuffs placed the concept of Smart Specialisation into the European context, explaining the links between the idea and other fields like grand challenges, industrial policy, cohesion policy as well as global value-chains. According to him, the key challenge for policymakers is a choice between the concept of systemic innovation and mission-oriented policies. He mentioned the good practice of East England's wiring approach on defining scientific strengths and innovation capabilities. He referred to the communication published by the European Commission in 2010 defining the roles policymakers should play in the delivery of Smart Specialisation from creating a critical mass in R&D and innovation resources as well as combining regional policy with other policies to exploit multi-level governance for integrated innovation policies with the aim of helping regions in identifying their own regional priorities. He mentioned the important relationship between the entrepreneurial discovery process (economic approach), university dimension (societal challenges) and last but not least the regional strategies (territorial dimension). He claimed that the regional strategies representing the territorial dimension need a lot more work. Public procurement seems to be among the main barriers to effective S3 implementation as well as the exploitation of opportunities still not tapped to by universities. Based on this reasoning, Mr. Tuffs explained the role universities could play in Smart Specialisation introducing the concept of civic and non-civic universities. According to the classic understanding of universities, universities focus mainly on their education and research tasks and care less for their regional setting (they are 'from' the region but not 'for' the region), cultivating a clear barrier between them and the regional development process (left side chart). By contrast, the civic university concept cultivates a different approach with a softer barrier between it and the region. Thus the civic university will engage actively with the region (right side chart) delivering transformative, responsive and demand-led actions. Regarding the innovation ecosystem, Mr. Tuffs referred to the understanding presented by JRC and referred to Mr. Lacrosse's previous presentation on the role of cities. As a conclusion, success factors entail committed public institutions, harmonious business sector, risk-taking entrepreneurial culture and society and last but not least, community and branding building. New coordination roles are emerging, that should be taken into account when revitalizing regions. Barriers include S3 focus on policy design instead of policy implementation only, lack of appropriate political follow-up and inconsistencies regarding governance (regional vs. multi-level). Consequently, a number of recommendations were discussed namely how to improve regional innovation ecosystems, an alternative approach to apply Smart Specialisation as a governance mechanism, roles and responsibilities that lead to successful Smart Specialisation. In particular emphasis was given to the role that can be played by the so-called 'boundary spanners', people that are able to 'wire' together and connect different stakeholder communities for optimising the place-based approach to an economic transformation.

End of webinar

¹ European Regions Research and Innovation Network