



# Evaluation Helpdesk 2021-2027



**Task 2.a: Support to Member States**

**SPAIN**

**13+14 November 2024**

**Venue: CDTI, Calle Cid,4 - 28001 Madrid.**



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP – SPAIN

## SMART SPECIALISATION

**13+14 NOVEMBER 2024**

### Background

The Spanish authorities have asked the Evaluation Helpdesk for assistance to strengthen capacities to evaluate Smart Specialization strategies in the programming period, 2021-27. Smart Specialisation Strategies have been central to the innovation and competitiveness goals of the 2014-2020 programming period; and in the 2020-27 period the principles of S3 have been ‘mainstreamed’ across objectives for a Smarter Europe, Greener Europe and A More Connected Europe. This places the uptake of innovative RTD and associated enabling conditions at the centre of the evaluation of S3 strategies.

Given the importance of Regional Programmes, as well as in the pluri-annual national ERDF Programme in Spain, it is anticipated that the proposed event will involve up to 40 participants responsible for commissioning and managing evaluations from across Spain.

### Evaluation Challenges of Smart Specialisation

In preliminary discussions, the Spanish coordinating team and regional experts have expressed an interest in a number of topics. These included:

- How to take into account the specific characteristics of Smart Specialisation programmes
- Developing appropriate Terms of Reference
- Priorities for good Proposals and how to improve the quality of proposals
- Asking the right Evaluation Questions
- Choosing the best approaches and methods.

Additional topics follow from the specificity of Smart Specialisation as a ‘place-based, innovation and technology focussed strategy that builds on mobilising the distinctive strengths and resources of regions. This brings into focus:

- Innovation at national & enterprise level including the extent to which Universities, Institutes and knowledge brokers are oriented to digital and green opportunities for enterprise and market transformation; and knowledge exchange relationships between large firms and SMEs as well as between domestic and multinational firms.
- *‘Cross cutting’ or ‘horizontal’ programmes and policies.* S3 strategies typically bring together Horizon and REACT EU with ERDF investments. Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms (TSSPs) can also add a cross European dimension. The sectoral focus of many S3 strategies which requires enterprise networking & cooperation at national as well as at European level (e.g. via TSSPs) also reinforces the cross-cutting dimension.
- *The importance of engaging with ‘on-the-ground’ partners, stakeholders and intermediaries.* How far all relevant partners are engaged in a process of ‘entrepreneurial discovery’ when programmes

are planned; and as part of coordination and governance in the course of implementation also has to be evaluated. This inevitably also raises the way any evaluation of S3 can be made adaptive, i.e. how to respond to change trajectories and how to steer evaluations so as to remain focussed and maximise quality.

- *Theories of Change likely to lead to competitive advantage and sustainability.* Smart Specialisation as part of ‘transition’ and transformational programming opens up long-term development processes, extending over 2 or 3 programming periods. Deciding what can be evaluated in the short, medium and longer term will be important.

## Proposed Workshop

The Workshop that will last one and a half days will cover the main steps in designing and managing the evaluation of a Smart Specialization Strategy. The overall learning style will be participative, building on the experience and know-how of those attending. In practical terms, there will be a mixture of presentation, exchange of experience and practical exercises, taking place in both plenary and small group settings. Practical exercises will use case material based on ‘real-world’ examples built around simplified versions of actual Programmes.

Given the number of participants it will be important to work in a large enough room, arranged in ‘café-style’ around tables to accommodate up to 40 participants. Four other breakout rooms will also be required each with flipcharts and a table to work around.

The following Agenda outlines workshop content. This Agenda can be adapted following clarificatory discussion and suggestions, in advance and during the course of the one and a half days.

## Draft Agenda

Time	Activity – day 1	Outputs
9.00 - 9.30	<b>Introductions:</b> Personal introductions by all participants followed by Helpdesk team introducing the workshop agenda and key learning outcomes	Confirmation or adjustment of Agenda
9.30 - 10.45	<b>Types of S3 activities in Spain, expected effects and evaluation challenges:</b> Participants will brainstorm in ‘table’ groups for 30 minutes identifying S3 strategy types, expected effects & enabling conditions including existing strengths and weaknesses in RTD take-up . An initial Theory of Change template will be provided to assist this exercise. Key points will be discussed in plenary for 45 minutes.	Basic typology of main types of S3 programming, likely evaluation challenges and first steps towards a generic Theory of Change.
10.45- 11.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
11.00 - 13.00	<b>Choosing Evaluation Questions:</b> Helpdesk input (approximately 30 minutes) about nature of EQs	Understanding of EQs relevant for different types of S3 activity

Time	Activity – day 1	Outputs
	– descriptive & explanatory, causal & contributory; summative, formative and normative; and how EQs relate to Theories of Change and types of Smart Specialisation activities. This will be followed by discussion in breakout rooms (60 minutes); and plenary, feedback, Q&A and discussions (30 minutes)	including strengthening national/regional innovation systems; sectoral initiatives; cross-cutting and horizontal multi-programmes (i.e. including more than one ERDF and/or other EU programmes), governance arrangements; and the ‘entrepreneurial discovery process’.
13.00 - 13.45	<b>Methodological options for different S3 setting; and for different EQs:</b> Helpdesk framework inputs together with introduction of 2 simplified ToRs similar to examples in present Spanish OPs and Evaluation Plan	Awareness of EQ/methodology choices and how these choices can match different S3 settings and activities
13.45-14.45	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.45 - 16.00	<b>Choosing EQs, approaches and methods:</b> In-depth exercise in breakout rooms using 2 simplified ToRs and framework material on EQs and methodological choices	Ability to distinguish how different EQs, approaches and methods need to be adjusted to match different S3 settings
16.00-17.15	Presentation in plenary sessions of breakout discussions and challenges identified. Followed by Q&A	Identification of key evaluation challenges when choosing methodologies
17. 15	Day 1 Workshop ends - A light snack (vino español) served after the workshop	
Time	Activity – day 2	Outputs
9.00-9.30	<b>Review of Day 1:</b> Responding to points of clarification and adjusting Day 2 agenda if necessary	Confirmation or adjustment of Day 2 Agenda
9.30 – 11.00	<b>Taking into account the role of research &amp; innovation partners, public agencies, users and intermediaries such as knowledge brokers in S3 type programmes.</b> Plenary and Table-based discussions moderated by Helpdesk. How can evaluation support different roles?	Clarification of the specificities of how to evaluate user/partner/stakeholder roles in S3 evaluation
11.00-11.15	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
11.15-13.00	<b>ToR ‘quality’ when commissioning S3 evaluations:</b> Plenary discussion facilitated by Helpdesk about what constitutes ‘quality’ in	Raised awareness of quality assessment when evaluating S3 strategies

Time	Activity – day 2	Outputs
	ToRs in general and in S3 ToRs in particular. To include identification of data/evidence sources; quality difficulties encountered and how quality can be improved. Participants will brainstorm in Breakout groups for 1 hour and discuss their conclusions and questions in plenary for 45 minutes.	
13.00-13.45	<b>Final Review session:</b> what has been learned and outstanding areas of uncertainty? Plenary review and discussion.	Highlighting issues covered; how they relate to S3 evaluations; outstanding issues.
13:45	Workshop ends -A lunch served after the workshop	

## Experts

- Elliot Stern - Lancaster University
- Thomas Delahais – Quadrant Conseil
- Andrea Naldini - Ismeri Europa