Regional Roadmap: Allon_I3 Project

Attica

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1. Project Background

Overview

The 'Alliance on interregional innovation investments' project is initiated by the Regional Innovation Centre 'Ambitious Gabrovo' (RIC_AG), Bulgaria, in partnership with two other less developed regions (Italy, Portugal), two regions in transition (Greece, Cyprus), and a more developed one (Denmark), along with an associated partner from Norway. Along these lines, the Allon_I3 project seeks to enhance interregional cooperation and innovation by exploring and supporting innovation ecosystems across various European regions.

Project Objectives

The Allon_I3 project centers around three main goals: improving regional connectivity, strengthening existing value chains and creating new ones, and enhancing regions' readiness for investment.

Allon_I3 aims to enhance connectivity of the less developed regions with the others by creating preconditions for a vibrant interregional cooperation and investments along value chains in the target S3 sectors of the project. This is to be enabled by experimenting new approaches, delivering solutions and exchanging good practices. This would lay the ground for future shaping of an interregional innovation investment ecosystem creating benefits to all three regional groups involved in the Allon_I3 project and beyond. The above spells out in 5 regional roadmaps that outline a set of particular activities, timelines, key drivers and expected outcomes.

2. Vision and objectives of Regional Roadmap

A regional roadmap is a strategic plan that outlines the steps and actions required for a region to achieve specific developmental goals or address particular challenges. It provides a structured approach to guide the region through various phases of development, ensuring coordinated efforts among stakeholders and effective use of resources.

A regional roadmap provides a structured plan outlining the steps and milestones for a region to achieve specific goals, particularly in the context of development projects like the Allon_I3 initiative. Regional roadmaps will empower the regions and the Q-helix stakeholders with partnership agreements and business cases to evolve and mature in the project follow-up stage.

Along these lines, 5 regional roadmaps that outline a set of particular activities, timelines, key drivers and expected outcomes (roadmaps for 3 less developed regions and 2 for the two regions in transition).

The Allon_I3 initiative encompasses a variety of European regions, each with distinct qualities that contribute to economic enhancement, technological advancement, and the advancement of sustainable methods. The 5 regional roadmaps will present an analysis from the 3 less developed regions (Gabrovo, Alentejo, Sicily) and the 2 regions in transition (Athens, Nicosia) participating in the project.

3. Current State Analysis

The Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) requires regions to have a comprehensive understanding of their regional institutional contexts to identify their strongest research, innovation and entrepreneurial assets so that they can select a limited number of priorities where they can build critical mass in areas of comparative advantage. Drawing on insights from the National Report developed under Task 2.1, we can delve into the following:

Athens boasts a vibrant and evolving landscape in economics, technology, and innovation, marked by substantial progress in clean technologies, energy solutions, and ICT/digitization. The region's tech sector is especially dynamic, encompassing key industries from renewable energy to advanced digital services. Athens hosts several prominent innovation hubs, including regional EDIHs and collaboration networks, which drive the city's dedication to sustainable and technological progress. This ecosystem is bolstered by a diverse array of SMEs, academic institutions, and research centers, positioning Athens as a crucial hub for interregional cooperation and innovation within the Allon_I3 Project.

SWOT and PESTLE Analysis

- Strengths: Athens has a high concentration of tech startups and a robust commitment to clean technologies and ICT/digitization, supported by strong political policies and investments.

- Weaknesses: Economic pressures and infrastructure challenges pose barriers to innovation, with a noted need for enhanced technological adoption and integration.

- Opportunities: Developing new value chains, particularly in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture, presents significant growth prospects, bolstered by social acceptance and favorable legal frameworks.

- Threats: Economic instability and political challenges could undermine technological infrastructure and innovation ecosystem participation.

- Political: Supportive government policies for tech innovation and a favorable legal framework for innovation highlight Athens' political environment.

- Economic: Economic pressures impact entrepreneurship and innovation within the Greek market, with financial instability noted as a significant external factor.

- Social: Social trends towards global connectivity and environmental consciousness provide opportunities for international collaborations and sustainable solutions.

