



Online S3 Newsletter

ONLINE S3 Consortium

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Scottish S3 newsletter

Scotland doesn't have a Smart Specialisation Strategy per se, although the Scottish Government and its agencies have commissioned various studies to work out how research and innovation strategies can best contribute to the economic growth of the region.

These pieces of work include the Scottish Government's response to the EU Commission's consultation on the Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation for 2014 – 2020, which identified the priority sectors of food and drink, sustainable tourism, finance and business services, universities, creative industries, energy

(particularly marine energy) and life sciences.

Scotland has instead chosen to integrate a smart specialisation approach into its current Economic Strategy, published in 2015. This document sets out an overarching framework and priorities for the Scottish Government based on the mutually supportive goals of boosting economic competitiveness and tackling inequality.



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It covers four priorities closely aligned with a smart specialisation approach:

INVESTMENT

Investing in people, infrastructure and assets in a sustainable way.

INNOVATION

Fostering a culture of innovation spanning business, workplaces and public services, and supporting the effective commercialisation of research and development.

INTERNATIONALISATION

Supporting export activities and ensuring Scotland continues as a major international brand and destination for investment.

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Promoting inclusive growth through promoting fair work, gaining private sector commitment to a range of business and social policies, and delivering more equal growth across all areas of the country.

The Scottish Government also plays a role in the implementation of smart specialisation strategies through its role in key EU projects and RIS3 thematic platforms. Scotland is a founder member of the Vanguard Initiative, set up in 2014 by a small group of European regions in response to the EU Commission's drive to re-industrialise Europe around new and emerging technologies. It aims to foster joint and co-investment, sharing of testing and demonstration facilities and cross-border supply chain creation.

Scotland is also involved, via Scottish Enterprise, in the Interreg Europe project S3 for Growth, looking at how to remove barriers to cross-border investment of EU ESIF funds. And through Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland is playing a lead role in the Interreg Europe project Clusters.

Scotland, through the Vanguard project, also inspired the thematic platforms approach that the European Commission has launched in recent years to provide hands-on support to regions to encourage collaboration and cooperation based on matching smart specialisation priorities. Scotland is involved in both the Energy and Industrial Modernisation platforms.

Scottish role in Online S3

The Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation (ECCI), part of the University of Edinburgh, led the Scottish Online S3 pilot with support from our trainers Napier University. As a hub for low carbon innovation, enterprise and multi-partner project delivery across Scotland and beyond, ECCI was ideally placed to rally the diverse networks and insight needed to help shape the platform's development.

ECCI undertook a stakeholder engagement exercise from July 2017 to March 2018 to test the Online S3 toolbox with a wide range of people.
Overall, the project delivered:

	More than 200 completed short questionnaires
	16 completed long questionnaires
	Nine workshops with various stakeholder and industry groups
	A broad programme of targeted email, social media and face-to-face dissemination and engagement, informing a total of more than 1,700 stakeholders across Scotland

Overview of stakeholder engagement

In tandem with training sessions from Napier University on the platform, ECCI prepared a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy outlining our key messages, our target audiences and our tactics for reaching them.

This set out a variety of techniques to engage individuals from across Scottish industry, academia, business, public sector and civil society with the Online S3 toolbox and gather their input. Overall, ECCI:

INFORMED 1,701 individuals (against a project target of 800)

This figure covers the number of people who saw information about the pilot project through social

media, newsletters, email and publicity material in ECCI's building.

ECCI commissioned a suite of branded publicity materials, including postcards, pens, and a GIF and graphics for social media sharing. We shared engaging content on our digital platforms in order to drive people to interact with the platform and take part in the questionnaire, tagging relevant organisations and individuals to increase reach.

We also included information on the project in our ECCI newsletter, reaching businesses, academics, students and public policy professionals within our own networks.

This activity drove people to dedicated news and events pages on our own website. We also displayed banners, postcards and screen information about the project in key locations within our building, which attracts more than 1,000 visitors a month.

CONSULTED 287 individuals (against a project target of 260)

This figure covers the number of people ECCI directly emailed and the number of items of marketing material given out at events. We compiled a database of stakeholders from across the quadruple helix, sending a targeted email as part of a multi-channel coordinated publicity push towards the end of the pilot phase. We took marketing collateral to key Scottish industry events & conferences, including the Low Carbon Innovation Conference in May 2017 and the VIBES green business awards in November 2017. Napier University also engaged relevant individuals with the platform as part of workshops and other activity for Online S3 WP2.

INVOLVED 95 individuals (against a project target of 30)

This figure covers the number of people taking part in a face-to-face meeting about the Online S3 project, whether as part of a group or in a one-to-one meeting.

