
Smart Specialization Strategies in Croatia: Experiences and the Way Forward

The Institute of Economics, Zagreb

Conference room, 1st floor

Trg J. F. Kennedyja 7, Zagreb

8 November 2024, 10:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Since the beginning of its implementation in 2016, the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) has been identified as a public policy tool in Croatia, enabling the development and financing of innovations and R&D activities in areas of strategic importance for regional economic development by utilizing funding from European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI). In the conceptual sense, S3 should contribute to structural changes in the economy, which should be brought about through modernization, diversification, and transition of local production and technological capabilities. The importance of the S3 strategy is derived from the fact that it has replaced the national innovation policy, the scientific policy (partly), and the industrial policy, as well as the fact that it is an important part of the national development strategy of Croatia.

The S3 strategy for the 2016–2020 period has been replaced by the new S3 strategy, which relates to the period up to 2029 and, to the greatest extent, constitutes a continuation of the previous S3 strategy. In addition to previous thematic priority areas (TPAs), ICT has also been defined as a new TPA in the current S3 strategy. Likewise, another novelty is the introduction of the Integrated Territorial Programme as part of S3 up to 2029, which is focused on the industrial transition of Northern, Pannonian, and Adriatic Croatia. Regardless of the novelties and operating principles, S3 pulls together a large number of individuals. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the S3 strategy are still limited to administrative analyses of spending, while the analyses of the wider impact of the S3 strategy on the long-term socio-economic development of Croatia are missing.

The aim of the workshop is to analyze individual S3 strategy implementation segments, to analyze its relatedness to other EU level strategies in the field of research and development (such as the New European Innovation Agenda) and to determine the relevance of said strategy in Croatia. Proposals for the expert community and policy makers will also be formulated, with the aim of improving the implementation of the S3 strategy. At the same time, the S3 strategy implementation experience from the 2014–2020 period can greatly contribute to the success of the current S3 strategy implementation. The workshop should bring together policy decision makers, policy analysts, researchers, and professional evaluators, who will give their opinions on the S3 strategy and the possibilities of improving practices.

This is the third workshop organized by The Institute of Economics, Zagreb and the Croatian Innovation Policy Network, an informal network of policy decision makers, researchers, consultants, and individuals interested in improving the functioning of public policies and analyses in Croatia.

Programme

10:00 a.m.: Introduction

Conference introduction: Ivana Rašić

Programme introduction: Zoran Aralica

10:10–11:10 a.m.: Session 1

S3 Strategy Reach – round table

Moderator: Domagoj Račić

Puljiz, J., *Analysis of the S3 implementation framework in Croatia for the 2014-2020 period*

Švarc, J., Bečić, E., *Evaluacija pametne specijalizacije i socio-ekonomska tranzicija: početna razmatranja*

Crnić-Duplančić, I., *The evolution of the S3 monitoring system in Croatia*

Aralica, Z., Božić, Lj., Roud, V., Škrinjarić, B., *Bridging the Productivity Gap: Technological Growth in Croatia's ICT Sector*

11:15–12:30 a.m.: Session 2

How the S3 Strategy Works – round table

Moderator: Ljiljana Božić

Račić, D., *Entrepreneurial discovery process in Croatia: Lessons learned*

Milas, P., *S3 strategy participation experiences*

Radošević, S., Marković, S., Rajaković, M., *Regionalni aspekt strategije S3 u RH – Industrijska tranzicija hrvatskih regija*

Pinter, T., *The international dimension of S3*

1:00–2:30 p.m.: Session 3

S3 Prospects in Croatia – round table

Moderator: Zoran Aralica

Goran Romek, State Secretary, Ministry of Economy

Domagoj Mikulić, State Secretary, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds

Hrvoje Meštrić, Director-General of the Directorate for Science and Technology, Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

Želimir Kramarić, HAMAG BICRO Board Member

Slavo Radošević, University College London