



Integrating the territorial dimension for cohesive
S3.

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Regional action plan for Stockholm County

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Part I – General information

Project: COHES3ION

Partner organisation: Region Stockholm

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): No

Country: Sweden

NUTS2 region: Stockholm County (region)

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: **Business and Growth Strategy of Stockholm region**, including the regional **Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)**, affecting the new **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** program of Stockholm County 2021-2027.

Policy instrument

At the time of the application for Cohes3ion in 2018, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (Länsstyrelsen) had initiated a process to develop a new Regional Innovation Strategy, including smart specialisation (S3). In January 2019, the responsibility for regional development was transferred to Region Stockholm (former County Council of Stockholm) and smart specialisation was integrated in ongoing processes.

To implement The Regional Development Strategy of Stockholm (RUFSS 2050¹), a political decision was taken in 2019 to develop a **Business and Growth Strategy of Stockholm region (BGS)**. During the planning process, it also became evident that Region Stockholm needed to develop a **Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (S3)**, to secure future funding from the new **European**

¹ In Stockholm, The Regional Development Strategy is also the more long-term plan for physical development (RUFSS 2050).

Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2021-2027. To avoid parallel processes, it was decided to integrate the S3 with the new BGS. A formal steering group consisting of regional and local policy makers and high-level civil servants was appointed.

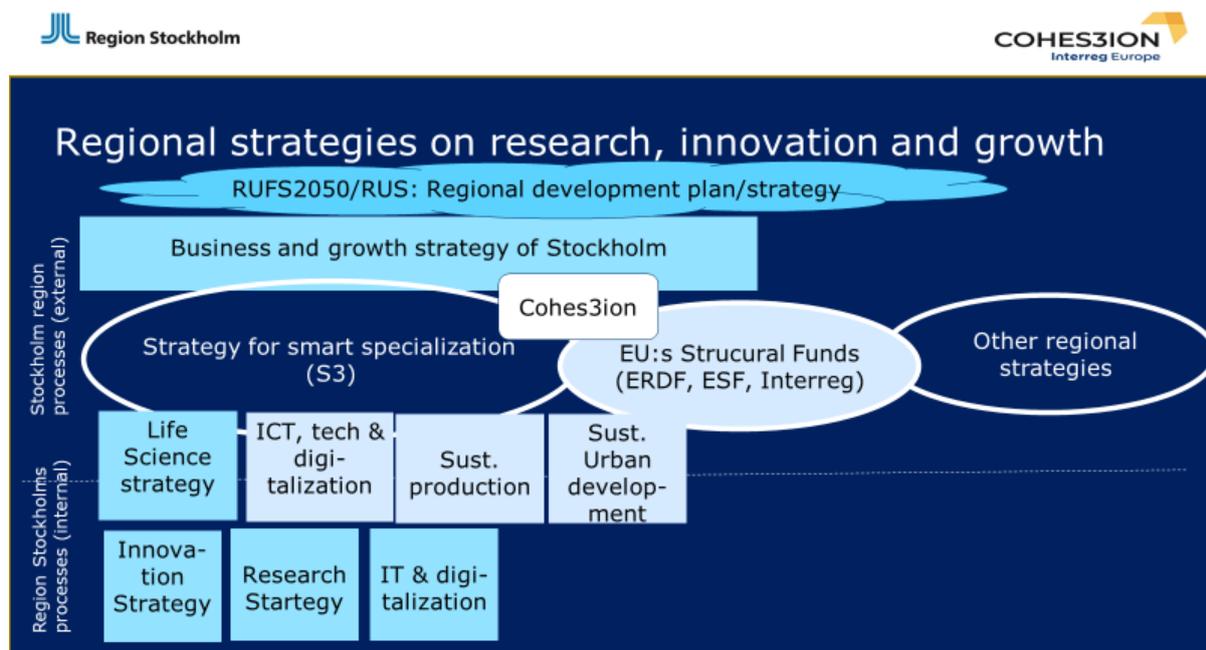
In January 2020, a kick-off activity with regional stakeholders was arranged in collaboration between the BGS and the Cohes3ion project, to inform about the up-coming process and invite stakeholders to participate. A project team with representatives from different departments in Region Stockholm was appointed to coordinate the development of the BGS, including S3, and running the Cohes3ion project. In April 2020, the team also became responsible for developing the new ERDF-program for Stockholm county 2021-2027. After an intensive process of analysis, stakeholder involvement and text production, the ERDF program and the BGS were sent out for public consultations during 2020. In late 2020 the ERDF program was sent to national authorities and to the EU commission for approval. In April 2021 the BGS, including S3, was formally approved by Region Stockholm.

