05 RIS3 support for lagging regions

Type of support / service available

The primary aim of this initiative is to support the implementation of the Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) in nine lagging regions in eight EU Member States. In so doing, it also aims to:

- Improve understanding of slow and limited growth in EU regions and links to macro-economic framework conditions, taking RIS3 as an entry point

- Develop and disseminate lessons and a tool box for other EU regions

- Contribute to advancing relevant theory on (implementation of) smart specialisation by codifying hands-on experiences.

This project has built on experience gained in supporting the refinement and implementation of the RIS3 in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (Greece).

Relevance for regional authorities

The project provides concrete support to managing authorities in the partner regions in the refinement and implementation of their RIS3s. Central to the project is the structured engagement of the regional authorities, and the partner regions' stakeholders in business, academia, and society at large, to develop innovative ideas for potential funding in the region's identified research and innovation priority areas. The project also brings partner regions together to foster mutual learning in approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of RIS3 implementation and the effective governance of RIS3.

Policy context

The JRC "lagging regions project" implements three Preparatory Actions, initiated by the European Parliament. The first focused on Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Two subsequent actions place a particular focus on Romania and its regions and a broader focus on lagging regions across Southern and Eastern Europe.

Its lessons serve the implementation and refinement of RIS3 strategies in other lagging regions both within the EU and beyond. The project is implemented by the JRC, in close cooperation with DG REGIO, as well as the regional and national authorities and stakeholders in industry, higher education and society at large in each partner country and region.

How to use

Based on stocktaking and assessment of the of the implementation of the RIS3 strategy of the partner regions, the JRC works closely with regions to identify appropriate activities to further support RIS3 implementation.
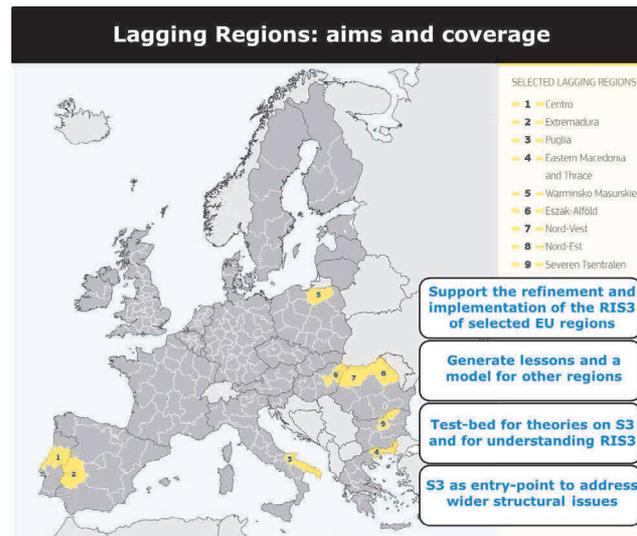
The project focuses on the structured engagement of the partner regions stakeholders. This centres on the organisation, together with each of the regional authorities, of dedicated participatory events. Work is also carried out with regional stakeholders to identify and address bottlenecks and challenges in RIS3 implementation. All the activities conducted in the project are codified to maximise its impact both within and outside the region. The information regarding RIS3 support in lagging regions is available on the RIS3 Lagging Regions section[1] of the Smart Specialisation website[2]. The team is easily reachable through an email address[3].

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1. http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ris3-in-lagging-regions
2. http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu
3. JRC-B3-LAGREG@ec.europa.eu

Map of RIS3 support to 9 EU regions.

Impact

The support provided by JRC has contributed to building trust and improved mutual understanding between stakeholders, understanding of the realities of smart specialisation, developing capacities to better create and implement smart specialisation strategies and refining the smart specialisation strategies, underpinned by sustained stakeholder engagement.

The steps taken towards RIS3 implementation in the different regions, with a number of important project outcomes, include:

- The development of a highly constructive working collaboration with the authorities as well as with a critical mass of relevant regional stakeholders based on mutual understanding and trust

- Concrete steps in implementing respective RIS3 priorities through targeted support to entrepreneurial discovery process, project refinement and eventual preparation of calls

- Increased national and international networking and research-business collaboration, some of which resulted in successful project H2020 proposals

- Increased understanding of the concept of RIS3, its governance and its monitoring, as well as the complexity of its implementation challenges

- Particular progress has been in monitoring RIS3 implementation progress and impacts, through mutual structured learning between partner regions

- Awareness of the need for more coordination between national and regional governance, particularly in Romania. In the case of Bulgaria, the sub-regional (municipal) dimension and its relationship with the national level is also explored. In Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, both the Special Managing Authority and wider community of regional stakeholders have better access to international counterparts, both in governance of RIS3 and in performing research and innovation. The methodologies applied in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace has subsequently been applied to other Greek regions.