

Building on local community, environmental and cultural assets - 'smart specialisation' in the rural development context

The relevance of the smart specialisation approach for rural development

Smart specialisation platforms are being set up at European level (primarily supported through the **ERDF**) to identify and build networks of countries and regions working on similar sectors.

The 'smart specialisation' approach has strong potential in the **rural development context** in particular with regard to:

- Identifying the **comparative strengths** and unique opportunities for rural businesses building on local assets and resources, i.e. particular fields where rural areas and/or rural businesses have a comparative advantage.
- **Interaction of stakeholders** and networking as tool for inducing new innovative business ideas, building value chains, and mobilising external resources.

The **Cork 2.0 Declaration** states that *"rural and agricultural policies should build on the identity and dynamism of rural areas through the implementation of integrated strategies and multi-sectoral approaches. They should promote diversification and foster entrepreneurship, investment, innovation and employment."*

RIS3 smart specialisation strategies now set the framework for both the specific actions targeted at business innovation and the €57 bn support provided by **the ERDF to SMEs**. The largest of these, with relevance to rural development, is the **Agri-Food Smart Specialisation Platform** which covers over 80 regions.



Definition: Smart Specialisation

Smart specialisation has been defined in the regional development context as a place-based approach, meaning that it builds on the assets and resources available to regions and Member States and on their specific socio-economic challenges in order to identify unique opportunities for development and growth. A smart specialisation strategy requires identifying competitive strengths and realistic growth potentials and subsequently making choices on where to invest.

EAFRD Support for "smart specialisation" in the rural context

- The smart specialisation concept has close similarities to the approaches to innovation and **diversification** (including tourism development and building on the demand for healthy products and lifestyles) applied in **LEADER and Local Development Strategies (LDSs)**.
- **Measure 16** is to build up **cooperation among different stakeholders** for the creation of, among others, new businesses, products, procedures or networks. Operational Groups (M16.1), largely build on the concept of innovation being induced through exchange among different stakeholders (including farmers and researchers).
- Sub-measure 16.9 focuses on '**support for diversification** of farming activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about environment and food'.
- Knowledge transfer (M01) and the availability of professional advice from advisory services (M02) in building the necessary entrepreneurial skills to foster smart specialisation processes.

How the TG can add value? Questions and issues for discussion

- Identifying ways of **supporting rural businesses in finding new creative business ideas and areas of specialisation**
- Possible **tools for LAGs** to better connect with (potential) businesses in rural areas (where entrepreneurial culture is weaker)
- Explore ways, examples and practical steps to support the development of **genuinely integrated, cross-fund strategies** and bring Regional Innovation Strategies / smart specialisation and LAG strategies closer together

Members said it...



- Horizontal networking, value chains, business networks
- Rural entrepreneurs need to find their niche market understand/use their specific chances and create a unique businesses
- Smart specialisation and wild ideas
- Smart specialisation, creating the experience economy and promoting rural destinations
- Enhancement of the involvement of LAGs in the RIS3 process
- Link local food production and touristic services and hospitality
- Awareness of economic challenges and opportunities, based on endogenous resources and cooperation, communication and digital and economic skills

Contact Point

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