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Wprowadzenie

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Wyrażamy przekonanie, że publikacja ta będzie stanowiła istotny wkład w rozwój gospodarki przestrzennej jako interdyscyplinarnej dziedziny wiedzy, będzie także inspiracją do dalszych badań i analiz porównawczych. Większość artykułów, oprócz wartości czysto naukowej, ma także walor aplikacyjny. Pozwala to z optymizmem spoglądać w przyszłość tej szybko rozwijającej się dziedziny naukowej, jaką jest gospodarka przestrzenna.

W imieniu Komitetu Redakcyjnego

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SMART SPECIALISATION IN THE REGIONS OF EASTERN POLAND – CASE STUDY

INTELIgENTNE SPECJALIZACJE W WOJEWÓDZTWACH POLSKI WSCHODNIEJ – STUDIUM PRZYPADKU

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Summary: The concept of smart specialisation (SS) is of crucial importance for the EU innovation policy in the years 2014-2020. It is emphasized in the EC's documents that the process of smart specialisation can be applied to all types of regions: the best performing as well as the least innovative ones. The main aim of the paper is to assess the importance of the smart specialisation process in Eastern Poland with a case study on the Świętokrzyskie region. All Eastern Poland regions have already identified smart specialisations, have started their implementation as well as have designed their monitoring and evaluation tools. The case of Świętokrzyskie shows that the region decided to design smart specialisations process with the use of detailed regional analysis, foresight studies, a report submitted by an external expert cabinet, public consultations with regional stakeholders and the assistance of the World Bank. The region has chosen the coordinators of selected smart specialisations that were formally approved in February 2014. The monitoring and evaluation system has also been implemented. As research methods, the authors used descriptive analysis and case study analysis.

Keywords: smart specialisation, region, Eastern Poland, innovation, Świętokrzyskie.

Streszczenie: Pojęcie inteligentnych specjalizacji jest kluczowe dla polityki innowacji prowadzonej w UE w latach 2014-2020. W dokumentach Komisji Europejskiej podkreśla się, że proces inteligentnych specjalizacji może być zastosowany zarówno w odniesieniu do najlepiej prosperujących, jak i do najmniej innowacyjnych regionów. Głównym celem artykułu jest ocena znaczenia inteligentnych specjalizacji w województwach Polski Wschodniej z uwzględnieniem studium przypadku dotyczącym świętokrzyskiego. Wszystkie województwa Polski Wschodniej zidentyfikowały już regionalne inteligentne specjalizacje, rozpoczęły ich implementację, a także określiły narzędzia ich monitoringu i ewaluacji. Przykład województwa świętokrzyskiego pokazuje, że region zdecydował się zidentyfikować inteligentne

specjalizacje w oparciu o szczegółowe analizy regionalne, studia foresightowe, zlecone zewnętrznie opracowanie eksperckie, konsultacje społeczne z regionalnymi interesariuszami, przy współpracy Banku Światowego. Region wybrał także koordynatorów poszczególnych inteligentnych specjalizacji, które zostały formalnie zatwierdzone w lutym 2014 r. System monitoringu i ewaluacji został także wdrożony. W artykule zastosowano następujące metody badawcze: analiza opisowa i analiza studium.

Słowa kluczowe: inteligentna specjalizacja, region, Polska Wschodnia, innowacje, Świętokrzyskie.

1. Introduction

Smart specialisation is known as the major regional innovation agenda for the EU cohesion policy programming period 2014-2020 and as an important element of the Innovation Union flagship programme of the EC. This originally non-spatial and largely theoretical concept has been translated into a geographical and rather pragmatic scheme to become a powerful regional policy tool¹. The smart specialisation concept is a way of thinking about local knowledge- and learning-enhancement systems. This is a way for policymakers to design and combine local development policies and should be understood as a partnership-type approach between different stakeholders aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in order to open perspectives for regional competitive advantage. An advantage of this approach is that it forces regional policy priorities to be set up in a pragmatic way and on a basis closely related to regional strengths, socio-economic and innovation potential and challenges. Moreover, the approach is not necessarily concentrated on the prioritisation of high technologies, but it rather emphasises the broader understanding of innovation developed over recent years (even though this policy approach may raise concerns about "picking winners") [McCann 2015, p.197].

