



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SEDEC-VII/002**

**140th plenary session, 12-14 October 2020**

## **OPINION**

### **Regional Innovation Scoreboard and its impact in regional place-based policies**

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- points out that the RIS provides an assessment of the areas where regions are working well and those that need to focus their efforts on increasing innovation performance. The data should help regions assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of regional research and innovation systems;
- recommends developing clear and understandable synergies between the RIS and other tools the EU uses;
- recommends increasing the synergy between the RIS and the impact assessments carried out by the Joint Research Centre;
- recommends better aligning the 2021 RIS with the new priorities of the post-2020 programming period. Specifically, the European Committee of the Regions recommends drawing up, in cooperation with the Committee itself, a framework for synergies between the RIS and the priorities of the European Research Area, the priorities of the European Commission, such as the European Green Deal and digitalisation, the Commission's research and open science strategy and the upcoming strategic plan for Horizon Europe, as well as developing regional policy objectives and linking them with the smart specialisation strategies;
- recommends that the European Committee of the Regions be more involved in preparing the 2021 RIS, as well as in disseminating it to local and regional authorities through ongoing initiatives such as the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP) and Science meets Regions.

Rapporteur

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## **Opinion of the Committee of the Regions – Regional Innovation Scoreboard and its impact in regional place-based policies**

### **I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

##### **The importance of having reliable innovation policy indicators**

1. believes that regions need to adapt their specific policies to each place since there is no "one-size-fits-all" regional innovation policy framework. Every region has different institutional capacities and diverse political, economic and social circumstances, which enables, or limits, the design and implementation of these policies;
2. points out that, in accordance with Article 181 TFEU, the Commission may "promote the coordination" of "initiatives aiming at the establishment of guidelines and indicators, the organisation of exchange of best practice, and the preparation of the necessary elements for periodic monitoring and evaluation";
3. stresses that the Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) provides a more detailed breakdown of performance groups with contextual data that can be used to analyse and compare structural economic, business and socio-demographic differences between regions;
4. points out that the RIS provides an assessment of the areas where regions are working well and those that need to focus their efforts on increasing innovation performance. The data should help regions assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of regional research and innovation systems;
5. stresses that the 2019 RIS shows that regional results have strongly converged, as differences between regions are gradually decreasing, and emphasises how important the scoreboard is for devising strategies, as the development of place-specific measures is based on datasets, among other things;
6. underlines that one of the political objectives of the next multiannual financial framework (2021-2027) and, in particular, the proposal for a draft regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) proposed by the European Commission, is to promote an innovative and smart economic transformation by developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship<sup>1</sup>;
7. points out that the EU's strategic approach has shifted to specific policies developed in each place and smart specialisation strategies (S3) to support regional innovation;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN> (Art. 2)

8. stresses that the smart specialisation strategies (S3) have triggered the development of real regional innovation ecosystems. Regional innovation ecosystems generate significant impacts for the economy and regional competitiveness as well as excellent innovation that is close to ordinary people and their local needs<sup>2</sup>;
9. points out that regional policy establishes the obligation to carry out assessments of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of aid from Common Strategic Framework funds, with a view to improving the quality of the implementation and design of the programmes, and determining the effects of these programmes in relation to the targets of the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
10. emphasises that the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) Working Group has pointed out that there must be monitoring mechanisms in place from the start to assess progress and identify gaps, impacts and successes, in order to steer the European Research Area (ERA) and enable it to adapt to evolving demands and needs, which must include appropriate monitoring mechanisms and quantifiable key performance indicators (KPIs)<sup>3</sup>. It is proposed that the monitoring mechanism be extended at local and regional level as well, in order to gather realistic information on the innovative level of certain regions, as well as the possibilities and challenges in this area;
11. stresses that both the recommendations of the independent High Level Group of Innovators (2018 FAST report<sup>4</sup>) and the *LAB – FAB – APP – Investing in the European future we want*<sup>5</sup> report warn that, in the design stage of the EU's post-2020 research and innovation programme, a comprehensive and centralised system for programme monitoring and assessment will be required, and close cooperation and information sharing with national and regional innovation agencies will need to be encouraged;
12. emphasises that the *Mission-oriented research & innovation in the European Union* report<sup>6</sup> points out that, with regard to measurement and impact by goals and milestones, appropriate indicators and monitoring frameworks will need to be established to measure progress. They must be dynamic, recognising that static cost-benefit analysis and net present value calculations would most likely stop any bold mission from the outset;
13. suggests that preparatory work from experts is needed for a new policy initiative on a broader concept of smart specialisation that would target an agreement at EU level on guiding

