FUNDECYTPCTEX

Improving Structural Funds for better delivery of R&D&i policies

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FUNDECYT-PCTEX

Project overview

IMPROVE
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European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Research & innovation

Policy instrument

The region of Extremadura (Spain) has originally selected Priority Axis 1 "Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation" of the ERDF Operational Programme of Extremadura 2014-2020 as the policy instrument to be improved within IMPROVE project. Based on the fact that the new programing period2021-2027 is starting, the focus of the project will be on the new ERDF Operational Programme of Extremadura 2021-2027, Political Objective 1.

This policy instrument, in line with the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Extremadura (RIS3), finances different types of operations with the aim of:
- Attract and retain talent in the region.
- Encourage technology transfer, innovation and cooperation networks.
- Foster innovation.
- Invests in centres and resources for the promotion of innovation.
- Consolidate the most relevant research groups in Extremadura.

The correct implementation of these operations is of great importance for the region as the Operational Programme is the main instrument for the delivery of the R&D&i policies in the region, and often administrative burdens, lack of personnel or an isolated approach might put in risk the proper deployment of the OP.

In this sense, the improvement in the management and implementation of Structural Funds by means of the exchange of knowledge and experience with other regions/countries will increase the effectiveness of R&D&i support public policies based on a better and more sustainable use of resources, better decision-making processes and a more effective governance and evaluation of the actions undertaken.

Good practices

Smart Specialisation monitoring tool

The RIS3 Monitoring System is a data integration, exploration and analysis platform. It integrates external and internal data on the R&D&I activities of all the agents of the innovation system, allowing, through interactive visualisations and full access to the data, to carry out an in-depth exploration of the ecosystem, to analyse and better understand the R&D&I activities of all actors and the evolution of the regional smart specialisation pattern.

Its objective is to provide evidences on the smart specialisation process in order to facilitate its analysis and inform the decisions of policy-makers and those responsible for its implementation.

One of the main aspects to learn from is the possibility of having open and interconnected data and to capture the different needs of the different stakeholders involved in the monitoring process.

Link to the good practice: https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5582/smart-specialisation-monitoring-tool/

Office for Innovation

The O4i main goal is to increase the innovation capacity of regional companies (mainly Micro and SMEs) in order to improve and foster their competitiveness into the regional, national and international markets.

Managed by FUNDECYT-PCTEX, this tool is a paradigmatic example of the reciprocal transfer processes tending to the exchange of knowledge and co-creation of solutions, focused on the companies´ needs, adding value from the science and technology.

Joint responsibility, co-creation and knowledge sharing are the three pillars that support the main processes of interaction between civil society, public institutions and companies.

Link to the good practise: https://www.oficinaparalainnovacion.es/

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Innovation and Talent Programme

Ongoing since August 2017 the Innovation and Talent Programme (PIT), framed within the Operational Programme "Youth Employment 2014 - 2020" and mostly financed by the European Social Fund of Extremadura, aims to improve the employability of unemployed young people with university degrees, or who have completed intermediate or higher vocational training under 30 years old, through integrated training and employment actions especially linked to the change of the production model and the requirements of innovative activities in strategic knowledge areas for smart specialisation.

Other regions/cities can learn from this programme as it has been success in three important aspects: its implementation, in the results achieved and in the problems solved.

Link to the good practice: https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5449/innovation-and-talent-programme/

Specific issues and areas of improvement

The **governance, co-ordination and communication between actors** could be improved with a view to ensure a user-driven focus in the design and implementation of ROP programmes and instruments, as well as to maximise the support provided on the ground. Strengthening information flows and knowledge sharing could also help generate a greater sense of ownership and common understanding.

In relation to the **design and implementation of the ROP**, there is a difficulty to adapt the Regional Operational Programme programming to Extremadura's regional profile of beneficiaries. The ROP implementation processes are unaligned with regional specificities/beneficiary capacities. Therefore, the region should address this challenge by ensuring that the OP implementation aligns with regional/beneficiary needs and capacities adapting the project selection process to regional specificities.

Finally, **Monitoring and evaluation** of the Policy Instrument is another area of improvement to consider. A weak performance measurement culture limits the evidence bases to support strategic planning, priority setting and programming for the OP. Therefore, a more robust approach to ROP evaluation could help inform any necessary adjustments.

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Identified solutions to specific issues

In terms of **Governance**, we have already identified in **Lapland Region (FI)** a good example of how the different actors at regional level have to perform in order to create dialogue and join forces around the structural funds management. On this regard, a **Regional Working Group** has been established with the aim to increase coordination between regional authorities, to coordinate different funds and programmes and to create cooperation with ongoing projects, as well as to prevent overlapping projects and actions. The value of joint discussions and debate is in the views and knowledge of the group and in the learning process that the joint meetings facilitate.

We have also identified in **North-West Region (RO)** the "C-Voucher - Circular Value Chains in European RIS3" initiative which aims to offer support to SMEs for their transition from linear towards circular value chain models. This is a **cascade-funding** initiative/ project based on innovation vouchers Open Calls designed to simplify administrative processes with the SMEs. We believe this would be a good mechanism to facilitate the access to public funds to our regional SMEs, removing bureaucracy and making it more effective and aligned with the regional/beneficiary needs and capacities.

Monitoring and Evaluation systems provide appropriate and relevant information on the impact that public policies are achieving in a concrete territory. Although the RIS3 Technical Office of Extremadura is implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation System, coherence with the ROP should be guaranteed. The implementation of these systems presents several challenges: conceptual and methodological clarity for the design, institutionalisation for an efficient and effective functioning of the monitoring and evaluation function, a political commitment to implement these processes, the incorporation of ICTs in the design of the systems and the development of an organisational culture. The monitoring and evaluation tools presented by **Puglia Region (IT)** during the Interregional Thematic Workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation, as well as the practices on this topic presented during their peer-review are interesting cases thay will help us to improve our monitoring and evaluation system for the period 2021-2027.

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Main stakeholders involved in the project

Our main stakeholder is the **General Secretariat of Science, Technology, Innovation and University** of the Regional Government of Extremadura as owner of the Policy Instrument selected by FUNDECYT-PCTEX to be improved in the framework of the IMPROVE project.

Other stakeholders involved as part of the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Extremadura (RIS3) governance are:

- General Director of Autonomous Financing and European Funds
- General Secretary of Digital Administration
- General Director of University Policies
- General Director of the Digital Agenda
- General Director of Enterprises
- General Secretary of Employment
- General Director for Planning, Training and Quality in Health Care
- General Director for Agriculture and Livestock
- General Secretary of Ecological Transition and Sustainability
- General Director of Tourism
- Rector of the University of Extremadura
- Managing Director of FUNDECYT-PCTEX
- General Director of Extremadura Avante