Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies in Italy: the process of stakeholder involvement

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Introduction

Synthesis of the survey conducted by the Italian Agency for Cohesion Policy about the extent to which Italian Regions have exercised the "stakeholder involvement" in the process of developing their RIS3.

Focus on :
1. the way the Regional administrations lead their entrepreneurial discovery process and the role of stakeholders in all the stages of the policy cycle;
2. most diffused methodologies used to involve the relevant stakeholders;
3. the stakeholders' role in the implementation of RIS3;
4. 3 regional cases representative of the national variety of arrangements in stakeholder involvement modes;
5. the role played by the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion.

The analysis is based on the content of the 21 Italian RIS3 documents, to date already approved by the European Commission or still in progress. Slight differences between data collected for this paper and RIS3 documents could be possible since the design phase is not finished yet for a few of them.

For this reason the information have been processed in an anonymous way

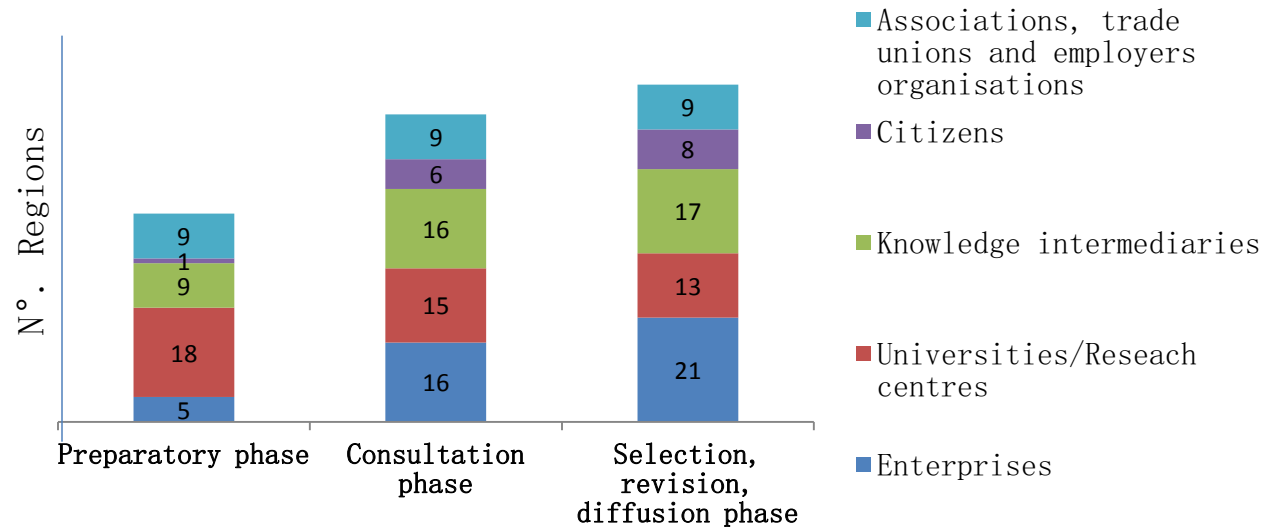# Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) in Italy

21 RIS3

- **5 Less Developed** – GDP < 75% EU27 average
- **3 In Transition** – 75% =< GDP < 90% EU27 average
- **13 More Developed** – GDP > 90% EU27 average

13 S3 ex-ante conditionality fulfilled
4 S3 completed , waiting for formal approval
4 S3 still in progress, soon completed

Heterogeneous conditions: *S3 as different opportunity*

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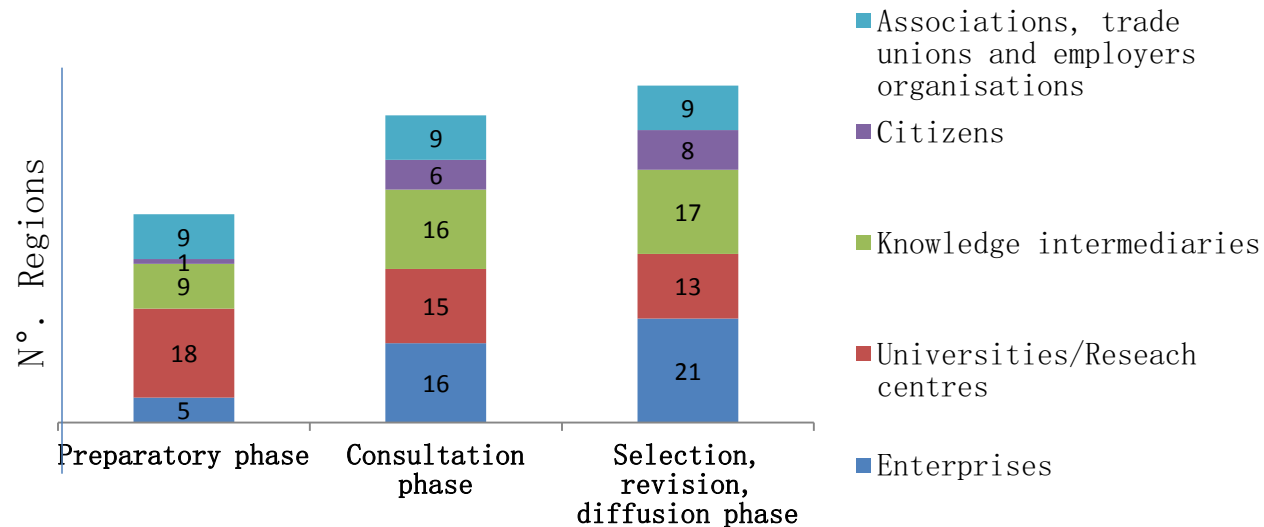# Typologies of stakeholders involved by phase