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<sup>2</sup> Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions: *Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth*  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52017IR4757&qid=1584511381550&from=EN>

<sup>3</sup> See the ERAC's *Opinion on the future of the ERA*, Brussels, 23 January 2020, ERAC 1201/20.

<sup>4</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0deba00f-15f0-11e8-9253-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-91324356>

<sup>5</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffbe0115-6cfc-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>

<sup>6</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5b2811d1-16be-11e8-9253-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

principles, e.g. in the form of a smart specialisation charter 2.0 that complements the existing tools used to plan and implement local and regional economic development;

14. refers to the European Committee of the Regions opinion *Horizon Europe: the Framework Programme 9 for Research and Innovation*<sup>7</sup>, in which the Committee "calls strongly for the full participation of local and regional authorities in the strategic planning exercise that will guide the implementation of Horizon Europe, and for smart specialisation strategies to be taken into account in this context";

### **Methodological aspects of the RIS**

15. points out that the 2018 Science, Research and Innovation Performance of the EU (SRIP) report highlights the importance of combining several types of innovation-prone assets to spur the creation and adoption of innovations, from R&D to ICT investment, to skills development or changes to managerial and organisational skills. In this regard, greater account should also be taken of non-R&D and non-technology-based innovation frameworks, investments, activities and impacts. A "silo approach", focusing solely on, for example, R&D or ICT performance in isolation may not provide a good basis for understanding the complexity of the innovation process<sup>8</sup>;
16. suggests that a thorough analysis be carried out to assess whether the current RIS indicators are suitable for measuring innovation or, where appropriate, if new indicators need to be incorporated and others discarded. As well as being a necessary question, the inclusion of new indicators adapted to smart specialisation that can analyse the progress of RIS3 could be a valuable resource for driving interregional cooperation. If possible, the selection of indicators should be well founded in theory;
17. highlights the need to establish effective indicators for measuring and assessing the impact of gender on regional innovation, in line with the Committee of the Regions' own call for indicators broken down by gender to be used in all Community public policies. To this end, the proposed indicators need to become part of all general standard statistical operations, at both national and European level, in a coordinated manner, so that appropriate policies can be put in place, making it possible to compare regional values, in order to promote convergence within the EU;
18. stresses the crucial importance of digitalisation in innovation and especially in speeding up for COVID-19 economic recovery towards sustainable growth. This needs to have a high role in developing further the RIS indicators;
19. points out that where data are not available in some regions, an information-gathering tool should be developed, as far as possible, either by means of surveys or by using administrative

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<sup>7</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018AR3891&qid=1584514102293>

<sup>8</sup> Science, research and innovation performance of the EU, 2018, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/16907d0f-1d05-11e8-ac73-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

records, or by collecting information directly from regional statistical or administrative agencies, where these exist. This need could be an opportunity to include new indicators relating to smart specialisation and European priorities (the Green Deal, digitalisation, industrial transition, etc.) that require specific definition and recording;

