

ACTION PLAN

Adaptation of the R&D&i Observatory to include Soft Innovation Data



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Part I – General information

Project: **PASSPARTOOL**

Partner organisation(s) concerned: Foundation FUNDECYT Science and Technology Park of Extremadura (FUNDECYT-PCTEX)

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

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

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed

Smart Specialisation Strategy of Extremadura 2021-2027 (RIS3 Extremadura)

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument:

Although the initial policy instrument selected was ERDF Operational Programme of Extremadura 2014-2020, based on the fact that the Action Plan will be mainly focused on improving and adapting the R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura, part of the RIS3 Monitoring and Evaluation System, the policy instrument tackled within the PASSPARTOOL project is the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Extremadura 2021-2027. This Strategy is mainly financed through the ERDF Operational Programme of Extremadura 2021-2027, under Political Objective 1.

The ERDF Operational Programme constitutes a key instrument for the implementation of R&D&i policies in the territory through the deployment of the operations foreseen under Political Objective 1 and in clear connection with the RIS3 Extremadura.

One of the problems and criticalities faced by our RIS3 is the one regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the R&D&i results. So far, there are many steps that are already being taken in order to solve this difficulty, as for example the Monitoring and Evaluation System put in place by the RIS3 Technical Office through the **R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura**, which allows not only to reflect the data retrieved in the development of the RIS3 monitoring, but also to continue monitoring science and innovation trends and the influence of regional, national and European funding and action lines, framed in the RIS3 areas. However, this monitoring system do not reflect non-R&D driven innovation.

Within the framework of the PASSPARTOOL project, we seek to **improve the RIS3 Monitoring and Evaluation System** to be able to measure more clearly and efficiently the innovation generated in the region and, fundamentally, non-R&D

driven innovation. To do so, we will make use of the data obtained by the **Regional Innovation Survey** (Cátedra de la Innovación), **already improved** attending to the lessons learned within the PASSPARTOOL project framework, integrating it in the **R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura**.

This approach is in line with one of the twofold focus addressed by the PASSPARTOOL Project: Monitoring and Evaluation.

On the other hand, and attending to the second focus **“Soft Innovation - Social and Non R&D Driven Innovation”**, the integration of the Regional Innovation Survey within the R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura will act as an open window and help to create awareness about the opportunity that soft innovation represents for our Micro and SMEs network. Our policymakers and the society as a whole will also have the opportunity to better understand what is Soft Innovation and how we perform on this regard at regional level.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

Name of the action: Adaptation of the R&D&i Observatory to include Soft Innovation Data

1. Relevance to the project

The R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura is the instrument for monitoring and evaluation of the RIS3 Strategy and, therefore, of the Political Objective 1 of the ERDF 2021-2027 Regional Programme of Extremadura. In this sense, the adaptation of the Observatory in order to include soft innovation data will improve the monitoring of the selected Policy Instrument by having a more comprehensive overview of the R&D&i activities at regional level.

In other to properly tackle this Action, we will divide it into two activities:

Activity 1. Regional Innovation Survey Improvement

This Regional Survey was created in 2008 as complement of the National Innovation Survey, since the latter does not measure innovative behaviours in companies with less than 10 employees. When talking about a region like Extremadura, where almost all companies are MicroSMEs (96.49%/ 2019 data) the national innovation survey does not reflect reality.

The **Regional Innovation Survey** is a joint initiative of FUNDECYT-PCTEx and the University of Extremadura (UEx) which has been performed annually since 2009. It aims to inform the scientific, technological and business communities, and Extremadura society in general, about the importance of innovation for the socio-economic development of the region. This Survey makes possible to describe the evolution of innovation in Extremadura, both innovation driven from the public sphere and, especially, that arising from business organisations.

An annual report focused on micro-SME: ≥ 5 employees is delivered, reflecting the situation, experience and degree of innovation of regional companies.

The data generated provide also information on the innovative processes of regional companies, what advantages they obtain from them, what obstacles they encounter in their implementation and, in short, it is gained more and better knowledge of the panorama of business innovation in Extremadura.