- Technological: Athens' strong focus on ICT/digitization and renewable energy solutions underscores its technological strengths.

- Legal: The region benefits from laws that encourage innovation but faces challenges with regulatory complexity and the need for further legal enhancements.

- Environmental: Strong environmental policies promote sustainable innovation, with initiatives aimed at improving Athens' environmental sustainability and green technology adoption.

The following initiatives related to the S3 sectors are in place at the moment:

COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL SMART SPECIALIZATION STRATEGY (2021-2027)

Decision making body in the context of the governance model of the national S3 strategy.

INVESTMENT LAW 4887/2022-STRONG DEVELOPMENT OF GREECE (since 2022)

The Investment Law provides an institutional framework of aid schemes for investment projects submitted by individual undertakings or business groups.

KNOWLEDGE AND PARTNERSHIP BRIDGES INITIATIVE (since 2017)

The "Knowledge and Partnerships Bridges" is an initiative aiming at the connection and functional networking between highly skilled Greek professionals living and working abroad with Organizations and Greeks within the country. The goal is to strengthen the growth prospects of the country and ensure that participating Greeks become part of a joint endeavor.

NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN: RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PART (since 2021)

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-26, which constitutes the Greek contribution to the coordinated European response to COVID-19 crisis, includes investments and reforms in the area of research and innovation to address common European challenges by embracing the green and digital transitions and to strengthen economic and social resilience.

NATIONAL SMART SPECIALIZATION STRATEGY 2021-2027 (Greece; 2021-2027)

Strategy for the development of a new growth model in Greece, socially, financially and environmentally sustainable, based on knowledge and its commercialization for the production of high added value products and services, capable to integrate into global value chains.

SECTORAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON DATA AND AI POLICY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (since 2021)

This is a Sectorial Scientific Council on Data and AI (Artificial Intelligence) Policy of the National Council for Research and Innovation (NCRI).

4. Strategic Priorities

Focus Areas

Athens, Greece, is making swift strides in digital transformation, fueled by substantial investments in ICT startups and smart city initiatives. The city's focus on strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors, along with its implementation of smart solutions across urban infrastructure, underscores its ambition to emerge as a leading digital and sustainable city in Europe.

During the development of the new National Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027, an analysis identified eight priority areas where the country holds distinct advantages, which could serve as the foundation for transitioning to a new growth model. These areas include:

- Agri-food value chain

- Bio-sciences, Health, and Pharmaceuticals

- Digital Technologies

- Sustainable Energy

- Environment and Circular Economy

- Transport and Logistics

- Materials, Construction, and Industry

- Tourism, Culture, and Creative Industries

These eight priority areas are similar to those from the 2014-2020 programming period.

Alignment:

The National Smart Specialization Strategy 2021-2027 was officially adopted in June 2022 (Ministerial Decision 66021/30-6-2022). Aligned with European regulations governing Structural Funds, the new S3 Strategy encompasses specific objectives for digitalization, enhancing SMEs' competitiveness and growth, and developing the necessary skills for the twin transition, alongside its focus on research, innovation, and new technologies. Additionally, the national S3

has regional counterparts, complementing the 13 Regional Smart Specialization Strategies across the country's regions.

5. Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder Identification

- National government - Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments (MINDEV)
- Subnational government (Municipalities)
- General Secretariat for Industry
- Higher Education Institutes
- Public research institutes
- Incubators, accelerators, science parks or tech parks
- Firms of any size
- Technology Transfer Offices
- Non-governmental organizations
- Established researchers/PhD students
- Research support institutions
- Industry associations

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

- **Establish a Stakeholder Advisory Group**

- **Form a Diverse Advisory Committee:** Create a committee that includes representatives from various stakeholder groups to provide ongoing input and feedback.
- **Regular Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings to discuss progress, gather insights, and address concerns.

- **Conduct Workshops and Focus Groups**

- **Thematic Workshops:** Organize workshops focused on specific themes or sectors relevant to the S3 to facilitate in-depth discussions and idea generation.
- **Focus Groups:** Host focus groups with targeted stakeholder segments to gather detailed feedback on specific aspects.