The paper aims at examining the process of smart specialisation in Eastern Poland with a case study focused on Świętokrzyskie. It is highlighted in the European Commission's documents that the SS approach can be applied to all types of regions: the most developed as well as the least innovative ones. As an empirical investigation of the smart specialisation process in the least innovative regions in Europe is rather scarce, the paper aims to fill this gap. In order to achieve the main objective of the paper, the following detailed objectives are expected to be met: 1) explanation of the logic of the smart specialisation process in less innovative regions, 2) presentation of the socio-economic and innovation potential of Eastern Poland regions, 3) assessment of the SS process in Eastern Poland with a case study

¹ The theoretical framework of the smart specialisation concept was developed in particular in the following papers: [OECD 2013; Foray, David, Hall 2009; McCann, Ortega-Argiles 2013; Camagni, Capello 2013].

on the Świętokrzyskie region. As research methods, the authors used descriptive analysis and case study analysis.

2. Smart specialisation process in less innovative regions

Some observers argue that the smart specialisation approach only favours the strongest regions with a high-tech potential and there is little to be gained while adopting this process to weaker regions. However, this criticism is not valid. Smart specialisation emerges rather as a useful way for many non-core regions to prioritise policy initiatives and ensure resource concentration in a manner which provides weaker regions with the greatest potential benefits from EU cohesion policy exploring learning processes as well as capacity-building, knowledge exchange and self-discovery [McCann 2015, p. 161].

The SS model provides a logical framework that gives policymakers an opportunity to frame their long-term innovation-related development agendas. This logic also implies that chosen priorities should differ markedly in various types of regions, depending on the region's geography, industrial and institutional structure or technological profile.

In order to assess the applicability of the smart specialisation approach to different types of regions, a classification of regions according to various economic and innovation criteria is needed. An OECD analysis using a set of socio-economic and innovation related variables identified eight types of regions grouped into three categories, namely: knowledge hubs, industrial production zones and non-S&T-driven regions [OECD 2011, p. 113]. The group of non-S&T-driven regions is further divided into: 1) structural inertia or de-industrialising regions and 2) primary-sector-intensive regions. The first subcategory is characterised by persistent underdevelopment traps, low S&T related indicators, low GDP per capita and it faces a process of de-industrialisation or structural inertia. The second subcategory of regions is composed of regions with low population density, a significant share of their economy in primary sector activities or low-technology manufacturing and the lowest values on S&T related indicators. In the case of Poland four regions are grouped into the category of structural inertia or de-industrialising regions and twelve regions (among them all Eastern Poland regions) are categorised as primary-sector-intensive regions [Ajmone Marsan, Maguire 2011, p. 18].

In the non-S&T-related regions which are primarily agricultural regions the focus of the smart specialisation process should be on fostering local entrepreneurship in non-agricultural activities in order to help diversify the rural economy away from typically agricultural activities to a wider range of activities. In the case of non-S&T-related regions which benefit primarily from the inflows of FDI in response to low local factor prices and the regions which were former industrial production zones, the smart specialisation approach would be 1) to foster specialist skill training, 2) to enhance both local and interregional connectivity in the region's most embedded

activities in order for knowledge flows to fuel local innovative activities and 3) to help the region with formal R&D activities (such as patenting) [McCann 2015, p. 184-185].

Evidence from a growing body of literature suggests that ‘hard’ investments such as transport infrastructure tend to have a greater impact on lower levels of economic development, but only if they are combined with human capital investments. In contrast, ‘soft’ innovation-related investments have the biggest impact in more advanced regions [Crescenzi, Rodrigues-Pose 2012, quoted by McCann 2015, p. 188].