Although some results obtained from the Survey are related to Soft Innovation, these are in the minority and in no way identified as such. Within the context of the PASSPARTOOL project, and being aware that the first step in order to improve our RIS3 Monitoring and Evaluation System is to be provided with reliable data able to show a picture, as accurate as possible, of this type of innovation, we FUNDECYT-PCTEX (as PASSPARTOOL Partner and entity financing the Innovation Survey) together with the University of Extremadura (Managers of the Innovation Survey) decided to re-design this tool by also shifting it towards Soft Innovation.

Activity 2. Creation of a dedicated space on Soft Innovation data in the R&D&i Observatory

The ERDF Operational Programme of Extremadura constitutes a key instrument for the implementation of R&D&i policies in the territory through the deployment of the operations foreseen under Political Objective 1 and in clear connection with the RIS3 Extremadura which is financed by this PI. As part of the RIS3 Extremadura, the R&D&i Observatory was created in 2017 with the aim of providing our region's RIS3 Monitoring and Evaluation System with an effective tool able to measure indicators related to regional R&D&i.

The absence of granular data on R&D&i activities and results, the difficulty to classify R&D&i activities in the RIS3 areas of specialisation, and the lack of integrated data from the set of R&D&i support instruments at regional, national and European level, prompted the RIS3 Technical Office to seek new solutions to the problems encountered.

Concretely talking about Innovation, we need to improve the RIS3 Monitoring and Evaluation System to be able to measure it in a clearer and efficient way, especially non-R&D driven innovation which is often overlooked by current monitoring and evaluation systems and that is of strategic value in regions like EXTREMADURA with a low innovation profile.

Within the framework of the PASSPARTOOL project, we seek to improve the Observatory with the integration of the data, the results and the conclusions obtained from the Innovation Survey. This improvement will provide to all actors at regional level (Regional Government, Micro and SMEs, Researchers and Society as a whole) with a more accurate picture of Innovation (hard and soft). But beyond that, this will also contribute to inform and generate awareness of the importance of Soft Innovation dynamics as well as to boost and reinforce cooperation among them.

This action is framed within the PASSPARTOOL Project: Monitoring & Evaluation and SME & Social Innovation aspects, and we expect to reach with it an enhancement of our PI within Type 2: Improved Governance as the introduction of non-R&D driven innovation data within the RIS3 Observatory will be achieved thanks to the lessons learnt within the PASSPARTOOL Project.

2. Good Practices that have inspired the action

Both **activity 1 and activity 2** have been inspired in the **Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor**.

The Innovation Monitor is based on an online survey that is sent out once a year to SMEs in the region and covers broad range of topics, such as organisational innovation, human capital, social innovation, barriers to innovation, etc. The aim of this tool is to monitor and provide information on the characteristics and behaviours of SMEs in North Netherlands and to help understand the innovation competences of hundreds of SMEs in the region.

The survey is a flexible tool, which is updated annually, based on previous results and responding to emerging needs at the local level. The results contribute to better innovation policy and more effective use of grants in their territory. The Innovation

Monitor also contributes to strengthening cooperation between businesses, governments and knowledge institutions.

Moreover, the *Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor* was also an inspiration and helped us to understand the importance of giving added value to the monitoring activities. Therefore, the integration of the regional survey into the R&D&i Observatory will help us to have a more robust system.

We have identified some aspects of the Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor that could be imported into our Regional Innovation Survey in order to make a more inclusive reading and measurement, with a broader scope, of Non-Technological/Soft Innovation.

We are especially interested in go deeper about:

- Inclusion of terminology related to Soft Innovation/ Non-R&D driven Innovation.
- Key points in the design of the questionnaire regarding the non-technological innovation issues.
- SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) inclusion.
- Involvement of other entities/ regional ecosystem in the dissemination and communication activities.
- Their methodology for reaching out to companies and achieving broader participation.
- The design of the individual reference report, “benchmark report” (comparison with other SMEs).