Source: Elaboration on RIS3 documents

For the first two points, the analysis considers the different roles of territorial stakeholders and the different methods used to involve them in the 3 phases of strategy design:

1. **Preparatory,**
2. **Consultation,**
3. **Selection-revision-diffusion of the specialisation trajectories.**

Typologies of stakeholders involved by phase

Source: Elaboration on RIS3 documents

Universities and Research Centres are the most relevant actors of the preparatory phase (18 Regions), decreasing their importance in the next two phases, but still involved in 15 and 13 Regions out of 21 till the end.

Associations, trade unione and employers organizations are considered in the same way for all the process (recalled in 9 Regions for each of the three phases)

All the **other stakeholders** grow in importance phase by phase:
- **Enterprises,** from 5 (preparatory phase) to 21 regions (selection, revision, diffusion phase)
- **Knowledge Intermediaries**, from 9 to 17 regions

Citizens have been involved only in few cases: only 1 region in preparatory phase, and 8 regions in selection, revision, diffusion phase

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Methods of stakeholders involvement in consultation and selection phases

PA	Focus group	Foresight	Digital Platform	Events	Experts support
1	• Stakeholders category		• Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
2	• Specialisation/ tech. Area		• Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
3				• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
4			• Web Survey • Consultation platform	• Discussion (thematic workshops)	• Thematic Experts
5	• Stakeholders category		• Consultation platform	• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
6	• Stakeholders category		• Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
7	• Stakeholders category		• Consultation platform • Dedicated email	• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
8	• Stakeholders category			• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
9		• Participatory mode	• Consultation platform	• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	
10	• Specialisation/ tech. area			• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
11	• Stakeholders category		• Consultation platform • Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
12	• Specialisation/ tech. area		• Consultation platform • Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
13			• Consultation platform	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Thematic Experts
14			• Consultation platform • Web Survey	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
15	• Specialisation/ tech. area			• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
16			• Consultation platform	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
17			• Consultation platform	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
18	• Stakeholders category			• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Thematic Experts
19		• Expert research	• Consultation platform	• Discussion (thematic workshops) • Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators
20	• Specialisation/ tech. Area		• Web Survey	• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	• Process facilitators • Thematic Experts
21	• Specialisation/ tech. area		• Consultation platform	• Diffusion (seminars and conferences)	

Source: Elaboration on RIS3 documents

Methods of stakeholders involvement in consultation and selection phases

Focus Group

"Small group discussion" setting guided by a leader - **13 Regions**
- to learn about specific stakeholders opinions on the S3 topics,
- to maximise the amount of information available at regional level in a relatively short time,
- to compare different perspectives and to guide the future strategy implementation.

two different ways:
- **6 Regions "specialisation area":** sectorial topic concerning each potential "area of smart specialisation" or "technological trajectory", moderated by a scientific/technological expert;
- **7 Regions "stakeholder category"**: selecting a group for each category of stakeholders, lead by a facilitator.

Methods of stakeholders involvement in consultation and selection phases

Foresight

- **2 Regions** applied technology foresight as a **"collective learning" method for priority setting** , exploiting, especially for one of them, its participatory dimension built on an intense communication and consensus-building base

- A chance for public administration institutions to **widen their equipment of policy design methods**, opening the way to the experimentation of bottom up approaches and to network steering devices

Methods of stakeholders involvement in consultation and selection phases

Digital platform

16 Regions adopted a wide set of tools enabled by internet, to activate a **feeding-back mechanism** about the strategic choices related to the design of their development path:

- **8 Regions** developed a **web survey** addressing a broad range of concerns coming form the preparatory phase through desk analysis and from the focus groups work

- **11 Regions** implemented on **website** the features of a wider **consultation platform**, supporting **discussion boards, forums and mailing lists** to engage in debate a wide network of people, to share a policy agenda setting and to receive suggestions regarding the orientation and management of public policy;

- almost **all of them** declared that they will keep their platform operating for all the implementation phase of their RIS3 as a multilevel governance tool.