During 2022, initiatives will be taken to develop action plans and structures to implement actions related to the different priorities in the BGS:

- SME competitiveness
- Access to competence
- Internationalization and international attractiveness
- Research and innovation, including smart specialisation (S3) and the need for a management structure for identified S3 priorities (based on seven criteria for good management of S3 from EU):
 - Health and life science
 - Industrial modernisation and sustainable production
 - Sustainable urban development
 - ICT, tech and digitalisation

A regional Life Science strategy was developed and formally approved during 2021, and action plans for implementation are being developed. However, there are no specific strategies or action plans for the remaining S3-priorities.

Figure: Overview of strategies and on-going processes in Stockholm County.



The main funding sources for actions on regional development are national state funding, administered by Region Stockholm (about €0.7 million/year), and the EU structural funds (ERDF and ESF). Since the level of co-funding in the program period 2021-2027 has increased to 60% it is extremely important that regional stakeholders have a good understanding and interest to develop strategically prioritized collaborative projects in line with S3. For the program period 2021-2027, EU has raised a seven-criteria conditionality for good management of smart specialization to receive funding from the ERDF. Since the

concept has so far been rather unknown in Stockholm County, it is important to secure a broad understanding and implementation of S3 in the new program period. As a result, the Regional Action Plan (RAP) of Cohes3ion will address important aspects, to lay a sound foundation for this responsibility of Region Stockholm. The RAP will focus on management, governance, and early implementation of the BGS, including S3.

The BGS aim to improve competitiveness of the whole Stockholm County (NUTS2 and NUTS3) and address some of differences at municipal level (LAU2) by establishing better links and governance across levels. Today, there are large variations in social and industry structures, Manufacturing industry is dominating in some more peripheral municipalities, while knowledge intensive business services (KIBS) are dominating the city of Stockholm and its surrounding municipalities. Some cities/municipalities have identified specific priorities, e.g. sustainable production in Södertälje, fashion and education technology in Nacka, and health/life science in Stockholm, Solna and Huddinge municipalities. As responsible for regional development, Region Stockholm should address different challenges across the County. To reduce problems of congestion and bottle necks in central Stockholm and to develop a more polycentric region, the Stockholm Regional Development Strategy (RUF5 2050) priorities development of 8 regional cores, in addition to the city centre of Stockholm. But it is also important to involve the more peripheral part of the region in innovation activities. Today, Stockholm County has the 3rd largest rural population of Sweden, about 30 000 islands in the archipelago and 50 percent of the county is covered by forest.

Stakeholders involved

Stockholm is well-endowed with organisations supporting research and innovation, but there is a need for increased collaboration between actors and sectors, to avoid fragmentation and secure efficient use of public funding, in line with S3. Many regional stakeholders have participated in the development of the BGS, including S3, and the new operational program for ERDF. These actors will also have an important role in the RAP of Cohes3ion, to secure good management, governance, and implementation of S3 in Stockholm.

Region Stockholm (former County Council of Stockholm) has historically been responsible for healthcare, public transportation, physical planning, and culture in Stockholm County. Since January 1st 2019 Region Stockholm is also responsible for coordinating regional growth initiatives, including state funding for regional development. Today, Regional Stockholm is coordinating - and to limited extend financing - several regional development processes, e.g.