Furthermore, inspiration has also come from the project itself, and from the need to better understand and assess Soft Innovation. Along the 3 years of exchange of experiences among partners, we have had the opportunity to see how important this type of innovation is, at least as important as Hard Innovation, being on the other hand the most common to find the two forms of innovation implemented together.

What makes the processes, services and products of most of companies to be innovative refer above all to issues like: company management, business values and culture, creativity, development of their leaders and professionals, communication between business networks, the role of workers in their organisations, the flexibility of their organisational structures, knowledge management, their capacity to manage change and transform themselves, ...

All this learning has served us to understand the importance of being able to measure Soft Innovation and include this measurement within the tool we already have for this purpose: R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura.

3. Nature of the action and steps for implementation

Activity 1. Regional Innovation Survey Improvement

On this regard, we (FUNDECYT-PCTEX as PASSPARTOOL Partner and entity financing the Innovation Survey, together with the University of Extremadura as Managers of the Innovation Survey) have already started with the improvements.

The first contacts with the University of Groningen (AP5), owners of the Northern Netherlands Innovation Monitor, took place on May 2021. We held virtual meeting with them and exchange emails in order to deepen in those aspects we were interested in. Between June and August 2021, FUNDECYT-PCTEX and the University of Extremadura worked together in analysing the information received and where & how it was feasible to include the first improvements. Early September, the University of Extremadura (UEX) approved the definitive version of the 2021 Regional Innovation Survey and End-September 2021 it was launched. Deadline to receive the answers to the study was 31st October 2021. First results of the Survey are being analysed and within the first quarter of the year they will be published.

This first set of improvements consisted on:

- Updated the survey with the methodology of the Oslo Manual;
- Inclusion of some questions related to non-technological innovation: specifically, 3 questions on SDGs have been incorporated in section A of the questionnaire, and 1 question on environmental innovation in block B;
- Inclusion of some questions on the effects of the pandemic on innovation processes;
- In the glossary of terms, a definition of Non-Technological Innovation/ Non-R&D driven innovation has been included;
- Relied on other regional entities to send out and disseminate the questionnaire.

On the other hand, and based on the lessons learned during the “on-site” Staff Exchange process, we have realised and been conscious of the importance of a good and appropriate dissemination & awareness campaign, in order to not only present the results of the survey but also to reach out companies and achieve their broader participation. To do so, the second set of improvements will consist on:

- The design of an attractive image/ front page of the survey, as “the looks matters!”
- The development of promotional material for its use regarding social networks in order to: inform about the launch of the survey first and the organisation of a regional Event to present the result obtained secondly.
- The organisation of a regional Event to presents the survey results to the different actors of our innovation ecosystem: stakeholders, political authorities, companies, university community, society...

Additionally, and in order to better manage the sending of the survey, its collection and the analysis of the results, the University of Extremadura will manage the participation of students/ PhD.

Finally, we will consolidate the first improvements already carried out in the survey and aforementioned in order to better analyse their impact in the survey as result of the comparative of the two consecutive years.

Activity 2. Creation of a dedicated space on Soft Innovation data in the R&D&i Observatory

The second activity of this Action will be the integration of data on non R&D driven innovation obtained from the Regional Innovation Survey into the R&D&i Observatory of Extremadura.

To do so, different steps will be necessary in order to meet this challenge:

- First of all, we FUNDECYT-PCTEX as Technical Office of the RIS3, and therefore in charge of managing the R&D&I Observatory, will **design and create a dedicated space** within the Observatory where to integrate the data on non-R&D driven innovation/ Soft Innovation obtained from the Regional Innovation Survey.
- On the other hand, an **analysis of the data** obtained from the Innovation Survey will be carried out in order to select, prepare and include that one able to show and inform about non-R&D driven innovation processes and activities in the region. FUNDECYT-PCTEXT and UEX will work together in this step.
- An **awareness and information campaign** will be launched in order to inform about this new feature of the Observatory at regional level.

