

## Friends of Smart Specialisation - 10 things we did in 2021...

1. In May, FoSS participated with presentations and overall reporting to the **EURASHE 30th Annual Conference** (online) (Richard and Dimitri)
2. Also in May, FoSS organised a **Special Session in the Regions in Recovery Global eFestival of the RSA** (Regional Studies Association) (SS09. FOSS I - What role of Smart Specialisation in driving resilience and recovery? The key issue this session addressed was the role of smart specialisation (S3) in the current period and how far smart specialisation can and will be able to play a role in developing and delivering regional sustainable growth through the present recovery and transformation plans (RRPs) of the Member States.
3. Also in May, Dimitri Corpakis presented the FoSS vision on S3 and its links with macro-regional strategies in a **EUSAIR Online Forum**.
4. In August, FoSS presented a joint paper in the **ERSA Annual Conference** (European Regional Science Association) (online) on 26/8/21 (ERSA 60th CONGRESS: TERRITORIAL FUTURES, VISIONS AND SCENARIOS FOR A RESILIENT EUROPE )(24-27/08/21) on "Considering the macro-regional dimension of industrial ecosystems: functional macro-regions and smart specialisation". A version of the same paper was also presented by Dimitri during the **AISRE (Association of Italian Regional Scientists)** annual online conference in September.
5. In October, FoSS participated actively in the evaluation session for the Smart Specialisation Strategy of the **Galicia region** (Spain) that took place online.
6. Also in October, FoSS organised a session at the **European Week of Regions and Cities** [Investing for resilience and recovery: defining a new role for clusters and smart specialisation | European Week of Regions and Cities \(europa.eu\)](#)
7. Also in October, Richard took part in the **"tetRRIS October workshop"** was organised as a space to share experiences, learn from each other and support the challenges in regional implementation of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). The two-day online workshop was led by VTT, the coordinating partner of the tetRRIS project. [Home page tetRRIS - tetRRIS](#)
8. Also in October, Richard was invited to present at the **EURASHE Restart Workshop** on Professional Higher Education contributing to Recovery and Resilience. [EURASHE Restart: Workshop on Professional Higher Education contributing to Recovery and Resilience in Europe | EURASHE](#) . FoSS have built a good relationship with EURASHE and we wish John Edwards the new Secretary General (ex JRC Seville and S3 expert all our best wishes).
9. In November, FoSS started a collaboration with the **DYNA Think Tank** (Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg, Stabsstelle Forschung Förderberatung / EU-Hochschulnetzwerk (FFB), Steuerungsgruppe Think Tank DYNA) on the issue of Smart Specialisation with a special focus on the region of Sachsen-Anhalt.
10. Richard Tuffs was invited to a closed **Interreg-Europe PLP webinar on Industrial Policy** (16th Dec) with participants from the Committee of the Regions and countries and regions with relevant Interreg-Europe projects such as [S34Growth | Interreg Europe](#) and [INNO INDUSTRY | Interreg Europe](#) .

N.B. The Interreg-Europe PLP is a useful site for events and other opportunities such as peer reviews [News and events | Interreg Europe](#) . The next event is on Building a Regional Hydrogen Economy in February 2022 see [Building a regional hydrogen economy | Interreg Europe](#) .

## **Future events - 2022**

### **1. FoSS at RSA Regions in Recovery Conference in March 2022 (opportunities to contribute)**

FoSS has been accepted by the RSA for an open session at the RSA Regions in Recovery Conference in March 2022. Please send in an **abstract by 17th January 2022** if you would like to join our session below

**Top down sectoral meets bottom up place based perspective: love at first sight or marriage of convenience?**

**#SmartSpecialisation** <https://www.regionalstudies.org/news/2022-rinr-special-sessions/#!>

#### **Outline**

The European Green Deal is the new growth strategy of the EU. Introduced in 2019 along with the Digital Agenda, the Green Deal and the Digital Agenda became the twin-track policy drivers for the 2021-2027 financial period supported by cohesion, research and innovation and industrial strategies.

Following the COVID crisis in 2020, the EU unleashed a battery of new instruments under Next Generation EU enriched by a New Industrial Policy and a New Digital Agenda. The EU's long-term budget, coupled with NextGenerationEU (NGEU), a temporary instrument designed to boost the recovery, freed up €2.018 trillion to help rebuild a greener, more digital, and more resilient Europe. post-COVID-19 Europe a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.

To access the funding, Member States produced in a record time the so-called National Recovery Plans (NRP), which in themselves are for their majority, impressive planning pieces of extraordinary promise targeting investments for innovative growth. Yet, there are serious concerns over their feasibility, the underlying framework conditions for their implementation and the prioritisation mechanisms that led to their adoption.

However, one of the key weaknesses of the Recovery Plans was the lack of attention paid to consulting the regional or local levels on future investment choices as it is now confirmed by numerous reports at the EU institutional level. Therefore, the Recovery Plans may firstly not represent the actual regional challenges or relate to existing smart specialisation strategies and secondly reduce the 'buy-in' of regions and relevant stakeholders due to a lack of ownership of the program and hence undermine its implementation.

So, a key question is why were, in most Member States, regional smart specialisation strategies (S3) ignored but also how can S3 play a bridging role with the NRP to deliver the best prioritisation process for investment choices in the context of the Green Deal? More generally, the question of mainstreaming S3 at the heart of relevant EU policies that have an impact on growth, jobs and wellbeing needs to be seriously debated.

This Open Session welcomes discussion and insights from on the ground as to why Smart Specialisation is not already mainstreamed as a general concept in all transformation policies? Can we identify bridges that facilitate linking recovery plans and smart specialisation or on the other hand identify barriers to linking smart specialisation to National Recovery Plans and EU Industrial Policy? Is Smart Specialisation confined to regional policy and what happened to multilevel innovation governance?

A second area of discussion is how to link a more sectoral industrial strategy focused on industrial ecosystems, alliances, and Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs) with the concept of place-based transformation? This opens up the debate between a top-down directionality (e.g. Green and Digital) with a more bottom-up focus rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach and a shift to a more challenge driven approach embracing mission-oriented research and innovation (Horizon Europe). What could be the spatial implications of such an approach?

These questions open up a wider discussion on several areas:

- Can S3 or S4 act as a transition policy of the economic growth model as a whole (Green Deal for climate neutrality)?
- Is the European Green Deal, with its wealth of policies, encouraging regions to shift from S3 to S4 (smart specialisation and sustainability)?
- What is the leverage power of 'smart specialisation for sustainability'?
- How can an innovation system approach be integrated in multi-level governance? For example, what should be the future role of the European Research Area which still supports 'a robust policy framework to better support fundamental research at national and European levels to generate breakthrough knowledge and innovation' while accepting a stronger need to 'link industrial and R&I policies, notably on how to accelerate the industrial take-up of R&I results'.
- Who will be the driver and have the political ownership for a possible new top-down/bottom-up growth model? What could be the role of European alliances across urban innovation systems?

**Submit an abstract by 17th January 2022**

<https://www.regionalstudies.org/news/2022-rinr-special-sessions/>

[Events & Webinars - RSA Main \(regionalstudies.org\)](https://www.regionalstudies.org)