ECCI ran or commissioned nine interactive workshops in total, of around two hours each. Each event included a short PowerPoint presentation with background on RIS3 and the Online S3 project, before examining a handful of relevant applications in depth. Detailed handouts outlining the tools' benefits and how to use them were provided by ECCI.

This workshop programme consisted of four sessions run by ECCI, leveraging our extensive cross-sector networks as well as our broad internal community of charities, public sector professionals and start-ups. After a competitive tender process, we also contracted a consultancy called FreshSight to collect feedback on the platform's applications from at least 80 stakeholders across the quadruple helix. The company ran five workshops for the Online S3 project, alongside smaller group sessions and one-to-one meetings with key individuals. ECCI provided in-depth training for the consultancy as well as a venue and catering for all workshops.

COLLABORATED with 16 individuals (against a project target of 15)

This figure covers the number of people who we worked with to integrate the Online S3 tools into their work and then undertake a face-to-face interview based on the long questionnaire.

We worked closely with contacts from ECCI's existing networks and the wider University of Edinburgh academic network. Each partnership kicked off with a briefing meeting, to demonstrate the platform and selected tools as well as provide broader context on the project and RIS3. The participants then worked with the tools in their own time, integrating them into their work and/or study. We then arranged a debrief meeting where we ran through the long questionnaire face-to-face to gain qualitative and quantitative feedback on the tools and the platform as a whole.

Conclusions

A high proportion of respondents felt that the platform had some excellent applications in it and, with adjustment and refinement, had the potential to be a powerful tool.

However there were some recommendations surfacing from the consultations, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Streamline and group the tools. Many felt that rather than attempting to provide a one-stop-shop, the simpler applications – or those that would be of little or no added value to professionals who already have access to their own expertise and resources - should be cut out. This would allow the platform to be realigned around a much smaller number of tools which provide clear, focussed added value around the production of a RIS3 strategy, including functionality, data and insight that cannot not easily be found elsewhere.

2. Improve user experience. There was strong feedback about the need to enhance the design of the platform in order to improve useability, by starting from the perspective of the users not the developers. Many fed back that users shouldn't need to – and/or don't have time to – read a long, technically demanding guidance document and then apply what they have learned. Many respondents called for video tutorials and simpler guides, e.g.: a 'quick start' guide built in to each tool with explanatory pop-up balloons or a video overview. In the digital age, people expect an intuitive, interactive user experience which leads them seamlessly through the application with guidance and next steps already built in to the design. This points to the need for a managed process of engaging end users with the platform and researching their specific needs and

perspectives in order to inform the platform's future development.

3. Integrate the data and the tools. Many felt that the tools should all provide complete and comprehensive data so the user doesn't have to research or import their own. There was also some feedback around integrating the data so that you can seamlessly import it into different applications within the site, as well as allowing all reports and graphs to be imported into one overview document rather than having to combine graphs, reports and statistics manually. This would require additional back-end functionality but the number of users requesting this suggests many expect it as standard.

4. Create a clear journey from the toolbox to the production of a RIS3 strategy. Several respondents commented on what they saw as the gap, or potential disconnect, between outputs from the platform and the actual production of a smart specialisation strategy. Some outlined the need for clearer direction on how to use the outputs from the platform's tools, including links to evidence-based policy options. This naturally chimes with the feedback about integrating reporting and data across the back end of the platform (focussed around a smaller number of applications) to produce a clearer, unified output.

Next steps

As noted above, although the Scottish Government has commissioned pieces of work about smart specialisation, Scotland doesn't have an active, published smart specialisation strategy in place. Instead, its approach to this concept is embedded in its existing economic strategy.

For these reasons, only a handful of the people we engaged as part of our pilot project had previous knowledge of smart specialisation and even few had ever worked on a smart specialisation strategy or related projects. It was therefore challenging to gather robust feedback about whether or not the Online S3 toolbox could, or would, help professionals tasked with producing a RIS3 strategy for their region.

The feedback outlined above nonetheless provides useful pointers for the practical application of this toolbox by those looking to create and implement a smart specialisation strategy for their EU region.

ECCI and our pilot trainer Napier University will share the conclusions of the Scottish pilot with key contacts in Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government so that these insights can inform next steps on the approach to economic growth and smart specialisation-related activity in Scotland.

ONLINE S3 project aims to develop an e-policy platform augmented with a toolbox of applications and online services, which will assist national and regional authorities in the EU in elaborating or revising their smart specialisation agenda, in terms of policies and strategy.

ONLINE S3 Project

<http://www.onlines3.eu>

ONLINE S3 Platform

<http://www.s3platform.eu/>



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