- Business and Growth Strategy, including S3 - During 2022 there will be an on-going process to identify, operationalise and implement actions in line with the strategy
- ERDF Operational Program 2021-2027 – When the program starts, Region Stockholm will have an important role in the Structural Funds Partnership (SFP) in Stockholm, as secretariat, participant in the preparation group supporting the SFP and coordinator of the good management process of S3.
- Stockholm Regional Development Strategy (RUF52050) - Coordination of regional planning and development processes, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the plan.
- STHLM GLOBAL – Coordinator of the export collaboration for SME-support
- Life Science strategy of Stockholm County – Implementation of the strategy, addressing one of four S3-priorities, in collaboration with academia, patients, business and the healthcare sector
- Funding or participating in several regional collaborative initiatives e.g. science parks, incubators and collaborative platforms, such as Urban ICT Arena, Digital Demo Stockholm and Digital Futures.

However, many other stakeholders must be involved during the implementation of the BGS, including S3, and ERDF, which requires a sound understanding and involvement in S3.

- Municipalities are important stakeholders at the local level, providing basic services of importance to innovation and business development. In Stockholm County, there are 26 municipalities, dominated by the City of Stockholm. Storsthlm is a collaborative association for all municipalities in Stockholm county, but less active in innovation and business development activities.

- Stockholm County has over 20 higher education institutions of various size. Three internationally established academic institutions are Karolinska Institute (medicine, health, and life science), KTH Royal Institute of Technology (engineering, computer science, sustainable production, etc) and Stockholm University (chemistry, human science, etc). Together these three forms the newly established collaboration called Stockholm Trio, which has an important role in research, innovation, and regional development. All three universities have contractual agreements to secure joint research with Region Stockholm, collaborative platforms and specific organisations to support academic commercialisation and business contacts.
- Stockholm has many regional testbeds, including large scientific organisations such as SciLifeLaboratory (life science), as well as smaller prototype workshops such as Things (ICT). In a previous mapping, over 100 testbeds or instruments were identified in academia and research institutes.
- There is also several start-up incubators and science parks, e.g. Flemingsberg Science and Stockholm Science City (life science), Södertälje Science park (sustainable production), Kista Science park (ICT), STING (incubator for ICT/ tech, green development, health care, etc) and Transit (incubator for creative industry), local start-up centers, Coompanion (non-profit organisations), etc.
- As the capital of Sweden, there is also a large number of national actors (e.g. RISE, Research Institute of Sweden and IVL, Swedish Environmental Research Institute), authorities (e.g. Swedish Innovation Agency, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and Swedish Energy Agency) and business organisations (the Association of Swedish Engineering Industries, Photonics Sweden, Sweden Bio, Sweden Medtech, etc) present in the region. Some of them have expressed an interest in taking a more active part in regional development.

Learnings from STM process

Due to covid-19, the initial ambition to include representatives from municipalities, mainly business managers, in the mapping process had to be replaced by desk research at Region Stockholm. Local business strategies, existing analysis at local and regional level and webpage content were analysed and the results of larger municipalities, municipal sub-groups and regional cores, was compiled in the STM. An overall observation was that no municipality explicitly referred to the concept of smart specialisation. However, many collaborations or platforms addressing issues of interest for S3 were identified.

Gaps/areas of improvement in terms of specialisations

- A general need for increased involvement and knowledge about the S3 concept at municipal and regional level to secure involvement in the future ERDF-program, prioritization of calls in line with S3 priorities and good management of S3.
- Broaden participation in industrial modernization and increase collaboration on sustainable production and processing of food, including foodtech. Södertälje Science park has become a national node for Sustainable production and there is a potential to engage more actors in a larger geographic area.
- Access to relevant data to identify regional strengths from a regional, national, and international perspective. Due to statistical complications and high costs, this requires a close collaboration with national authorities.