- **Public Consultations and Surveys**

- **Online Surveys:** Distribute surveys to gather input from a broader audience, including those who may not be able to attend in-person events.
- **Public Consultations:** Hold public meetings or forums to discuss and gather feedback from the general public.

- **Collaborative Planning Sessions**

- **Co-Creation Workshops:** Engage stakeholders in co-creation sessions where they can contribute to the development of specific elements.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with key stakeholders to co-develop and implement relevant initiatives.

- **Capacity Building and Training**

- **Educational Programs:** Offer training and capacity-building programs to help stakeholders better understand the process and their roles.
- **Skill Development:** Focus on developing the skills needed for stakeholders to actively participate in and contribute to the implementation.

- **Leverage Digital Tools and Platforms**

- **Online Collaboration Tools:** Use digital platforms for collaboration, document sharing, and virtual meetings to engage stakeholders who may not be able to attend in person.
- **Interactive Platforms:** Develop interactive online platforms for stakeholders to provide feedback, vote on priorities, and contribute ideas.

- **Develop Clear Communication Channels**

- **Information Dissemination:** Ensure that stakeholders receive timely and clear information about the process, objectives, and developments.
- **Open Dialogue:** Maintain open channels of communication to address concerns and answer questions from stakeholders.

- **Foster Long-Term Engagement**

- **Sustained Relationships:** Build long-term relationships with stakeholders to ensure continued engagement and support.
- **Ongoing Collaboration:** Promote continuous collaboration and engagement throughout the implementation phase to adapt and refine the strategy as needed.

6. Key proposed initiatives and actions

To boost cross-regional cooperation in the S3 (Smart Specialisation Strategy) sectors within the Attica region, a series of key initiatives and actions can be proposed. These initiatives aim to enhance collaboration between regions, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources, and create synergies that drive innovation and economic growth across the S3 sectors.

1. Establish Cross-Regional Innovation Hubs

- **Creation of Thematic Innovation Hubs:** Set up innovation hubs focused on key S3 sectors (e.g., ICT, energy, health, maritime industries). These hubs would serve as centers for cross-regional collaboration, bringing together researchers, businesses, and public institutions from different regions.

- **Shared Infrastructure:** Develop shared R&D facilities and technological infrastructure accessible to stakeholders from various regions to promote joint research and development.

2. Develop a Cross-Regional Cluster Network

- **Cluster Development Programs:** Foster the development of cross-regional clusters in strategic S3 sectors, encouraging businesses, universities, and research centers from different regions to collaborate on common challenges and opportunities.

- **Inter-Cluster Collaboration:** Facilitate partnerships between existing regional clusters in related sectors to leverage complementary strengths and share best practices.

3. Launch Joint R&D Projects and Programs

- **Co-Funded Research Initiatives:** Promote co-funded R&D projects that involve partners from multiple regions, encouraging joint applications for EU and national funding programs.

- **Collaborative Innovation Programs:** Create specific programs aimed at solving cross-regional challenges through collaborative innovation, such as sustainability in the maritime industry or smart city technologies.

4. Facilitate Knowledge Exchange and Mobility

- **Knowledge Transfer Networks:** Establish networks for knowledge exchange, including digital platforms where stakeholders can share research findings, technology solutions, and market insights.

- **Cross-Regional Mobility Schemes:** Develop mobility programs that allow researchers, students, and professionals to work in partner institutions across different regions, fostering a culture of collaboration and learning.

5. Create a Cross-Regional Funding Mechanism

- **Joint Investment Funds:** Set up cross-regional investment funds that pool resources from multiple regions to finance projects aligned with S3 priorities.

- **Financial Incentives:** Provide financial incentives for cross-regional collaboration, such as grants or tax breaks for projects involving multiple regions.