3. Socio-economic and innovation potential in the regions of Eastern Poland

The macroregion of Eastern Poland (composed of five NUTS 2 regions: Lubelskie, Podlaskie, Podkarpackie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie) is a consistent area with the lowest level of economic development in Poland and one of the lowest in the EU. According to the Eurostat Regional Database, in 2013 in each analysed region GDP *per capita* did not exceed 28 per cent of the EU average. The highest values were recorded in Świętokrzyskie and Podlaskie – 7 500 EUR per inhabitant, the lowest in Lubelskie and Podkarpackie – 7 300 EUR per inhabitant. The problems that affect the socio-economic situation are largely of a structural nature and result from historical circumstances and peripheral location on the external border of the EU. Unfavourable factors are also low labour productivity and labour market problems [Operational Programme Eastern Poland 2014-2020, p. 7-14].

A low level of labour productivity is a consequence of a traditional economy structure with the dominance of inefficient agriculture and a low viability of other sectors of the economy, resulting from low innovativeness and infrastructural underdevelopment. In 2012, the highest R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP was recorded in Lubelskie and Podkarpackie – 1.2 per cent, the lowest in Świętokrzyskie – merely 0.3 per cent. In the period of 2010-2012, the average number of patent applications to the EPO per million of inhabitants did not exceed 4.8. The highest value of the indicator had Podkarpackie, followed by Lubelskie – 4.6 and Świętokrzyskie – 4.3. The lowest values were recorded in Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie, 1.8 and 1.9 respectively [Eurostat Regional Database].

Enterprises in the analysed regions do not innovate sufficiently. This is, to some extent, a result of a very limited degree of cooperation with other companies and non-commercial institutes. Supra-regional cooperation could be developed among others by the creation of cluster initiatives. There were 72 clusters in Eastern Poland in 2012 (over 35 per cent of the total number of such undertakings in Poland). The highest number of clusters was established in Warmińsko-Mazurskie – 18.8 cluster initiatives were created in Świętokrzyskie. Most of them are active in power engineering and tourism. There are also single clusters in food industry, ceramics, construction and design [PARP 2012, p. 3-12].

Labour market problems in the regions of Eastern Poland are connected particularly with the economic migration to other parts of the country regarding mainly young and well-educated people. In 2002-2012, the macroregion of Eastern Poland lost a total of 145 000 people. The biggest outflow was recorded in Lubelskie – 2.4 per cent, Świętokrzyskie – 2 per cent and Warmińsko-Mazurskie – 1.9 per cent, the lowest in Podlaskie – 1.6 per cent and Podkarpackie – 1.1 per cent [Zdrojewski, Guzińska 2012]. Thus globally, characteristics of the regions of Eastern Poland confirm the features of non-S&T-driven regions elaborated by the OECD.

4. Smart specialisation process in Eastern Poland – case study

The regions of Eastern Poland started the process of smart specialisation in line with six steps to design RIS 3 strategies proposed by the European Commission [European Commission 2012]. In the majority of cases the identification of regional smart specialisations has been based on the analysis of endogenous regional potentials, scientific and technological specialisations of regional universities and R&D centres, regional assets. Świętokrzyskie has used foresight to select regional smart specialisations and an external report commissioned by regional authorities. In all cases proposed regional smart specialisations have been discussed with regional stakeholders via local consultations in sub-regions. Once local consultations with regional actors are over, the selected smart specialisations have been formally approved by regional authorities in the form of a RIS3 strategy [Czyżewska, Golejewska 2014, pp. 215-217].

In the analysed regions monitoring and evaluation indicators have been set in the RIS3 strategies in order to adjust the smart specialisation process if necessary. In Podkarpackie the assessment of monitoring indicators and of regional position will be carried out at least once a year using Perkal's method and quantitative and qualitative studies of RIS actors; in Podlaskie regional territorial observatory is under construction. Globally SS monitoring systems are combined with monitoring systems of regional innovation strategies [Czyżewska, Golejewska 2014, p. 216].

Świętokrzyskie has been chosen for a case study as an example of a region that made great progress in the process of smart specialisation among five Eastern Poland regions.