20. recommends avoiding choosing highly correlated indicators that implicitly measure the same thing. Furthermore, maximum convergence between indicators is strongly recommended, both by Member State and by region;
21. recommends providing measures of variability for the indicators and final index, where possible. For example, the coefficient of variation for all indicators would be a good way of assessing the accuracy of indicators from the various regions. A confidence interval for the final index would also make it possible to assess whether or not the changes produced are real;
22. recommends analysing whether or not the various indicators should be weighted the same when calculating the final index. Various statistical and non-statistical processes for selecting the weighting could be considered. As the choice of weighting has a very significant impact on the index and final ranking, it needs to be properly justified and very transparent. It would be a good idea to analyse sensitivity and uncertainty in order to assess the various weighting proposals;
23. recommends analysing why regional data are missing, to avoid bias. Unless data losses are completely random, there will be bias in the estimates. The Committee recommends devising data-collection procedures to avoid such situations and therefore balance out the proportion of data available in the regions analysed as far as possible;
24. bearing in mind the heterogeneity of regions in the various Member States, recommends conducting an exhaustive analysis for the 2021 RIS of the "regionalisation technique of the Community Innovation Survey (CIS)", which assumes that industry intensities at national level are maintained at regional level as well; more specifically, recommends not using a correction factor in calculating the final composite RIS indicator, as this assumes uniform performance between different regions of a single country, and consequently penalises more innovative regions in countries that are moderate innovators;
25. recommends making the sources used more accessible and transparent. The data files and the code or tool used to calculate all the indicators (and therefore the final index) should be available so that researchers can reproduce the results obtained and in turn help to improve the RIS with their input. To increase transparency, it would be helpful to know which specific surveys provide the regional CIS data or whether they are provided by surveys specifically designed to draw up the RIS. Likewise, when "regional statistics" are used, the sources should be indicated;
26. recommends that, in addition to the well-established RIS data sources, new, non-traditional data sources for measuring regional innovations should also be tried out and tested for use. For example, the OECD has already used – for the purpose of studies – datasets created using artificial intelligence and drawing on company websites;

27. advises that the RIS publish all unprocessed raw data, i.e. without normalising the data to EU = 100, changing the units or eliminating bias, together with composite indices;

### **Impact on the development of regional innovation policies**

28. proposes collaborative efforts with DG JRC, DG RTD and DG EAC to increase the use of RIS in benchmarking and benchlearning regional innovation policies, especially highlighting human and creative aspects of innovation, together with its social dimension;
29. points out that the RIS is an essential tool for comparing changes in the performance of regional innovation policies, although it does not specify the reasons for these changes;
30. emphasises the role of the Joint Research Centre in using innovation camps and other advanced methods in the integrated use of RIS and smart specialisation strategies for increasing European partnerships to achieve more local and regional impact in implementing the activities of the Green Deal and the UN SDGs;
31. emphasises in particular the political impact of the RIS, as well as its influence on decision-making at regional level and its potential to optimise regional innovation ecosystems and smart specialisation;
32. recommends developing clear and understandable synergies between the RIS and other tools the EU uses, such as Innovation Radar, Regional Innovation Monitor Plus, the European Regional Competitiveness Index, the Research and Innovation Observatory – Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility, Innobarometer, the EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard, the Digital Transformation Scoreboard, the Business Innovation Observatory, the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) and the European Public Sector Innovation Observatory, as well as establishing complementarity with the CIS and the Innovation Output Indicator (IOI);
33. recommends increasing the synergy between the RIS and the impact assessments carried out by the Joint Research Centre;
34. is aware that the RIS is not aimed at the implementation of smart specialisation strategies but provides a general assessment of progress over time and an indicator of the strengths and weaknesses of regional innovation systems. Nevertheless, the European Committee of the Regions believes that, with its support, the European Commission should complement the RIS with some recommendations on the EU tools that can help to improve the indicators. The RIS may help with establishing policy priorities or targeting the structural funds for research and innovation allocated to these regions due to their broader geographical and sectoral coverage, should the regions voluntarily decide that this is appropriate;
35. recommends establishing links between RIS indicators, on the one hand, and related EU policies and strategies and the benefits of their implementation, on the other, so that the RIS becomes a tool for helping to improve innovation ecosystems, rather than a monitoring tool exclusively, in synergy with other initiatives such as the Horizon Policy Support Facility. It would be advisable

for the indicators used in the different structural funds, especially the ERDF, to be similar to and/or complement those of the RIS. The current breakdown of indicators sometimes makes it difficult to assess the impact of public action in favour of innovation;

