



Getting Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies closer to business

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATION INTERMEDIARIES

*Based on the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Project Emplnno –
“S3-Empowering for Innovation and Growth in medium-sized
Cities and Regions”*



Emplnno

S3-Empowering for Innovation and Growth in Medium-Sized Cities and Regions

Since 2016 the Interreg BSR project Emplnno supported partner organisations from twelve regions in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden to foster the implementation and improvement of RIS3.

The project provided strategy owners, strategy implementers and other innovation actors with resources to better work with the RIS3 approach and boosted cooperation and knowledge exchange between stakeholders within and beyond the partner regions.

The partners developed and implemented numerous R&D transfer workshops, matchmaking and networking events as well as training formats.

By doing so they provided companies, universities and other actors with knowledge and resources to implement innovative and competitive ideas.

Furthermore, Emplnno helped to improve and update regional smart specialisation strategies by transferring experiences and recommendations to regional authorities as well as strategy implementers to adapt and use the RIS3 for the benefit and growth of the region.

The implementation of Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) is by no means trivial.

Regional authorities (as “strategy owners”) face common problems and obstacles in the process of managing, delivering and monitoring the strategy.

Innovation intermediaries (as “strategy implementers”) - such as business support organisations, science parks and universities - often lack the institutional capacity, resources and experiences to work with the strategies.

The partners of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region project “EmplInno” cooperated to foster the implementation and improvement of RIS3 in medium-sized cities and regions in the Baltic Sea Region.

*Further information: **www.empinno.eu***

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Engage and motivate small and medium sized enterprises in re- search and innovation activities within the regional S3 framework!

Motivate SMEs to work with academia on the basis of concrete benefits

- **Illustrate** added value to the companies and academia, so that both parties clearly see the benefits. This can include a cheaper expertise and research services, new facilities, international state-of-the-art knowledge or to make use of human resources (scientific experts or the access to students/recruiting)
- **Highlight** and promote good practices and spread success stories as much as possible – i.e. show them that “it works to cooperate with academia”
- **Demonstrate** the direct commercial advantage that is expected, and use real (not academic) cases/issues
- **Create** concrete solutions to concrete problems: SMEs work with academia in case of concrete results, if SMEs search solutions to a concrete problem
- **Define** common interests (as regards both business and academia) – talk “new business” instead of “Research and Innovation”

Communicate and interact with SMEs regarding research and innovation opportunities

- **Get SMEs** involved in sharp cases of businesses and innovation
- **Prepare** good first connecting events. It's better to organise small prepared platforms instead of using only surveys and questionnaires to mobilise both professors and SMEs
- **Organise** joint workshops, business breakfasts for SMESs, study visits (e.g. to laboratories and companies), facilitate opportunities for meeting one another and one-to-one meetings where the SME can describe its ideas and needs. Personal contact is essential (though time consuming), e.g. organise short and concrete workshops over a limited period of time (e.g. 1/2 day, 3-6 times over 3-4 months)
- **Keep** information short and simple. SMEs do not have time to read long elaborated texts full of detailed technical information. They need to know if a proposed technology / solution can be easily implemented / used in their respective business
- **If appropriate, use** interactive / online modes of communicating with SMEs, e.g. in Estonia companies can post their problems/questions on the Adapter platform where researchers can offer possible solutions and propose themes for further cooperation

● **Build** bridges and help translate academic language to business language and opportunities – coach the companies from the idea to the project/market

● **Provide** easy to understand guidance and checklists when contacting SMEs to inform about funding

Assure SME engagement and success through appropriate structures and activities of your organisation

● **Know** the SMEs, their markets and challenges very well – increase your knowledge (!)

● **Maintain** a good relationship with other intermediaries, e.g. clusters, networks - trust is the highest currency

● **Identify** the critical mass of an SME focus or research and innovation topic

● **Offer** shared infrastructures of SMEs + Research and Innovation actors

● **Organise** a good intermediary role – keep SMEs interested of getting involved in activities and communicate how you can support SMEs in Research and Innovation

● **Establish** a clear framework how SMEs can benefit from the public sector (e.g. EU funds, tools for public procurement)

● **Organise** neutral grounds for sensitive topics, ensure and clarify safe IPR regulations, and be transparent

● **Arrange** meetings where businesses see the opportunities of innovation systems and the R+I actors

● **Facilitate** an entrepreneurship ecosystem at universities and educational institutions, a network between educational institutions, public administration, SMEs and society

● **Provide** exciting experts, communicate successful examples and offer concrete incentives of networking

● **Maintain** the communication platforms that were established, use existing and well known ones

● **Better** channel the knowledge from the academia to the business sector

*You can find good practices of R+D transfer,
SME empowerment and matchmaking activities under
www.empinno.eu/good-practices*

Make your organisation fit for the smart specialisation approach

Broaden the knowledge about the S3 concept and its implementation in your organisation

- **Coach** the operational staff to be able to apply instruments and work with the S3. Avoid that it's always only the "usual suspects" (and mostly the management level) who are aware of S3 developments
- **Document** the learnings about smart specialisation(s) in your organisation and make it widely available
- **Follow** up on the learnings and continuously keep them up to date

Look out of your region and cooperate to realise benefits for regional actors

Identify elements and improve value chains via transnational and interregional synergies – companies in other regions can be good for your actors, and not be competitors

- **Starting** from enhanced intraregional collaboration, S3 driven extra-regional collaboration can increase value if the actors are open and find complementarities in other regions

Establish links with intermediaries in other regions having similar priorities

- **Good contacts** via personal networks and good experiences about "doing business" (or research) can kickstart joint projects or simply increase knowledge of the others' interest
- **Coordinate** with other transnational actors about the same specialisations. Then 1. discuss which networking opportunities among e.g. Business Development Organisations and end-users exist and 2. arrange/initiate transnational delegation trips with matchmaking and cooperation possibilities