The process of identification of smart specialisations in the region included a development of the first project of RIS3, which took place in 2011-2012 (an external report commissioned by regional authorities and submitted by Geoprofit in 2011) and its further update until the end of 2013. The initial draft of RIS3 was based on the previous diagnosis of the region (regional infrastructure and resources, clusters, innovation support structures, institutional linkages), including three foresight reports from 2007-2008 (Świętokrzyskie is the only Eastern Poland

region to use foresight as an identification method of smart specialisations)² [Rogut, Piasecki 2013, p. 22]. Key stakeholders, including *inter alia* local firms, research units, social organizations and administration who participated in focus interviews and in local seminars on the selection of regional smart specialisations had an important impact on the selection of smart specialisations. The first project of RIS3 (2012) contained potential smart specialisations, such as vertically: efficient use of energy, medical tourism, fair and conference sector, foundry and metal industry and horizontally: knowledge transfer and design. Finally, knowledge transfer and design were removed because of their uncertain competitive advantages. Smart specialisations were chosen on the basis of their contribution to national and regional GDP (industry and construction), comparative advantage to the EU at national level (energy efficient construction, foundry and metal industry and, to a lesser extent, tourist services), above average total factor productivity level (metal industry) and labour productivity level (metal industry and construction) and export potential (foundry and metal industry) [Strategia Badań i Innowacyjności (RIS3) 2014, pp. 37-44]. Strategia Badań i Innowacyjności (RIS3) 2014 containing selected regional smart specialisations was formally approved on February 24th, 2014 by the *Sejmik* (Parliament) of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship.

In 2015, the Board of the Region accepted the list of the selected consortia for the development of smart specialisations of Świętokrzyskie [<http://www.sejmik.kielce.pl>]. The consortia are represented by coordinators acting as market makers for a given smart specialisation. The selected coordinators are:

1. The Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce (*Staropolska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa*) for energy efficient construction (key specialisation).
2. The Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce (*Staropolska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa*) for foundry and metal industry (key specialisation).
3. Centre for Promoting and Supporting Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Sandomierz (*Ośrodek Promowania i Wspierania Przedsiębiorczości Rolnej w Sandomierzu*) for modern farming and food processing (key specialisation).
4. Busko-Zdrój Health Resort (*Uzdrowisko Busko-Zdrój*) for medical tourism (key specialisation).
5. Kielce Technology Park (*Kielecki Park Technologiczny*) for modern ICT (supporting specialisation).
6. Chamber of Commerce "Kielce Trade Fairs Cluster" (*Izba Gospodarcza „Grono Targowe Kielce”*) for fair and conference sector (supporting specialisation).
7. Centre of Innovation and Technology Transfer of Świętokrzyskie Region (*Świętokrzyskie Centrum Innowacji i Transferu Technologii*) for renewable energy development (supporting specialisation).

² The Świętokrzyskie region has not used the methodology proposed by the S3Platform to identify regional smart specialisations. From 2013, with the assistance of the World Bank a project *REIGNITING SWIETOKRZYSKIE – Review of a regional research and innovation strategy (RIS3) in Eastern Poland* has been run in order to check up the selected smart specialisations [Rogut, Piasecki 2013, p.22].

Enterprises engaged in various activities in the area of smart specialisations expect the demonstration of advantages which can accrue if they invest in R&D. Therefore, it is planned to develop a business plan for each smart specialisation in the form of so-called “process sheet” presenting a transformation process of a given sector, specifying aims, sources, reference values, the acceptance level of the market and the level of the return on public investment [Strategia Badań i Innowacyjności (RIS3) 2014, p. 45].

