



Steering Committee 19 and 20 June 2023

Meeting Report

18 July 2023

S3 CoP Secretariat

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Agenda Day 1

TIMING (in CET)	SESSIONS	SPEAKER
13:00 - 13:20	Welcome and introduction	Catherine Wendt, Head of Unit, DG REGIO
13:20 – 14:00	Presentation of the S3 Community of Practice	Els Van de Velde, IDEA Consult
14:00 – 14:40	Presentation of I3 & the EIE call for Regional Innovation Valleys	Tomislav Pinter, DG REGIO Jekaterina Novikova, DG RTD
14:40 - 14:50	Coffee break	
14:50 – 16:50	Presentations of selected TSSPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Economy • Traceability & big data • Efficient & sustainable manufacturing • Mining 	Sergio Perez Garcia, Navarra (Social Economy) Mar Cátedra (Traceability & big data) Elena Mossali (Efficient & sustainable manufacturing) Kristiina Jokelainen & Santiago Cuesta López (Mining)
16:50 – 17:00	Conclusions and closing	Els Van de Velde, IDEA Consult

Day 1

Welcome and introduction

- **Catherine Wendt**, Head of Unit, DG REGIO, welcomed the participants and introduced the context for the event, emphasising that smart specialisation aims to foster research and development at local level, while supporting EU efforts for tackling major societal challenges. In this context, the S3 Thematic Platforms play a central role, in creating, promoting, and stimulating interregional collaboration by bringing together regions along shared priorities. The work is reinforced by the New Innovation Agenda, which recognizes the role of smart specialisation in tackling the innovation divide, and underlines the importance of Horizon Europe and Cohesion Policy working together. S3 CoP will offer a wide set of services to deepen collaboration and enable to create new projects in the search for new opportunities.

Presentation of the S3 Community of Practice

- **Els Van de Velde, IDEA Consult** presented an overview of the activities of the S3 Community of Practice, which is a flagship initiative of DG Regio providing strategic advice to S3 practitioners. The activities and support discussed zoom in on the S3 Thematic Platforms which bring together Thematic Smart Specialisation Partnerships (TSSPs) in agri-food, industrial modernisation, energy and sustainable blue economy. Participation in TSSPs requires a clear scope for activities, shared interests in smart specialisation strategies, as well as strong regional commitment based on the involvement of the quadruple helix. The benefits of interregional collaboration include access to resources, skills, knowledge, and capabilities, as well as advantages for industrial SMEs as being able to position one's own territory and identify priority areas for competitive and sustainable growth. Overall, partnerships are active and being reactivated through the S3 CoP. Some of the challenges faced include capacity, governance, policy context, resources, funding gap, scoping and mapping, expanding partnerships, and changing regional participation, among others, which the service provision will aim to address.
- **Q&A:**
 - Service delivery: there are three services per partnership over the three-year period of the project.
 - Service priority: Following partnership kick-off meetings, services have been selected based on a link with the partnership strategy. Validation of the service priorities will pass through DG Regio, for the approval of the service delivery.

Presentation of I3 & the EIE call for Regional Innovation Valleys

- **Tomislav Pinter, DG REGIO**, presented the I3 instrument, including a recent analysis of past awarded projects and the new I3 calls. Several partnerships are associated with successful projects. **New I3 calls were launched on 17 May 2023** with thematic priorities in the digital and green transition and smart manufacturing, linked to the burning challenges identified in the New European Innovation Agenda (such as increasing global food security, improving healthcare and achieving circularity). More information can be found on the main page of EISMEA I3: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/programmes/interregional-innovation-investments-i3-instrument_en. The deadline to apply for both strands is 17 October 2023, with expected results by March 2024. You can find information about the I3 Instrument in a nutshell here: [Inforegio - New Interregional Innovation Investments \(I3\) Instrument calls are out! \(europa.eu\)](#) and here [I3-FactSheet_0203_final.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).
- Simon Maas presented the **HIGHFIVE I3 project** awarded to the Smart Sensors for Agri-food partnership. The project focuses on implementing innovation in food processing, notably a focus on the implementation of digital solutions, processes, technology, etc. in a real environment (TRL 6 or higher). Examples include solutions to reduce food waste and use of robotics to support in repetitive tasks to allow workers to carry out complementary, complex tasks. Simon also presented funding opportunities related to financial support to third parties I3 scheme, as this is the first I3 project to start with the cascade funding for

SMEs. In this first Open Call, EUR 900 000 are available to fund 15 innovative SMEs to foster new cross-regional and cross-sectoral value chains.

