

Boosting Innovation-Led Growth in EU Regions EARTO Welcomes EC Communication on Smart Specialisation Strategies

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EARTO very much welcomes the European Commission's [Communication on Smart Specialisation](#) published by DG REGIO, which gives perspectives for an efficient future of the Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3). This Communication stresses the need to work jointly together at all levels, from local to European, to activate Europe's potential for innovation, competitiveness and growth. It identifies four main challenges to regional innovation under the regions' smart specialisation strategies:

- Boosting the innovation and competitiveness potential of European regions as a basis for a sustainable growth model, strengthening the focus on less developed and industrial transition regions;
- Increasing interregional cooperation in innovation investment, which is a key element in globalised economies;
- Reforming regional innovation systems with a focus on three cross-cutting issues: the quality of public research, efficient business-science cooperation with the right support for technology transfer, and a business-friendly environment;
- Facilitating synergies between EU policies and instruments supporting innovation, particularly between Horizon 2020, the Cohesion policy funds (EFSI) and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) under the Juncker Plan.

EARTO can only agree with such statements and hopes that the future generation of Smart Specialisation Strategies can be embedded in a more global approach of designing R&I strategies in the EU, overcoming current barriers like state-aid rules or the complexity of complementarity between Programmes.

A 2015 [JRC Policy Brief on RTOs and Smart Specialisation](#) already identified RTOs as key actors in Smart Specialisation through their policy role and their capabilities to identify industry needs and technological opportunities. By stressing the necessity to support technology transfer within RIS3 strategies, EARTO believes that this new [EC Communication on Smart Specialisation](#) looks in the right direction.

EARTO very much hopes that the key messages developed in this EC Communication will be picked up by EU policy makers, as they are vital to create an efficient R&I landscape in Europe. In our current economic and political context, further thinking is really needed to find practical ways to allow R&I actors like RTOs to effectively experience and support complementarity between EU Programmes. Combined with the [Kallas report's recommendations](#) published last week, the EC efforts to plan the next funding period are going in the right direction by looking at how to boost regional innovation ecosystems.

EARTO hopes that the EC will consider involving various RTOs in its proposed Pilot Actions & Projects, as they will be key to deliver any proper technology transfer to industry as well as to further develop our regional innovation ecosystems. In addition, EARTO believes that the development of Thematic RIS3 Platforms is of interest. New ways of supporting the scaling up of inter-regional R&I pilot projects - such as those offered under the Vanguard Initiative in which many RTOs are involved for instance - need to find specific and fitting support in the next funding period.

EARTO and its members remain ready to continue the dialogue with EU institutions and provide additional input on these topics to boost innovation-led growth in EU regions.

EARTO - European Association of Research and Technology Organisations

Founded in 1999, EARTO promotes Research and Technology Organisations and represents their interest in Europe. EARTO network counts over 350 RTOs in more than 20 countries. EARTO members represent 150.000 highly-skilled researchers and engineers managing a wide range of innovation infrastructures.

RTOs - Research and Technology Organisations

From the lab to your everyday life. RTOs innovate to improve your health and well-being, your safety and security, your mobility and connectivity. RTOs' technologies cover all scientific fields. Their work ranges from basic research to new products and services development. RTOs are non-profit organisations with public missions to support society. To do so, they closely cooperate with industries, large and small, as well as a wide array of public actors.

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