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Study on the development of diagnostics and Regional Innovation Strategies in the French regions under the OPs of the ERDF 2007-2013

1. Background

The Community strategic guidelines for cohesion for the 2007-2013 programming period provide that ERDF operational programmes should aim in particular to promote research and innovation, including new information and communication technologies.

These guidelines also state that cohesion policy has two important roles to play. First of all, it must help the regions to implement action plans and regional innovation strategies at regional level. Secondly, it must help to boost research and innovation capacity in the regions.

When negotiating the 2007-2013 Operational Programmes, the European Commission noted that the regions were experiencing difficulties in formulating a clear Regional Innovation Strategy. It therefore took the initiative in 2007 of proposing that all the French regions engage in an exercise in order to firstly develop the initial diagnosis further and, secondly, to clarify and complete the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS). This exercise should also be of use in any mid-term revisions of the operational programmes.

All 26 French regions accepted the European Commission's proposal and have therefore carried out the exercise on the Regional Innovation Strategy.

2. Objectives and implementation of the study

In order to assess the results of this exercise in the French regions, the European Commission requested a study to be carried out by the company ADE (*Aide pour le Développement Economique*) of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), in association with the company *Louis Lengrand et Associés* of Versailles (France).

The aim of this study was to analyse the development of diagnostics and of the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS), and more particularly to examine:

- the process of developing and adapting the RIS in the regions, and the chosen methods of governance;
- the main developments or reorientations in relation to the initial situation in 2007, and how the process and its constitutive elements may have contributed;

- the main conclusions drawn from the RIS exercise, particularly with a view to the mid-term review of the ERDF operational programmes.

The study on the development of the RIS is therefore limited to an examination of the initial situation in the regions, a reflection process and the main reorientations in innovation at regional level. However, the published study does not pass judgment on whether the choices made under the Regional Innovation Strategies were appropriate.

First of all, the consultants from the two companies responsible for this study analysed the main documents on innovation in each region, including the ERDF operational programmes.

Secondly, between the summer of 2009 and February 2010, they carried out a series of missions in the French regions during which they interviewed the main people responsible for innovation.

The study consists of three documents: a summary, a final summary report, and a final report comprising 26 regional summary sheets.

Of course, the impetus provided by the Regional Innovation Strategies exercise continued after the study ended, and is still ongoing. The situations described by the consultants in this study have therefore evolved, particularly as regards operational progress.

Taking note of these reports, it should therefore be borne in mind that this study reflects the situations observed by the consultants in late February or early March 2010. It should be noted that the study conducted by ADE and its associate is the sole responsibility of its authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

During the exercise on Regional Innovation Strategies, many French regions underlined the need to have exchanges of information on the various types of work carried out at regional level.

The on-line publication of the study on the development of diagnostics and Regional Innovation Strategies in the French regions as part of the OPs under the ERDF 2007-2013 is also a response to the need for information and benchmarking expressed by the French regions.

3. Main study conclusions

Despite a sometimes complicated context, the RIS exercise has given almost all the French regions a diagnosis and a strategic orientation document specific to innovation which reflect a global vision shared by the regional partners. The RIS are all underpinned by in-depth teamwork involving a growing number of stakeholders over a long period. This in itself is a success and shows that the RIS approach has met a need, or indeed a necessity, for most regions.

The exercise involved mainly the services of central government (the SGAR [General Secretariat for Regional Affairs], the former DRIRE [Regional Directorates for Industry, Research and the Environment], the DRTT [Regional Directorates for Research and Technology], Oséo-Innovation, etc.) and of the regions. It was extended to other services such as the *Rectorats* (education authorities), the *Directions régionales du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle* (DRTEFP, Regional Directorates for

Labour, Employment and Vocational Training), the *Directions Régionales de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt* (DRAF, Regional Directorates for Agriculture and Forestry), etc. Other institutional and professional stakeholders were also able to take part in the RIS exercise (*Pôles de Compétitivité* [competitiveness hubs], *Chambres Régionales de Commerce et d'Industrie* [Regional Chambers of Trade and Industry], universities and panels of entrepreneurs).

The Regional Innovation Strategies have far exceeded the initial ERDF remit, positioning themselves in a global perspective (achieving consistency between all initiatives, sources of financing and stakeholders on regional territory), thereby underlining that stakeholders have adopted the approach and appreciated its usefulness.







The exercise has helped put innovation back at the heart of regional development policies, rather than remaining an isolated sectoral policy.

However, the RIS exercise must be continued with a view to defining or refining operational and implementation arrangements and to establishing and ensuring the functioning of governance structures.

The RIS exercise ties in perfectly with the "Europe 2020" Community strategy adopted by the Heads of State and Government on 17 June 2010, and which constitutes a key guiding element for future regional policy after 2013. The first priority of the "Europe 2020" strategy is intelligent growth – developing an economy based on growth and innovation, and cohesion policy has been identified as one of the essential instruments for implementing such a strategy.

In the future, regions with a solid Regional Innovation Strategy and which have been able to maintain the dynamic of the exercise in the context of shared governance will have a head start when it comes to defining their priorities for action in this field and making a coherent contribution to this new Community strategic framework.

Documents:

Study on the development of diagnoses and regional innovation strategies in the French regions under the ERDF Operational Programmes for the 2007 – 2013 programming period - Summary    - Synthesis    - Regional Factsheets 