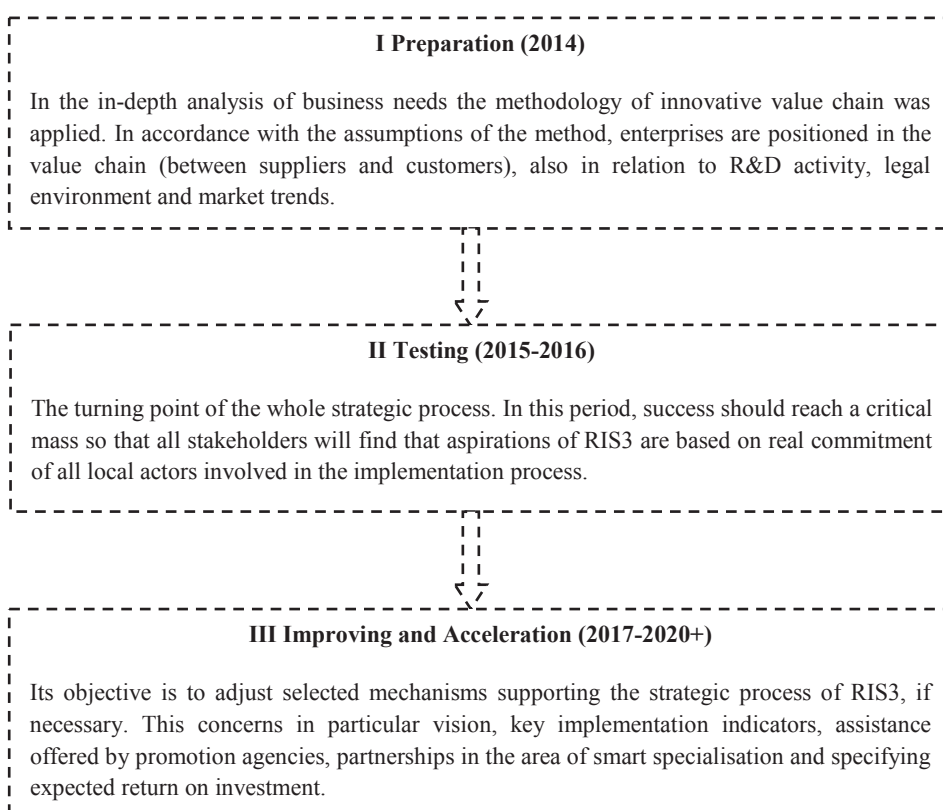


Figure 1. The implementation process of RIS3 in Świętokrzyskie

Source: own elaboration based on Strategia Badań i Innowacyjności (RIS3) 2014.

The implementation process of RIS3 is divided into three key phases covering the period 2014-2020+ (Figure 1).

5. Conclusions

The heterogeneity of regions combined with the systemic nature of innovation means that finding ways to different innovation pathways in different socio-economic and innovation contexts is of key importance. It also means that there is no "one-size-fits-all" policy prescription connected with smart specialisation. One has to know thoroughly socio-economic and innovation background of a region in order to be able to design a proper smart specialisation process combining regional strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

Smart specialisation seems to be particularly useful for many non-core regions (like the regions of Eastern Poland) giving the policymakers an opportunity to frame their long-term innovation-related development agendas.

All Eastern Poland regions have already identified smart specialisations as well as have designed their monitoring and evaluation tools. The case of Świętokrzyskie shows that the region decided to identify smart specialisations using regional socio-economic and innovation potential analysis, foresight studies, a report from an external expert cabinet commissioned by regional authorities, public consultations with regional stakeholders, with the assistance of the World Bank. The region also chose coordinators of selected smart specialisations that had been formally approved in February 2014. The monitoring and evaluation system is also implemented and the smart specialisation process will be adjusted if necessary.

It is expected that selected smart specialisations in the Świętokrzyskie region that have been implemented and are monitored according to the agenda proposed in the RIS3 strategy, will help overcome some structural imbalances and underdevelopment problems such as low innovativeness, a low level of labour productivity, economic migration to other parts of the country connected with high regional unemployment rate and the lack of perspectives for young people, as well as limited degree of cooperation among regional stakeholders. Thus all the activities connected with the smart specialisation process have to be viewed jointly and in a long-run perspective in order to see the expected impacts on regional innovativeness and competitiveness.

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