- Q&A:
 - Regional involvement organisation: An analysis on good practices of how to organise regional involvement is forthcoming.
 - Letter of commitment: The new I3 call launched only request a letter of commitment from the region of the consortium leader.
 - Consortium composition: If a potential applicant is not sure if the consortium composition is the right one, or if there is a doubt about eligibility, they can contact the official Q&A and get a reply.
- **Jekaterina Novika**, DG RTD, European Commission presented the EIE call for Regional Innovation Valleys (RIV), which, together with the I3 Instrument, also falls under the New European Innovation Agenda (NEIA) Flagship 3: Accelerating and strengthening innovation in European Innovation Ecosystems across the EU and addressing the innovation divide. NEIA aims to identify up to 100 regions committed to enhancing their research and innovation investment and policies at the regional level. They will collaborate on interregional innovation projects, including on deep tech innovation, that aligns with key EU priorities. The timing of the EIE call is aligned with I3 calls, with 50% co-financing coming from European, regional, local or private sources. It is expected that six projects will be funded in the first cut-off date. Further information from the Info Day can be found on the website: <https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/new-european-innovation-agenda/new-european-innovation-agenda-roadmap/flagship-3-accelerating-and-strengthening-innovation-european-innovation-ecosystems-across-eu-and-en>
- Q&A:
 - Co-funding: the co-funding should incentivize applicants to account for the requested 50%. A letter of intent from the consortium member would be sufficient, where co-funding sources are identified, discussed and committed.
 - Relationship between EIE, RIV and PRI: The overarching idea is to motivate participating regions to address EU-wide challenges. The call is open to PRI, to TSSPs, but also to other collaborations. The leading principle of the EIE RIV is S3. PRI is a pilot collecting regional experiences with the implementation of smart specialisation, whereas the Regional Innovation Valley is a concept established on the flagship in innovation, which sets out to address the innovation divide, enabling to establish and connect interregional innovation.
 - Relationship between S3 Thematic Platforms and RIV: A TSSP can become a RIV and then have two labels to carry. The advantage of the RIV being that there is some funding that supports the activities, which is at regional level, while addressing the burning challenges of Europe.

Presentations of selected TSSPs

- **Sergio Perez Garcia** presented the Social Economy partnership, which brings together the regions of Navarra, Murcia, Emilia Romagna, Lapland and Slovenia, together with Nouvelle Aquitaine and Wallonia. The Social Economy sector accounts for 2 million businesses and employs over 14 million paid employees. Projects include the Pilot Action European Social Economy Regions 2018, support through the Technical Assistance Facility and forthcoming

proposals to set up a European Business School for Social Economy. The partnership invites regions who have a clear commitment to social economy in their smart specialisation strategy to get in touch with them about potential collaboration. Additionally, those with enterprises and associations that are active in European networks keen to collaborate are also welcome.

- Q&A
 - What are the priorities moving forward? The next steps include structuring the activities for the partnership, through a secretariat, and a clear governance to make the roadmap for the future clear.
- **Mar Cátedra** presented the Traceability & big data partnership, which brings together 24 regions, 13 associated partners, and 14 countries, led by the Regional Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development of Andalusia and co-lead by Emilia Romagna Region. The objective of working together as a partnership is carried out with the aim of contributing to the digitalisation of the agrifood value chain through the adoption of digital technologies and the value creation from data. Select projects include SmartAgriHubs, Regions4Food, DIVA, TRACK, among others. The partnership also has a collaboration with EIT Food. Communication is key for the community and its animation, with a website, newsletter, youtube and twitter presence. The newsletter also includes upcoming calls which gives a good announcement of relevant upcoming activities and funding opportunities relevant to the scope of the partnership.
- Q&A:
 - The partnership is open to contact for potential interested regions to join working groups, and also to other stakeholders.
- **Elena Mossali** presented the Efficient & sustainable manufacturing partnership, which is also part of the Vanguard Initiative. The partnership experiences the importance of connecting with policy making at EU level. The partnership distinguishes between the pilot (partnership level), the demo cases, which relate to defined technology areas or manufacturing goals, and the use cases, which focus on specific technologies and industrial sectors. It is also the use case level at which companies are involved. There are a lot of activities within the different demo cases, including connections between the other related partnerships, such as the batteries partnership. An I3 project followed a Horizon project in this case. It is important to have good coordination to be able to merge and collaborate not only in the partnership, but also between partnerships.
- Q&A:
 - Fostering industry involvement: regions who join the partnership are asked to have regional commitment as well as industrial stakeholders in hand related to specific topics addressed in the partnership.
 - Main lessons learned for engagement in interregional collaboration:
 - Periodic meetings at different levels are needed, e.g., at demo case level, addressing industrial stakeholders. These meetings address different stakeholders and speak different languages.
 - Clear communication is key: newsletter allows to reach people more broadly than via email, while an updated website is also key to present the activities.

