

## OECD project: Smart specialisation for innovation-driven growth 2011-12

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Regions have, once again, become target areas for structural change towards smarter, more sustainable and inclusive growth. The concept of smart specialisation aims at helping regions to capitalize on their particular strengths. It is defined as an “entrepreneurial process of discovery where a region can benefit from specializing in a particular area of science and technology”.

Smart specialisation corresponds to the New Industrial Policy agenda, but also has the potential to bring about paradigmatic change to regional policy and development at large by pre-assessing new activities through a knowledge and innovation-driven lens. Shifting a region’s profile towards more innovative capacity needs to deploy the specific expertise that exists in all three dimensions of a triple-helix: (1) government and the regional planners, (2) the leading entrepreneurs, comprising both the region’s big companies and those hidden champions that make the innovative difference and, not the least, (3) those lead institutions that focus the knowledge, technology and creative edge of a region. Universities, research, innovation and design centres do not only influence the skills and growth capacity of a region, they are also magnets for a region’s innovators and agents of long-term structural change.

The OECD Working Party for Innovation and Technology Policy (TIP) has launched an international project on smart specialisation for innovation-driven growth and on drafting a new set of smart regional strategies. The project is a current spearhead of the international smart specialisation discourse that wishes to transform an EU-related conceptual base (innovation gurus Dominique Foray, Philip McCann and others paved the academic path) into policy evidence and tools of highly practical value. Until the end of this year, 15 OECD countries and regions from around the globe are co-operating to generate outputs like specialisation indicator profiles, governance enquiries and case-studies. The project has also sparked interest from the World Bank who only recently established closer collaboration links with OECD and TIP on an innovative online policy platform.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF), together with innovation experts of Joanneum Research and contributors from project partners throughout the OECD and in the European Commission, introduced an 8-page and easy-to-use KEY to the essence of smart specialisation and a list of self-assessing questions to start the process of a regional “Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)”. The **RIS3 KEY** is the first ready-to-use result of the OECD project; it can be downloaded in English, German and Spanish from [www.era.gv.at](http://www.era.gv.at).