

# ***Friends of Smart Specialisation***

## **Mission Statement**

**(July 2019)**

The *Friends of Smart Specialisation* is an informal group of **independent** innovation policy experts, set up in Brussels in 2018.

The group's goal is to enhance the smart specialisation<sup>1</sup> approach as an **instrument** for strengthening the multi-level European innovation system. The group therefore aspires to be a **resource** for policy makers and shapers at all levels.

The following 10 principles are proposed to guide the further work of the group towards **mainstreaming** smart specialisation in a coherent way:

In the group's view, Smart Specialisation:

- Is a key feature of **multi-level governance of innovation and transformation investments** in the EU. Furthermore, efficiency and effectiveness can only be achieved by a synchronisation of priorities. For this to happen, Smart Specialisation provides a decision mechanism in a dynamic context.
- Offers a **decentralised model of coordination** to avoid fragmentation of investment efforts and an unnecessary duplication at EU level which undermines the competitiveness of European actors at a global scale. Isolated efforts often remain at sub-critical scale. Smart specialisation informs and supports the **positioning** of European actors.
- Is an approach for **self-discovery of opportunities in system transitions**. It is driven by the search for European added-value (therefore focussing on higher TRL-levels in implementing innovation).
- Requires a **place-based** innovation approach at all levels, as well as an **integrated policy mix** to support entrepreneurial actors (in quadruple helix mode) across the board.
- Is a **bottom-up** co-creation process of new futures while at the same time requiring **top-down** leadership to set the proper direction.

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<sup>1</sup> For a definition of the concept of Smart Specialisation please see <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>

- Is a governance and policy approach that is geared towards **strategic targeting** of public-private investments in support of a thorough transformation process. While the entrepreneurial discovery (EDP) sets the direction, smart specialisation strategies are foremost government commitments to mobilise public and private resources in a strategic manner.
- Requires a governance **capacity** to organise the EDP as strategic co-creation process (strategic roadmapping of joint commitments and diagnostic monitoring of their implementation). This governance capacity must support and train place-based actors, able to join up triple helix<sup>2</sup> players and act transnationally.
- Requires a new kind of strategic **intelligence that** is forward looking (avoiding lock-ins) and seeks complementarities (not only benchmarking with peers).
- Has a close link with **regional** transformation policies, often based on **clusters** with their unique development and demonstration capacity, and **cities** often acting as living labs.
- Needs to be further **mainstreamed** so that it becomes a necessary component of a genuine European integration. For this to happen, all actors need to contribute to common goals and align themselves to new development opportunities.

*For more information you may wish to contact:*

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*The Friends of Smart Specialisation has already organised three successful workshops in the format of a **Smart Specialisation Policy Lab**, in 2018 and 2019. A **policy paper** is currently being prepared on the basis of these inputs by the end of 2019.*

*A mailing list for future events has been developed. Please let us know if you would like to be included in this **list**.*

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<sup>2</sup> You can find more on the Triple Helix at <https://www.triplehelixassociation.org/>