6. Organize Cross-Regional Innovation Events

- **Annual S3 Conferences:** Host annual conferences or forums that bring together stakeholders from various regions to discuss S3 progress, share insights, and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

- **Thematic Workshops and Hackathons:** Organize sector-specific workshops and hackathons that bring together experts and innovators from different regions to co-create solutions to common challenges.

7. Promote Joint Marketing and Branding Efforts

- **Regional Branding Initiatives:** Develop joint marketing campaigns that highlight the strengths and successes of cross-regional S3 collaborations, attracting investment and talent to the participating regions.

- **Shared Export Promotion:** Collaborate on promoting products and services from S3 sectors in international markets, leveraging the combined reputation and capabilities of multiple regions.

8. Enhance Digital Connectivity and Data Sharing

- **Digital Collaboration Platforms:** Invest in digital platforms that facilitate collaboration across regions, including tools for project management, virtual meetings, and real-time data sharing.

- **Open Data Initiatives:** Encourage regions to adopt open data policies that make it easier to share and access data relevant to S3 sectors, supporting cross-regional research and innovation.

9. Support Cross-Regional Policy Coordination

- **Policy Alignment Workshops:** Organize workshops and dialogues to align policies and regulatory frameworks across regions, ensuring a conducive environment for cross-regional cooperation.

- **Joint Policy Advocacy:** Collaborate on advocacy efforts at the national and EU levels to secure support and funding for cross-regional S3 initiatives.

10. Foster International Partnerships

- **Global Networking:** Encourage cross-regional partnerships with international counterparts to integrate Attica's S3 sectors into global value chains.

- **Participation in European Programs:** Actively engage in European programs and initiatives that support cross-regional cooperation, such as the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) and Interreg programs.

11. Monitor and Evaluate Cross-Regional Initiatives

- **Cross-Regional Performance Metrics:** Develop a set of metrics to monitor the performance and impact of cross-regional collaborations, ensuring continuous improvement and alignment with S3 goals.

- **Regular Reporting:** Implement a reporting mechanism to track the progress of cross-regional initiatives and share success stories and lessons learned.

By implementing these initiatives and actions, the Attica region can significantly enhance cross-regional cooperation, fostering a more integrated and innovative environment that benefits all participating regions and aligns with the broader objectives of the S3 strategy.

7. Collaboration and Partnerships – Good practices

Cross-Regional Collaboration

1. Identifying Complementary Strengths

- Collaborate with regions that have complementary industries or expertise, such as pairing Attica's ICT strengths with another region's renewable energy focus.

2. Establishing Innovation Clusters

- Create cross-regional innovation clusters to foster knowledge exchange and joint ventures, leveraging each region's unique assets.

3. Participating in European Networks

- Engage in EU-funded programs and networks that encourage interregional collaboration, such as Horizon Europe or Interreg, to align with broader European innovation goals.

4. Joint Research and Development Initiatives

- Launch joint R&D projects between universities, research institutions, and SMEs from different regions, focusing on shared challenges and opportunities.

5. Enhancing Mobility Programs

- Facilitate mobility of researchers, students, and professionals across regions to foster a culture of cooperation and shared learning.

6. Co-Developing Smart Solutions

- Work together on developing and implementing smart city initiatives, digital transformation projects, and sustainable development strategies that benefit all involved regions.

These strategies can help strengthen interregional ties, boost innovation, and contribute to the overall success of the National S3 Strategy.

Good practices:

COLLABORATING PROFESSORS (since 2022)

Acclaimed Greek scientists, who are professors in foreign universities or researchers in foreign research organizations, may simultaneously be employed part-time in Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as collaborating professors with the aim of transfering teaching or research project experience from abroad to national HEIs (Law 4957/2022, article 169).

CLUSTERS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE (since 2022)

This action refers to the development of Clusters of Research Excellence scheme (CREs) in the form of research group consortia between Greek Universities and private sector companies for the development of R&D innovative, internationally competitive products and services, with emphasis in areas of cutting-edge technologies, to be applied in the real economy.