- **Kristiina Jokelainen & Santiago Cuesta López** presented the Mining partnership, which is timely in the context of the European Green Deal, regarding the supply of raw materials. The mining partnership highlighted the importance of cross-partnership collaboration in the I3 BIOMASS project, which involves the ESM, Batteries and Mining partnerships. The mining partnership also spoke about the importance of other EU instruments, e.g. DIH, EDIH, EIC, Digital Europe, Connecting Europe Facility, among others. The partnership has also received DG Reform Technical Support from the OECD by means of a systematic analysis through the industrial ecosystem flagship. Next steps for the partnership include, among others, how to make the services integrated across the partnership (not all partners are involved everywhere).
- Q&A:
 - Involvement in shaping policy making: The Critical Raw Materials Act is an important element at partnership level. One region takes the lead on this policy dialogue (involvement in the Expert Group).

Conclusions and closing

- **Els Van de Velde** presented the closing of the first day of the Steering Committee meeting, highlighting that a new website is available via: <https://ec.europa.eu/smart-specialisation-community>.

Agenda Day 2

TIMING (in CET)	SESSIONS	SPEAKER
13:00 - 13:15	Welcome and opening	Wolfgang Munch, DG REGIO
13:15 - 14:00	Welcoming new partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food packaging • GO4 Cosmetics • Virtual and Smart Cultural Tourism 	Els Van de Velde and Daniela Kretz, IDEA Consult Angélique Vandemoortele (Food packaging) Céleste Rouberol (GO4 Cosmetics) Sander Münster (Virtual and Smart Cultural Tourism)
14:00 – 15:25	Parallel interactive session on the services I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • (Re)Scoping, Mapping and Smart Partnering • Funding, finance, and investment assistance 	Els Van de Velde, IDEA Consult (Governance) Daniela Kretz and Vincent Duchêne, IDEA Consult ((Re)Scoping, Mapping and Smart Partnering)

		Jean-François Romainville, IDEA Consult (Funding, finance, and investment assistance)
15:25 - 15:35		Coffee break
15:35 – 17:00	Parallel interactive session on the services II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and capacity building • Demonstration and scale-up and commercialisation • Agri-food Platform 	Daniela Kretz, IDEA Consult (Training and capacity building) Vincent Duchêne, IDEA Consult (Demonstration and scale-up and commercialisation) Els Van de Velde, IDEA Consult (Agri-food platform)

Day 2

Welcome and introduction

- **Wolfgang Munch**, DG REGIO, welcomed the participants and introduced the context of Day 2 of the event focussing on the service provision as well as the importance of continuing to look for new areas of collaboration, and improve the spread to other areas of Europe throughout the platforms.

Welcoming new partnerships

- **Daniela Kretz** presented the call for expression of interest for new partnerships. The call is open continuously and can be access via the link https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/s3-community-of-practice/call_partnerships_en. The next cut-off date is 30 September 2023, with two cut-off dates per year thereafter. A Guidance document with further details can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/communities-and-networks/s3-community-of-practice/S3_CoP_Guidance_new_partnerships_4_May_Final.pdf
- **Angelique Vandemoortele** presented the Food packaging partnership, which brings together 20 clusters in 11 EU countries, with cluster organisations at the core of the partnership. The motivation for the partnership is anchored in the European Green Deal as well as the packaging and packaging waste regulation. The aim of the partnership is to accelerate the transition to sustainable food packaging by connecting the penta-helix actors across the value chains in a circular way. A proposal to I3 Strand 2b, Value4Pack, has been submitted to connect the penta-helix value chain actors (Industry, RTOs, Government, Consumers & NGOs, and Investors).
- **Celeste Roberol** presented the GO4Cosmetics partnership, which is in place since 2021. A governance model was a priority from the first days, with a partnership agreement

expected to be signed by summer. The partnership organises a Steering Committee meeting once per year to discuss the aims and objectives, together with 2-3 meetings per year on more day-to-day activities (funding, meeting organisation, etc.). Funding for the partnership is a key subject, an EIE project named ACT4Cosmetics was awarded, in addition to a submission for ERASMUS+ (outcome pending). The conference on the future of the Cosmetics industry highlights the lobbying and networking aspect of the partnership <https://european-cosmetic.eventmaker.io/en>.

