

Final High-Level Event
Emmen (online Meeting) 12th May 2021
RELOS3 Interreg project

REPORT OF THE EVENT

The city of Emmen, partner of the RELOS3 project, and the City of Sabadell, project's Lead Partner, organised the (virtual) final High-Level Event of this Interreg Europe project, on the 12th May 2021.

This event puts an end to this 5-year project where six partners, from six European countries have learnt, exchanged good practices, and develop their Actions Plans regarding how to promote delivery of innovation at the lowest (local) level. This unique approach within the boundaries of the Interreg Europe RELOS3 program has helped the collaborating administrations to turn cities and local regions into innovation drivers around emerging strategic themes/sectors that are expected to offer broad business and job opportunities in the years to come.



The event started with **the welcoming by Guido Rink, councillor City of Emmen**, who pointed out the relevance of this HLE for the RELOS3 project in order to reflect on learnings, and the new experience obtained by partners thanks to this project, as well as the pitfalls and elements of improvement to be used as inspiration for future collaborations.

After this welcoming, **Iolanda Repullo, Head of Business Support at the Economic Development Agency of Sabadell Municipality and lead partner of the RELOS3**, made an evaluation of the

project. After reviewing the RELOS3 objectives, time scale, budget, and partners, she highlighted the main results of the project. She reflected the importance that the different events and long-term visits held during the project, had in the learning process and exchange experience, as did the review of good practices of the Monitoring and Baseline studies. This phase one results were critical for the development of the partner's Action Plans. After this, she highlighted the key factors of the project: the development of an strategic vision, specifically the process of adapting some actions and strategies to partners local context, the coordination with each partner's managing authority (very relevant to propose actions and improvements), the learning from other regions strategy and its adaptation to other cases, and last the communication activities that resulted in thematic articles, an active project website and dissemination.

According to Mrs. Repullo, however, one of the most relevant tasks during the project has been the involvement of local stakeholders, keep them engaged and participant for the project results and how to apply them to solve challenges of the different territories. Regarding problems encountered, one of the hardest one was trying to influence policy instruments, especially considering the different competences of partners, as some were regional authorities and other were local administrations, which limited their impact on the regional policies. However, this became also an advantage, as local administrations had the opportunity, thanks to this project, to come closer and know better their regional partners and created new ways of collaboration with them. The impact of COVID crisis was also mentioned as something that had a huge impact on the



project, but the positive side was pointed out regarding the capacity of creating new strategies to react to this unforeseen situation. As a conclusion to her intervention, Mrs. Repullo mentioned that RELOS3 had been a very fruitful experience and has helped them to understand better how to involve the local level in smart specialisation strategies.

Ségolène Jean, Finance Officer of JTS of Interreg Europe, was the third person to intervene in this HLE. Her intervention focussed on the current state of play of the Interreg Europe and the conclusion of the RELOS3 project for the program. She briefly described the features of the Interreg Europe program and focussed on some of the outputs achieved in the 2014-2020 period: more than 3.600 good practices identified, 925 Action Plans created or the more than 12.000 staff of different regional and local administrations with an increased capacities thanks to their participation in the program. Regarding the topic of innovation delivery, the one that corresponds to the RELOS3 project, the Interreg officer mentioned that there had been 53 projects in this topic, 13 of which (among them RELOS3) tackling more directly research and smart specialization strategies.



After this introduction, she congratulated the RELOS3 partners for the project results, with its 6 good practices published in the Policy Learning Platform database, the participation in communication and dissemination events as the Smart Cities Summit and its active presence in the social media. Her intervention ended with a reference to the future of the Interreg Europe program, mentioning some of the key elements for the next programming period: on one hand, some features remain as its pan-European reach, a similar objective on regional policies and on capacity building. On the other, she mentioned some novelties (and evolution more than a revolution as she said) as a lightened focus on Structural Funds, a higher emphasis of the learning by doing though the figure of the pilot actions and the capacity building.

The RELOS3 High Level event continued with the presentation of Laura Capel, Phd and Manager at FI Group and expert in innovation strategies at local level. She discussed some key learnings regarding Smart Specialization Strategies (S3) and the involvement of the local level, from a theoretical perspective but also focussing on the practical challenges encountered by regional and local authorities when trying to implement actions to involve the local level in the S3. Last, she presented some key aspects of the RIS3 program in the 2021-2027 programming period. Regarding the practical difficulties that the local level has encountered when trying to be included in the S3, she mentioned aspects as the different technical skills of local level officers responsible for the S3 implementation and their knowledge of this strategy; the difficulties to implement an homogeneous EU local specialization or the fact that the interplay region-local is now always easy. However, she also mentioned some opportunities that the involvement of the local level has for the S3 (and that have been reflected during the RELOS3 project) as how they can better reach the needs and potential of the 4H agents, the fact that the local level supports and “makes real” the regional specializations or how they can easily incorporate Responsible Research and Innovation in the S3. Her intervention ended with a reference of the S3 in the next programming period: The new Specialization strategy is under construction, but there are several elements that have been already highlighted as summarized in this image:

The new Smart Specialisation Strategy

- More links with other European programmes and initiatives (Horizon Europe, Interreg)
- From S3 to S4: Strategies for Sustainable and Inclusive growth (S4+)
- Making it more responsive to societal challenges (mission oriented)
- Complementarities with the **Territorial Agenda 2030**
- More interconnections of similar specializations at European level

The second part of the meeting was devoted to the presentations of the six RELOS3 partners, who discussed in two round tables their experiences and practices regarding the impact in achieving policy change (first roundtable) and the difficulties and success in putting the local level in their RIS3 map (second round table).

