Note to the European Commission, DG REGIO G5 - GREECE & CYPRUS

Review of the on-going RIS3 processes in the Region of Epirus

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This short note summarises the principal observations and conclusions to be drawn from the Technical meeting, held in Athens on 17 July 2013, between the Greek national and regional authorities and the Commission with a view to the preparation of the partnership agreement 2014-2020, and specifically the research innovation strategy for smart specialisation in the Region of Epirus.

i) RIS3 processes adopted by the region. Weaknesses and structures to be modified

Following the organisation of the regional conference and the RIS3 workshop for the new programming period on 25 and 26 April, the Region of Epirus continued with activities related to the elaboration of RIS3, namely:

- The setting of the Regional Innovation Council, which is composed of 23 members from the public administration (6), universities, HEI, research institutes (8), business organizations (6), and experts (3). The Council acts as an advisory body, supporting the region on issues related to innovation and competitiveness. Main objectives of the Council are to contribute to the drafting of a Strategic Plan for Regional Research and Innovation, establishing a cooperation network involving institutions, organizations and businesses in the region, and enhance the openness of the Region. Among the first results of the RIC has been the agreement between the University, the Higher Education Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture, and agricultute products growers to implement a prototype system forecasting trends in the agricultural sector.
- The participation of Epirus in the S3 Platform.
- The creation of the webpage <http://epirusinno-vationcouncil.blogspot.gr/> to inform about the work of the Regional Innovation Council, disseminate information from the S3 Platform, and information on research and innovation in Europe.

The Region of Epirus considers that major challenge is to get key entrepreneurs involved in the smart specialization strategy, given that the cooperation with chambers of commerce is less intense than expected. To this end, an external consultant has been selected to assist the Regional nnovation Council draft the regional strategy of smart specialization, facilitate the required consultation and cooperation with stakeholders, and design a monitoring system with indicators and milestones for the evaluation of the strategy.

The Commission should recommend the competent Greek authorities to define ASAP the global architecture of the programming period 2014-2020, the sectoral and regional programmes and policies, and interfaces between the regional and national Operational Programmes, and inform accordingly the Region of Epirus. This information is crucial for any further elaboration of RIS3.

ii) Promoting RIS3 in opposition to sectoral approach defended by some important stakeholders

The Region of Epirus has already made an initial selection regarding the sectors and industries of specialisation. These include branches of the agrofood sector and in the second place, tourism, promotion and protection of the environment, and health services. The sectors selected correspond to existing productive specialisation and critical mass across industries (Table below).

However, the identification and selection of sectors does not provide competitive advantages directly. For the sectors selected, it is necessary to define drivers of competitiveness, such as technologies, future trends, emerging markets, skills and needs, and target the strategy on making those drivers available to regional companies and organisations. This discussion has not opened yet in Epirus.

The Commission should facilitate this orientation with guidelines indicating how to combine sectoral view of specialisation with drivers and technologies that can offer competitive advantages to sectors selected.

	Industry	Rank in Europe	Specialisation	Employment
1	Site preparation	1	9.61	3 702
2	Bars	1	4.30	5 694
3	Farming of animals	3	9.02	5 923
4	Manufacture of dairy products	7	4.62	1 303
5	Growing of crops combined with farming of animals (mixed farming)	8	4.13	8 278
6	Manufacture of lighting equipment and electric lamps	9	4.50	554
7	Provision of services to the community as a whole	10	2.88	4 850
8	Adult and other education	10	2.52	2 255
9	Retail sale of automotive fuel	14	2.13	761
10	Retail sale of food, beverages and tobacco in specialized stores	14	2.17	2 908
11	Secondary education	15	2.42	4 895
12	Growing of crops; market gardening; horticulture	20	4.92	10 234
13	Building completion	31	1.59	2 825
14	Maintenance and repair of motor vehicles	31	1.57	1 921
15	Primary education	34	2.02	5 417
16	Production, processing and preserving of meat and meat products	35	1.85	1 346
17	Production and distribution of electricity	42	1.76	1 230
18	Manufacture of beverages	46	1.61	578
19	Manufacture of builders' carpentry and joinery	63	1.53	653

iii) RIS3 and the GSRT role and synergies

During the Technical meeting none collaboration was reported between the Region and GSRT. As happens in most Greek regions, the information gap on the current innovation policy and actions remains. On the other hand, the Region of Epirus should be informed about the overall architecture of the programming period 2014-2020 to be able to draft and advance the elaboration of the regional research and innovation strategy.

The Commission should ask the national authorities to define a national S3 coordination framework and define the architecture of the next programming period. These are preconditions for any further formulation of the regional innovation strategy and coordination between national and regional priorities.

iv) Conclusions of the seminar

The Region of Epirus is among the few Greek regions that made progress in the elaboration of the smart specialisation strategy. This is documented by the setting of the Regional Innovation Council and working groups, the definition of initial specialisation priorities, and the selection of external consultant to support the process.

National-regional coordination, however, is needed to proceed to next steps of the strategy, in terms of programming architecture, delivarables, and national milestones to be followed by all regions.

v) Milestones and deliverables by the Region of Epirus

In short term, the regional authority should work on the following two deliverables (D) and milestones (M) in order to accelerate the work of RIS3:

(**D1**) Analysis of the regional innovation system, innovation gaps, SWOT, and balance scorecard based objectives to be prepared by the consultant by 10 September 2013 **(M1).**

(**D2**) A first discussion / introduction of RIS3 to the Elected Regional Council of Epirus about RIS3 objectives, delivery mechanisms, innovation support strategies, and draft strategic orientations for Epirus, by 30 September **(M2).**