Gaps/areas of improvement in terms of governance

- Lack of a high level S3 governance platform, for prioritization and coordination between collaborative platforms (e.g. based on clear missions, evaluations and long-term funding)
- Development of an operative S3 coordination structure, with relevant competence and resources
- Involvement of new players in prioritized areas
- Increased knowledge, participation and collaboration on S3 at municipal level
- Joint promotion of regional strengths

Learnings from Cohesion partners case studies

The Project Team could not participate in all digital field visits arranged due to leave of absence with covid-19 and the partly conflicting mission to develop the regional ERDF-program for Stockholm 2021-2027. Still, some interesting learnings were picked up during the Cohes3ion-project. Some of them may be used as inspiration for the Cohes3ion RAP of Stockholm or in the more long term implementation of the BGS, including S3, and the ERDF-program.

Biscaya

Beaz is a sub-regional public company of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, which aims to support enterprises and entrepreneurs in their efforts to create new projects, innovate and internationalize. BEAZ provides different types to support for company growth, entrepreneurship and innovation. For example, BEAZ has initiated a collaboration with three international start-up hubs (Israel, Finland and Boston), where regional start-ups may go to take part in various acceleration activities. BEAZ also runs a regional network of incubators in different sectors.

Orkestra Basque Institute of Competitiveness was founded in 2006 and is a research institute at the University of Deusto, studying competitiveness and regional development with three goals: to contribute to the improvement of the Basque Country's competitiveness, to promote the improvement of citizens' wellbeing and to create knowledge of regional competitiveness. The Orkestra team promotes transformative research, including analysis, reflection, evaluation, and the proposal of actions, in a permanent form. Orkestra is an example of public-private cooperation, and works with a large number of networks, businesses, governments and institutions on numerous projects. As such, Orkestra is a regional change agent, driving competitiveness in the Basque Country, but also an international model in the analysis of regional competitiveness in a global environment.

South Ireland

The Digital Leaders network in Limerick has 27 members, consisting of large as well as small private and public actors, academia etc. The network has regular meetings to initiate project, identify need for competence and secure diffusion of knowledge in digitalization. The group has been involved in the development of a regional digital strategy.

Cyber Ireland is a national cluster on cyber security with 180 members. The goal is to support increased innovation, growth and competitiveness by identifying and testing good examples on cluster management from other regions.

Calabria

There was a broad and extensive bottom-up process for developing the S3 strategy for the on-going structural funds period in Calabria. The process was supported by an *open digital platform (Calabria Europe)*, where all stakeholders could access relevant information, e.g. guidance, examples, data and peer reviews.

FinCalabria is a public company owned by Calabria Region with a mission to support SME and implement public policy. The organization has about 130 employees, including management, administrative support and coordinates four operational areas (innovation and research support (€ 210 million), SME competitiveness (€ 50 million), digitalization (€ 80 million) and financing. Services address two strategic areas, i.e. production base/support innovation (e.g. agrifood, tourism, green building, ICT, Smart manufacturing) and improving quality of life (e.g. environment and life science). This is a very important organization, with impressive resources in terms of personnel and funding, with potential to initiate new programs and a clear responsibility for implementation of the regional S3 strategy.

Ruhr

The Ruhr Metropole region has 10-year experience of applying a lead market approach, related to the concept of smart specialization. The ambition has been to identify new markets, using value chain approach and the state as a lead user to create competitive strengths (in line with the research of Mariana Mazzucato). Regional lead markets have been identified in many different sectors, with strengths in a broad range of areas such as logistics research, waste & water management/cleantech, resource efficiency, data management and security, urban planning, etc. During this process, the region has changed focus from technologies and cluster policies to also include social infrastructures.

Wales

SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) Center in Wales is a coordination function to facilitate public cooperation with small companies to develop innovative solutions to societal challenges. They cooperate with all public actors in Wales. The center is run by a team of four persons and has yearly funding from the Wales Government Health of £300 000.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

The RAP will focus on management, governance, and early implementation of the BGS, including S3. The overall objectives of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) are

- to increase competence on S3 as a best practice tool for regional development among regional stakeholders and policymakers (action 1)
- initiate mobilisation and capacity building among regional stakeholders in 3 prioritized areas (action 2)
 - ICT, Tech and Digitalisation
 - Sustainable Production
 - Sustainable Urban Development
- lay a foundation at Region Stockholm for “good management” of S3 in line with EU conditions (action 3)

The following actions have been developed to meet the objectives mentioned.