CORALLIA CLUSTERS INITIATIVE

Corallia is a multi-Cluster facilitator, incubator and youth entrepreneurship accelerator, that underpins national and regional development plans in Greece as one of the main pillars of the Greek innovation ecosystem.

EKT'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP-RELATED SERVICES FOR INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

EKT supports the innovative transformation and improvement of the digital capacity of companies and organisations. With extensive experience in European programmes and substantial know-how as a National Contact Point, and making full use of the Enterprise Europe Network with a presence in more than 60 countries, EKT innovation consultants effectively guide researchers and businesses in identifying funding opportunities, entering into international partnerships and enhancing outward-orientation towards the digital economy.

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SPIN-OFF FIRMS (since 2021)

According to Law 4864/21 and Law 4957/22 the creation of spin-off firms from universities is seen as an important mechanism for the commercialization of research, and hence the overall contribution from universities to technology development and economic growth. Reform of the institutional framework for spin-offs concerns the simplification and clarification of the operating framework of spin-offs, i.e. companies that arise from Research Centers and Universities, investing in the know-how produced, while aiming to encourage the creation of more patents.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (since 2022)

According to the Strategic Plan for Higher Education, targeted investment in research excellence, reorganization of research activity by strengthening networks and collaborations and cooperation with businesses for the development of innovation and technology transfer constitute a strategic objective.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TRANSFER UNIT (since 2022)

Establishing in each HEI a Technology and Innovation Transfer Unit to promote its research capacity, connection with industry sector, transfer of the knowledge produced to society and

the cultivation of the entrepreneurial skills within the academic community (Law 4957/2022, Article 211).

REGIONAL IP SUB-OFFICES (since 2018)

The Hellenic Industrial Property Organization (OBI) launched in 1995 the Regional Patent Libraries network, currently named as Regional Sub-offices. The initial network included 3 Libraries that were relaunched in 2018 and since 2019 expanded to 3 more cities, thus providing services in 6 regions: Macedonia (Thessaloniki), Peloponnese (Patras), Crete (Heraklion), Central Greece (Volos), Epirus (Ioannina) and Thrace (Xanthi – Komotini).The Regional Sub-offices provide:– technological information from Patents at National and International level– information and personalized assistance on industrial property protection and research results– information to the public– transfer and diffusion of technological information to any interested party in Greece– printed information related to the Organisation and its services, as well as application forms for protection titles– help and guidelines to the applicants on the filling of applications for protection titles (Patents, Utility Models, Designs, Trademarks). The available information at this level is enough to get knowledge of the level of the prior art at a first stage and to apply for "pre-research".OBI's Regional Sub-offices are addressing to Inventors, Industrial Designers, Businesses, Chambers, Academic and Technological Institutes, Research Institutes, Young Entrepreneurs, Startups, Professional Organizations, Individuals and others.

8. Timeline and milestones

Timeline:

Short-Term

- **Strategic Planning**: Finalizing strategic objectives and priority areas.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Establishing collaborative frameworks with key regional stakeholders.

- **Initial Implementation**: Launching pilot projects in priority sectors such as ICT and renewable energy.

Medium-Term

- **Expansion of Projects**: Scaling successful pilot projects and initiatives.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: Conducting mid-term reviews to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.

Long-Term

- **Full Implementation**: Achieving comprehensive rollout of S3 strategies across all priority sectors.

- **Final Evaluation**: Assessing overall impact and preparing for the next strategic cycle.

9. Expected Outcomes

Economic Growth and Competitiveness

- **Increased Innovation**: Boosting regional innovation through enhanced collaboration among SMEs, research institutions, and universities.

- **Job Creation**: Generating new employment opportunities, particularly in high-tech and sustainable industries.

Digital and Sustainable Development

- **Digital Transformation**: Advancing the digitalization of key sectors and public services.

- **Sustainability**: Promoting green technologies and sustainable urban development.

Regional and Interregional Collaboration

- **Enhanced Cooperation**: Strengthening regional and interregional networks, positioning Attica as a key player in broader European initiatives.

These outcomes are expected to position Attica as a leading region in innovation and sustainable growth.

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