Each block was organised as follows: first partners presented their vision on the chosen topic, based on their own case, after which followed a debate and questions to the audience. We offer a summary of the key findings of each of the round tables.

Round table 1. Impact in achieving policy change

- Emmen, by Roel Folkersma, City of Emmen
- Wielkopolska, by Michał Ptaszyński Head of Wielkopolska 2050 Division. Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region Department of Economy
- Tartu, Allo Lilles, Head Of Business Development Department at Smart City

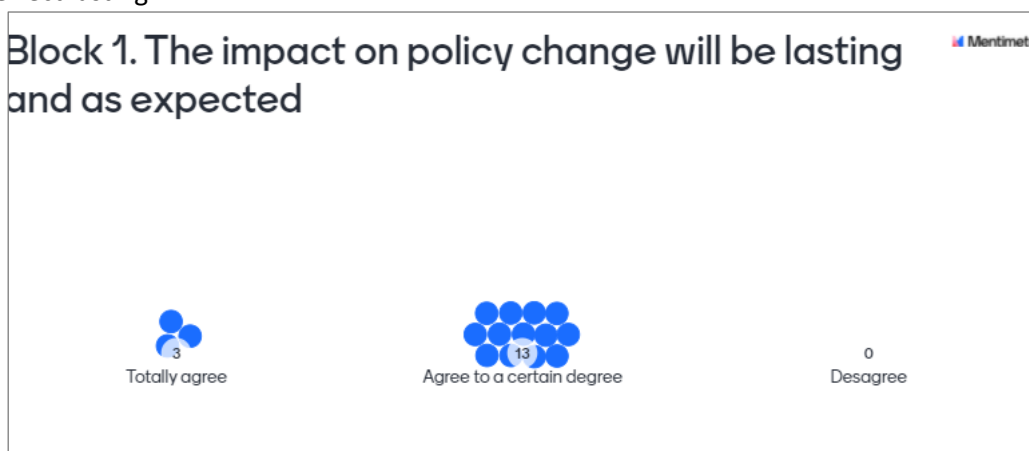
The Emmen partner mentioned that although there is not a direct impact of the RELOS3 in the regional policy, they have achieved an indirect impact. For instance, even if tourism and Leisure (one of Emmens specialization) are still not key sectors to innovate, they managed to bring this project into the board room (regional authorities) taking advantage of the political movement that is now giving more attention to these sectors innovation, as a way also to improve SMEs sustainability.

Wielkopolska presentation focussed in how they have adapted good practices learnt during the RELOS3 project to their own reality, achieving a policy change with new initiatives as the local companies' showroom devoted to the use of hydrogen for transport. In this case, the local level was a push for the market of innovative products, as the mentioned hydrogen.

In the case of Tartu, the policy instrument was influenced in various ways: by providing direct feedback for creation of KPIs and other measurable indicators, by sharing best practices with regional stakeholders and by increasing the knowledge and understanding of local policy makers on various best practices. In this case, the monitoring was a relevant result that is being used to provide relevant information regarding this impact and increase knowledge on the results of the Action Plan.

As a closure to this first round table, the moderator asked the audience to answer three questions regarding the topic discussed, using the Menti interactive tool. We present the results:

First, the audience had to answer whether they believed the impact on policy change will be lasting. As the next image shows, the great majority of participants considered that it would be in effect lasting:



The second and third question asked the audience to comment the most difficult and the easiest part in achieving policy change. The images below show the answers submitted.

Regarding the difficulties, we can highlight aspects as the coordination of all the stakeholders, the timing as the policy instrument was already set or the difficulty of breaking silos among different agents:

Regarding the easiest part, the audience mentioned elements such as the setting of common objectives and creating good one-to-one relations with agents:

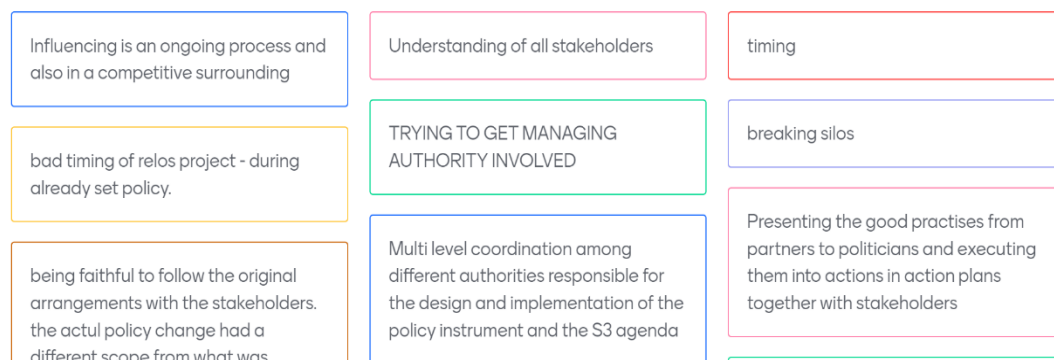


Round table 2. Difficulties and success in putting the local level in the partners' RIS3 map