ACTION 1 Increased competence on Smart specialisation (S3)

1. The background

A common challenge for most regions in the Cohes3ion project, including Stockholm County, is the need for increased competence on smart specialisation among regional development authorities and other stakeholders. In Stockholm region, this was one of the lessons learnt from the STM (Smart Territorial Mapping) in Cohes3ion. It was also an issue raised during regional stakeholder meetings arranged in 2021 to discuss potential actions to support the implementation of the Business and Growth strategy of Stockholm County (including S3). In spite of several regional initiatives over the years, e.g. mapping of regional strengths and presentations at various seminars and workshops, the general understanding of the S3 concept and its implication on regional development is still relatively low.

Region Stockholm has still a limited understanding of smart specialisation, partly as an effect of the relatively new responsibility for regional development (since January 2019). Among other regional stakeholders, the understanding varies between actors. In general, the interest is higher among innovation support actors and universities – running into the concept in dialogues on EU-funding – than among municipalities and business actor. To secure broad participation during the implementation of S3, more actors need an increased understanding of the concept.

Without an increased level of competence and understanding of S3 as a best practice tool for regional development, the implementation of the BGS, including S3, and ERDF may not receive the necessary attention and interest from regional stakeholders to participate and co-fund new projects in line with S3-priorities in Stockholm. This would have serious negative impact on the implementation of the new ERDF-program in 2021-2027 since the level of regional co-funding will increase to 60 percent and it has been difficult to secure even a 50 percent regional co-funding during the last program period.

2. Action

A combination of activities is needed to communicate the importance of smart specialization and increase competence on S3 as an important tool for regional development among policy makers and civil servants at regional and local level, as well as among other stakeholders representing regional S3-priorities. This is a first step towards mobilisation and capacity building among regional stakeholders (action 2), and vital to motivate regional policy maker to invest necessary resources to secure good management of the S3-process (action 3).

A combination of activities is expected and may, for example, include the following actions:

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- A more up-to-date website on S3 at Region Stockholm, including linkages to relevant strategic documents, actors, etc
 - An open digital platform (e.g. Teams) where regional stakeholders in each S3 priority can access relevant reports, exchange information and take part of good examples. This activity is based on inspiration from S3 preparation in Calabria, presented during the Cohes3ion project.
 - PPT-presentations and other communication material, e.g. a summary of good examples from Cohes3ion and other Interreg-projects, to raise interest and facilitate presentations at meetings with regional stakeholders at different levels.
 - Since the concept of S3 is still considered to be complex and difficult to understand among several stakeholders, a list of EU-vocabulary related to S3 (e.g. S3 for dummies) may be valuable

3. Players involved

Region Stockholm will, as responsible for regional development, have the main responsibility for development and implementation of action of Business and Growth Strategy (including S3) and coordination of the ERDF-program (including the seven ex-ante conditionalities) in Stockholm county.

The main target groups will be

- Policy makers and civil servants at Region Stockholm, to raise their competence and secure good management of S3, support multilevel governance and improve the implementation of activities in line with smart specialisation, e.g. future ERDF calls and distribution of business development funding (e.g. Business Development Grants).
- Regional key actors and stakeholders in each of the regional S3-priorities, e.g. collaborative platforms or clusters, to increase their competence on S3 and interest in participating in innovation and development initiatives, but also to facilitate their communication with other relevant stakeholders e.g. researchers and companies.

4. Timeframe

On-going activities during the implementation phase, but with a main focus during spring 2022

5. Costs

- Mainly wages for civil servants at Region Stockholm
- Some cost for external communication support (preliminary about €1 500)

6. Funding sources

Region Stockholm (mainly in kind), but since communication staff for regional development is scarce, some cash funding for external communication support may be necessary.