36. recommends better aligning the 2021 RIS with the new priorities of the post-2020 programming period. Specifically, the European Committee of the Regions recommends drawing up, in cooperation with the Committee itself, a framework for synergies between the RIS and the priorities of the European Research Area<sup>9</sup>, the priorities of the European Commission, such as the European Green Deal and digitalisation, the Commission's research and open science strategy and the upcoming strategic plan for Horizon Europe, as well as developing regional policy objectives and linking them with the smart specialisation strategies;
37. considers it important to step up efforts to investigate the link between funding under the Structural Funds and the innovation potential in European regions so as to tackle the innovation divide;
38. has a series of more specific recommendations:
  - believes that efficiency and effectiveness should be considered. For example, a region that invests vast amounts of resources to improve its innovation system can be identified as inefficient (in terms of the use of resources). The Committee points out that it might be the case that regions with fewer resources dedicated to innovation can reach very high levels of efficiency;
  - notes that the RIS shows that densely populated areas are more likely to be more innovative but does not indicate which measures or tools the EU provides to make less densely populated areas more innovative;
  - points out that there are other factors that the RIS does not measure that may be important for regions, such as the brain drain and responsible innovation;
  - recommends including a section in the 2021 RIS on the impact of Brexit on EU innovation indicators;
  - suggests addressing the issue of building regional resilience through innovation in the 2021 RIS, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, it would be useful to assess the vulnerability of regional smart specialisation strategies in times of crisis;
  - recommends that the RIS take into account the heterogeneity of European regions and the room for manoeuvre of data, and that it encourage the regional (and national) statistics offices to adopt a uniform set of criteria (and indicators) at European level;
39. recommends that systems for monitoring and assessing smart specialisation strategies be used to objectively analyse the value and impact of regional innovation policy steps, and to guide short-term decision-making;

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<sup>9</sup> [https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC114345/jrc114345\\_adjusted\\_research\\_excellence\\_2018.pdf](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC114345/jrc114345_adjusted_research_excellence_2018.pdf)



40. points out that the European Commission already applies the "innovation principle" when preparing major legislative initiatives and that it advises Member States to step up similar efforts, which need to enable more testing, learning and adaptation. Moreover, public policies need to make better use of all existing data and analytics<sup>10</sup>;
41. recommends that the European Committee of the Regions be more involved in preparing the 2021 RIS, as well as in disseminating it to local and regional authorities through ongoing initiatives such as the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP) and Science meets Regions.

Brussels, 14 October 2020

The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Blížkovský

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<sup>10</sup> *A renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation - Europe's chance to shape its future*, [COM\(2018\) 306 final](#)

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Regional Innovation Scoreboard and its impact in regional place-based policies
<b>Reference(s)</b>	Not applicable
<b>Legal basis</b>	Art. 304 TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Own-initiative (Article 307(4))
<b>Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	Not applicable
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	3 December 2019
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA)
<b>Analysis</b>	January 2020
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	9 July 2020
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	9 July 2020
<b>Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)</b>	Majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	14 October 2020
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth<sup>11</sup>;</li> <li>– Local and Regional Dimension of the Horizon 2020 Programme and the New Framework Programme for Research and Innovation<sup>12</sup>;</li> <li>– Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3): impact for regions and inter-regional cooperation<sup>13</sup>;</li> <li>– A renewed European agenda for research and innovation – Europe's chance to shape its future<sup>14</sup>.</li> </ul>

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<sup>11</sup> CDR 4757/2017.

<sup>12</sup> CDR 3891/2018.

<sup>13</sup> CDR 6963/2016.

<sup>14</sup> CDR 3955/2018.