- **Sander Münster** presented the Virtual and Smart Cultural Tourism partnership, which was the most recent partnership to start its activities. The examples of the ‘why’ of the partnership including support tools that can be used for museum visits, how to explore destinations for onsite visits and new business opportunities. The scope of the partnership includes remote visits of heritage, to support tourists and visitors on site with information and experiences. Opportunities of the partnership include enabling networking, but also developing pilot cases.

Parallel breakout sessions I

The first parallel breakout session provided a short introduction and discussion with the TSSPs related to the following services: governance, (Re)scoping, mapping and smart partnering, and funding, finance, and investment assistance. On the services discussed, the following details on when the service should be applied, the resources and activities proposed by the S3 CoP and the expected outcome of the service can be delineated:

- **Governance** as a service is proposed in cases where collaboration among regions is unstructured and suffers as a result e.g., lack of leading region, missing guidance, no one tracking progress of proposed activities. The S3 CoP proposes a meeting with committed regional stakeholders to determine a lead region(s) and organisation(s), structure governance (formalisation, including financial structure and reporting) as well as best practice exchange (meeting) on how to set up governance (leadership, organisation, financial). The expected outcome of the service provision is a proposal for the design of the TSSP governance.
- The **(Re)scoping, mapping and smart partnering** services are proposed where partnerships are either starting or restarting activities, perhaps due to changing priorities. (Re)scoping is applied when the initial activities are not sufficiently granular, where the S3 CoP proposes a partnership specific kick-off followed by a mini-survey and analysis to prepare a scoping note on the potential pathways and proposed next steps on how to move forward on the analysis. Mapping is proposed when the competences and organisations involved in a partnership are not well understood and it is hampering activities. Activities of the S3CoP include a survey to regional participants to identify competences around the scope and prepare a mapping report with the competences per region related to the priorities identified. Smart partnering is proposed in cases where a partnership has known, specific gaps, such as competences or geography in their network, where the S3 CoP proposes support to identify relevant new partners and foster their

engagement. The expected outcome is a list of organisations identified and support in outreach to a maximum of five potential partners.

- **Funding, finance, and investment assistance** is proposed where a partnership has a designed demonstrator, business plan or service and needs to locate specific funding or finance. The S3 CoP proposes support in establishing systems / tools to structurally better match funding opportunities to needs, with an expected outcome of the identification of relevant funding opportunities.

Parallel breakout sessions II

The second parallel breakout session covered the following sessions, namely: training and capacity building as a service, demonstration, scale-up and commercialisation as services, and a dedicated breakout session on the agri-food platform. On the services discussed, the following details on when the service should be applied, the resources and activities proposed by the S3 CoP and the expected outcome of the service can be delineated:

- **Training and capacity building** is proposed for emerging partnerships to overcome the stagnation of activities, lack of potential commitment and community backing. The S3 CoP proposes guidance material, as well as training sessions to delineate interregional collaboration, the vision, mission and objective as well as how to engage the quadruple helix. Meetings with relevant organisations and communities are proposed. The expected outcome is an informed lead partner as well as partnerships that are able to effectively engage quadruple helix actors in their TSSP.
- **Demonstration and scale-up and commercialisation** are proposed for partnerships with a need for the design and development of joint demonstration activities as well as partnerships looking to provide access to new markets and support fast growing companies and develop commercialisation activities and capabilities. As pertains to the demonstration activities, the S3 CoP proposes support in project design, as well as establishing tools facilitating the generation of demonstration activities. Expected outcomes are the design of joint projects towards projects implementation as well as the design of tools to structurally facilitate the generation of joint projects. Related to scale-up and commercialisation, the S3 CoP proposes support for the positioning of SMEs involved in the European landscape and making the link with relevant EU instruments for scaling. Expected outcomes include increased capacity for commercialisation of research and demonstration results and access to services for scaling.
- **The agri-food platform breakout session** featured an introduction of the service description, followed by a discussion on the alignment of interest and activities in the six TSSPs that are active in the agri-food platform.