ACTION 2 Mobilization and capacity building on S3-priorities

1. The background

All four S3-priorities of Stockholm were identified in analysis and mapping of regional strengths and collaborative processes starting in 2014. Stockholm is a leading innovation region in Europe, with a strong start-up scene and well-endowed with research and innovation support organisations and infrastructures. But as many metropolitan cities, there is also a need for improved collaboration between actors, to make efficient use of public funding and avoid fragmentation.

In 2019, Region Stockholm initiated a process to develop of a regional Life Science strategy in collaboration with Karolinska Institutet and other key actors. A process of analysis, broad involvement and priority setting took place and in fall 2020 a draft strategy was submitted for external consultation. In 2021, the strategy was approved by the Region Stockholm Assembly (regional policy level) and a process to develop and implement action plans together with relevant stakeholders (academia, business, public sector, etc) was started. In the Business and Growth Strategy (including S3) and the ERDF-program 2021-2027, Life science and Healthcare was introduced as one of four prioritized S3-area in Stockholm County.

However, for the remaining three S3-priority areas (ICT, Tech, and Digitalisation; Sustainable Production and Sustainable Urban Development) such a structured process has not yet been initiated and there is still no formal structure for coordinating these areas. There is also need for capacity building, a broader participation, and clarifications of possible roles in the collaboration between key actors in different sectors and at relevant levels during the implementation of the regional smart specialisation strategy (S3). In this process, good examples from other Cohes3ion regions may be used as inspiration, e.g. the IT network in South Ireland.

In the policy recommendation from the Cohes3ion project, partners are advised to arrange workshops as part of a pre-kick off process, to discuss and agree upon roles of actors during implementation. to create governance bodies for smart specialisation and discuss the possible need for more formalised collaboration platforms. Despite previous initiatives to mobilize regional stakeholders, this need was indicated during the Cohes3ion STM process and in workshops with regional stakeholders about possible actions for implementation of Cohes3ion and the Business and Growth Strategy (including S3).

2. Action

An important action will be to plan and arrange mobilization workshops with regional stakeholders representing the three S3-priorities still lacking regional action plans or strategies. The purpose is to involve more actors, define roles and start capacity building among key actors from different sectors in the S3-process.

The ambition is to arrange at least one workshop for each S3-priority

- ICT, Tech and Digitalisation
- Sustainable production
- Sustainable urban development

3. Players involved

Region Stockholm will be responsible for planning and coordination of the mobilization workshops, in close collaboration with relevant actors in the three S3-priorities. Below, please find example of key actors and collaborative platforms in different areas:

- Sustainable production, e.g. KTH, Södertälje Science park, Södertälje municipality, Astra Zeneca and Scania (private companies)
- ICT tech and digitalization, e.g. KTH Innovation, Sting (incubator), Kista Science city, Stockholm Business Region (Stockholm municipality), Digital Futures, Stockholm IT Region (public-private collaborative network), Beyond (incubator on Edtech in Nacka municipality), Sweden Foodtech, RISE (national association of research institute), Ericson and Telia (private companies)
- Sustainable Urban Development, e.g. County Administrative Board, Stockholm Municipality, Storsthlm (Association of municipalities), Barkarby science park (Järfälla Municipality), IVL (Swedish Environmental Research Institute), RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden)

4. Timeframe

Planning and preparation of these activities is expected to start already during January 2022, but the mobilization workshops will take place during 2022. If possible, the activities will be coordinated with other regional initiatives, e.g. Science Week in Södertälje in February 2022.