- Sabadell, by Anna Puiggròs, European Projects Officer at the Economic Development Agency of Sabadell Municipality.
- Bologna, by Marino Cavallo
- Malta, by Pedro Álvarez, Head, EU Projects - Corporate Programmes and Initiatives, Malta Enterprise

The first partner to intervene in this second round table was Sabadell, who. Regarding difficulties in putting the local level in its RIS3 map mentioned aspects such as the low participation of private sector in R&D projects, the huge impact that Covid19 had on the stakeholders meetings and the deployment of the action plan, causing that some activities had to be readapted and all

What was the most difficult part in achieving policy change? Mentimeter



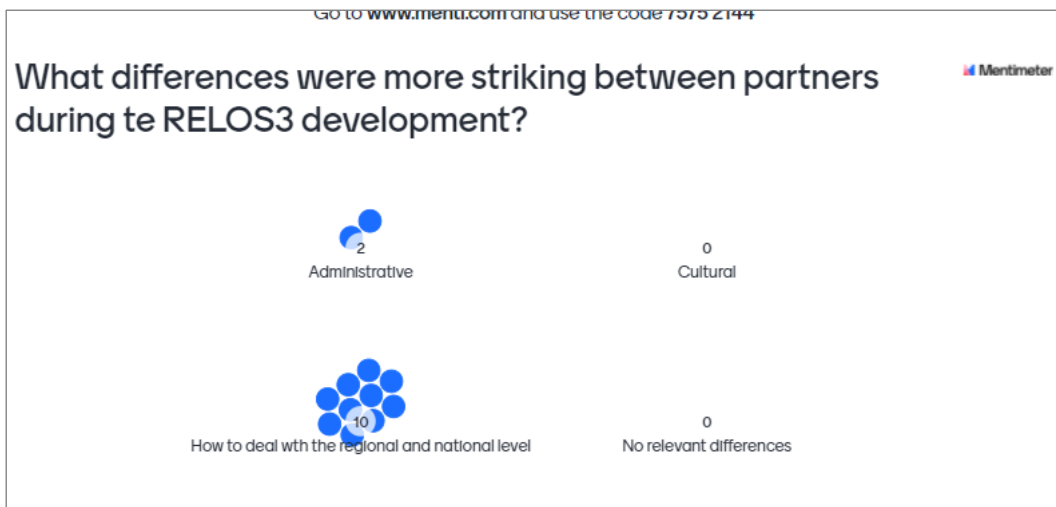
of them had to be rescheduled. Last, Sabadell mentioned difficulties of implementing local actions along with regional administrations. Among the successes, they mentioned the exchanges maintained among the different partnership stakeholders and synergies that emerged, the capacity of adaptation to deal with COVID19 by public administrations and other stakeholders or the increased visibility of local level in the development of innovation policies.

Bologna put the focus on how the RELOS3 was an opportunity for the Metropolitan City of Bologna to contribute to the fine-tuning of the Emilia Romagna regional S3 by developing locally embedded projects in specific areas of intervention that were relevant and aligned with their Strategic Plan. Moreover, they used the entrepreneurial discovery process learnt during the project to identify new policies in the social area, specifically the mentoring of Social start up and social innovation initiatives. Some critical issues highlighted in their case were difficulties regarding multilevel coordination as well as the coordination with multiple and diverse stakeholders.

Malta described how RELOS3 allowed them to further specify their specialization in maritime services, arriving to a narrow definition of the activities to focus on: the advance manufacturing in the blue biotech. The Malta partner mentioned how they managed to refocus their specialization and benefit various stakeholder groups. This was a good example of how the local level allowed to find this more specific specialization that responded to the real context at the local level of Malta.

To end this second block, and conclude the high-level event, two more questions were posed to the audience, using the Menti tool.

The first one asked the participants to point out what were the most striking differences between partners during the RELOS3 project. As the image bellow shoes, most agreed that this regarded the different ways of engaging with the national and the regional level.



The second and last question asked the audience to mention the aspects that made them prouder regarding their participation in the RELOS3 project. We leave the comments obtained as a conclusion to this report of the High-level event of the RELOS3 project:

What make you most proud of having participated in the RELOS3 Mentimeter

Partners	Exchange of knowledge and experiences	great collaboration with partners
The fact to share information with other partners	Again interesting to work together to see and experience different approaches	We have put the value of local potential and relevance for S3 through actions and learnings from other participants
Exchange of experiences among partners is the best part of the project, as we have learned a lot of others	the opportunity to learn thanks tools that have enabled me to increase my knowledge of such an important	Good project partner and stakeholder connections