This Action will help our regional ecosystem and our Policy Makers to cooperate, to create dialogue, but also to better measure & assess Soft Innovation and the impact and weight it has within our Micro and SMEs network. It will also contribute to inform and generate awareness of the importance of Soft Innovation dynamics. The alliance of the Regional Innovation Survey and the R&D&i Observatory will become a strong tool in order to facilitate the elaboration of the R&D&i plans of the Regional Government of Extremadura. It will serve as a consultation tool by the group of experts in charge of drafting them.

4. Stakeholders involved

UNIVERSITY OF EXTREMADURA

As managers and technical responsible of the Regional Innovation Survey, they will be in charge of Activity 1. On the other hand they will also participate in activity 2, in those steps related with the data analysis.

FUNDECYT-PCTEX

As Technical Office of the RIS3, and therefore in charge of managing the R&D&i Observatory, it will be in charge of Activity 2. On the other hand and as PASSPARTOOL Partner and part of the R&D&i ecosystem, we will support the UEX in those steps both parts consider necessary for the correct development of Activity 1.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF EXTREMADURA/ General Secretariat of Science, Technology, Innovation and University

The General Secretariat of Science, Technology, Innovation and University of the Regional Government of Extremadura, main responsible of the Policy Instruments addressed, will support the action plan and will benefit from it as it will have additional information for policymaking.

5. Risks and mitigation strategy of the action

Regarding **Execution Risks**, we count on the appropriate and skilled human resources to duly develop the actions and steps already described regarding the Implementation of the Action Plan. Furthermore, and bearing in mind FUNDECYT-PCEX and the University of Extremadura are the two entities in charge of the R&D&i Observatory and the Regional Survey respectively, collaboration is guarantee and therefore this type of risk is considered low.

Regarding **Stakeholders Risks**, both entities (FUNDECYT-PCTEX and University of Extremadura) count with a long and broad experience working together as part of the regional innovation ecosystem. Nevertheless, we will programme regular meetings in order to follow up performance and mitigate any possible problem/ difficulty it may arise.

Regarding **Technical Risks**, we count with an IT department that will be in charge of developing activity 2. Regular meetings will be also organised with them in order to prevent delays and possible difficulties.

6. Timeframe

Timeframe for the implementation of the Action Plan is:

August 2022 - July 2023

Within this timeframe, the activities will be implemented as follows:

ACTIVITY 1

May-August 2022: Development of new version of Regional Innovation Survey

September 2022: Development of Strategy to reach out to companies and achieving broader participation.

September 2022: Approval of new version of Regional Innovation Survey

October 2022: Launch of new version of Regional Innovation Survey

March 2023: Results of the Regional Innovation Survey

May-June 2023: Dissemination Actions/ Regional Event

ACTIVITY 2

September-December 2022: Design and creation of specific section within the R&D&i Observatory.

March-April 2023: Analysis of the data obtained from the Regional Innovation Survey and inclusion within the Observatory new section.

May 2023: Inclusion of data within the new section of the Observatory.

June 2023: Awareness and Information campaign to inform about this new feature of the Observatory at regional level.

7. Indicative costs

No additional costs are foreseen to implement these two activities.

However, FUNDECYT-PCTEX as the Technical Office of the RIS3 Extremadura (financed through ERDF ROP) has a budget of around 200.000 € per year. Of this budget, around 120.000€ per year are for monitoring and evaluation activities. A team of four people are working on this activity.

On the other hand, the University of Extremadura already receives financing for all the works related to the Regional Innovation Survey. In this budgetary framework, it is expected to mobilise:

- Financial resources: 15,000.00 € per year to develop the questionnaire, mail survey, results analysis, report edition, research activities and overheads.
- Human resources: 3 professors -part time- of the Department of Business Management and Sociology of the University of Extremadura/ per year.

Therefore, the implementation of the Action Plan will only require a distributing and reordering of existing resources rather than needing new ones.

8. Indicative funding sources

Activity 1: Own resources

Activity 2: RIS3 Technical Office budget, financed through ERDF ROP

Date: 15/06/2022

Name of the organisation(s):

Foundation FUNDECYT Science and Technoly Park of Extremadura

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