5. Costs

- Wages for civil servants at Region Stockholm
- External costs for workshops, e.g. refreshments, rent, etc (preliminary about €500)

6. Funding sources (if relevant):

Region Stockholm and regional stakeholders (mainly in-kind), limited amount of external costs e.g. for workshops

ACTION 3 Developing management of S3

1. The background

As indicated during the Cohes3ion project, Stockholm has a multitude of collaborative forums with actors from various sectors. However, there is still a challenge concerning governance of regional innovation and smart specialization, including multi-level governance, since the former high-level innovation collaboration platform *Innovation Stockholm* was abandoned in 2019. It is also important to develop and lay the foundation for **management and coordination** of smart specialisation in Stockholm County to fulfil the necessary conditions of EU during the implementation of the ERDF-program 2021-2027. These include a need for a coordinating body, analysis of challenges for innovation transfer, development of research and innovation systems, an entrepreneurial discovery processes (EDP), efforts for industrial transition, international collaboration, and monitoring and evaluation.

However, since the role as responsible for regional development is still rather new at Region Stockholm, the level of understanding and resources available to fulfil these criteria is still limited. So far, a small Project Team (about 4-5 persons) has been responsible for coordinating the Cohes3ion project, developing the Business and Growth Strategy, including S3, and the new ERDF-program. For the implementation of these strategies, there is a need for internal support and increased resources.

As experience from the Cohes3ion project shows, many other regions make considerably investments in coordinating S3 activities. In Biskaia, for example, the sub-regional development company BAEZ and the research institute Orkestra provide expertise and process support. In Calabria, a regional agency (Fincalabria), with 130 employees and an impressive budget has been established to co-ordinate research, innovation, and SME-support, including S3.

Even if a similar amount of resources will probably not be available at Region Stockholm, it is necessary to secure a broad understanding of S3 as a “best practice” for regional development among politicians as well as civil servants. Otherwise, it will be difficult to have fruitful dialogues with regional stakeholders, to develop the multi-level governance platforms recommended in the Cohes3ion project and to fulfil the seven criteria of good S3 management required for future EU-funding. This may have a negative impact not only on the implementation of the ERDF-program but is also likely to influence other policy areas and funding programs, such as the new research program Horizon Europe and future European Digital Innovation Hubs – as discussed during regional stakeholder workshops in Cohes3ion.

2. Action

To secure a broad understanding and commitment to the concept of S3 as a tool for regional development outside of the Project Team at Region Stockholm, different activities are needed, as complement to communication activities on S3 developed in action 1.

- Inspiration activities to increase understanding of regional development and S3 among civil servants and policy makers in Region Stockholm, e.g. workshops, lectures or seminars. To increase legitimacy, it is preferable with external participation from regional, national or international experts, e.g. on the potential to focus on missions or societal challenges, with inspiration from Ruhr (lead markets) or Wales (SBRI).
- Continued Project Team meetings with external expert competence to monitor and secure the implementation of the RAP, including a continued development of a S3 coordination structure and engaging in internal and external dialogues during the implementation of Cohes3ion Regional Action Plan.
- Physical participation of representatives in the Project Team at the final conference/project meeting of Cohes3ion in Bilbao during 2022, if possible due to the pandemic situation.

3. Players involved

These activities are directed mainly to policy makers and civil servants at Region Stockholm, to support an increased understanding of the new responsibility for regional development, including S3, and increase the willingness to provide additional resources for long-term implementation of S3.

4. Timeframe

Activities are expected to take place during the implementation phase of Cohes3ion, mainly February to December 2022.

5. Costs

- Wages for planning and coordination (Project Team) and participation (politicians and civil servants) in activities at Region Stockholm
- Cost for external monitoring, i.e. following the RAP implementation, participating in selected activities and providing documentation on the development of S3 in Stockholm (preliminary about €10-12 000)
- Travel costs and accommodation for final conference (preliminary about €2-3 000)

6. Funding sources:

Region Stockholm (mainly in-kind, e.g. wages and workshop costs) and Cohesion lump sum to cover external monitoring and travel costs for final seminar.

Signature

Region Stockholm agree to support and promote the implementation of the plan detailed above.

Date: X December 2021

Name: Clara Hellner

Position: R&D Director

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____