Methods of stakeholders involvement in consultation and selection phases

Events

Two different **formats**:

- **15 regions: thematic workshops**, arranged as discussion meetings around specific concerns of their RIS3, focused on specialization areas, technological trajectories, policy instruments or emerging critical issues;

- **21 regions**: **seminars and conferences** in the form of diffusion events, to inform all the territorial actors of the state of advancement of the strategy, of the choices addressed in the document and of their motivations, and to create a modality for a shared accountability of the processes currently underway.

Stakeholders involvement: managing, monitoring and revising the strategy

Governance schemes vary across Regions (White paper on EU Governance)

- All the regional governance schemes allow for **collaborative leadership** and **define in a clear way the role and the level of stakeholders' engagement** in the RIS3 governing process.

- In general, governance schemes involve stakeholders providing their **direct participation in governing bodies with advisory functions** while **citizens are involved in the process through web consultations**.

Stakeholders involvement: managing, monitoring and revising the strategy

Regions	coordination mechanism	model of stakeholders partecipation		participation phase	inclusion in RIS3 governing bodies	other
		triple helix	quadruple helix			
1	interdepartmental body	TH		co-designing sectorial action plan, monitoring	Research Table, Thematic Working Groups	
2	interdepartmental body	TH		implementation proposals, monitoring and evaluation, revision, best practices dissemination	Steering Committee, Thematic platforms	
3	interdepartmental body		QH	communication, bestpractice dissemination, animation	RIS 3 Campania platform	
4	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation process		periodic meetings
5	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and evaluation, revision	Steering Group, permanent Thematic groups	
6	interdepartmental body		QH	monitoring and evaluation, updating and revision	Monitoring Committee, Thematic groups	annual meeting
7	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation process, monitoring and evaluation	Steering group , Thematic working groups	memorandum of understanting
8	interdepartmental body		QH	proposals, evaluation and revision		Mid term meeting, Living Labs for pilot projects, working groups, thematic forum
9	interdepartmental body		QH	action plan for RIS3 implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision	Regional Table for Growth , Thematic Forums	
10	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	Strategic Committee, Stakeholders General Assembly, Specialisation working Tables	
11	interdepartmental body	TH		implementation proposals, monitoring		High level events on Science, Technology and Innovation, Focus Groups, Thematic Tables
12	within R&I field	TH		implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	Steering Committee	Mid term meeting, thematic tables and forum
13	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	RIS3 Sharing and Consultation System (Region Directorates, Working Group on regional Clusters, Experts Working Group, Open Innovation Platform)	memorandum of understanding
14	interdepartmental body		QH	calls for proposals/tenders RIS3 revision		annual meeting
15	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation process, monitoring and revision	Innovation and Research Board, Technical Committee, Working groups	
16	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	Steering Committee, Extended Stakeholders Group, Thematic Focus	
17	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	Leading Committee, Working groups	
18	interdepartmental body	TH		implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	RIS3 Observatory	
19	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring and evaluation, updating and revision	Steering group, Table for Economic Development and Green Economy, Thematic working groups	memorandum of understanting
20	interdepartmental body		QH	implementation proposals, monitoring, communication	Technical Monitoring Committee, Thematic working groups	
21	within R&I field	TH		implementation proposals, monitoring and revision	Steering Committee, Observatory	

Source: Elaboration on RIS3 documents

Stakeholders involvement: managing, monitoring and revising the strategy

Coordination needs and mechanisms

- **2 dimensions** of coordination **needs**:
    - multi-sectoral/functional
    - multi-stakeholder

- **19 regions** establish **interdepartmental bodies** to coordinate different sectorial policies (and related public actors at different government level) involved by RIS 3 implementation

- **2 regions** position their coordination **within the Research and Innovation Department**, relying on previous coordination mechanisms for R&I policies based on regional laws (10 years experience), enhancing synergies between ordinary and cohesion policies.

Stakeholders involvement: managing, monitoring and revising the strategy

Model of stakeholder participation

(European code of conduct on partnership):
- **15 Regions** quadruple helix model
- **6 Regions** triple helix model

Inclusion in RIS 3 governing bodies

- **17 Regions:** stakeholders are represented within RIS3 **governing bodies** (Steering committee, Observatory, Thematic working groups), usually with advisory non-binding functions;

- **4 Regions:** stakeholders engagement is assured through the organization of **periodic planned meeting**.

Participation Phase

- the stakeholders participation is concentrated on **monitoring, evaluating and revision phases** symmetrically with respect to the key role played in co-designing smart strategies.

Stakeholders involvement: managing, monitoring and revising the strategy

R	Types of stakeholders
1	PRCs, MOCs, RTOs, HEIs, Private Research Centres, researchers, LEs, SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, Incubators, Innovation networks, Industrial Districts, Business Associations, TSOs
2	Regional Development Agency, Innovation and Research Network (made up by University TTO, Chambers of Commerce and business Associations Innovation desks, Innovation Poles, industrial Districts), Trade Unions, qualified people from Research and business community
3	PROs, HEIs, Qualified people in research/innovation field, firms, associations, citizens
4	Regional Innovation Agency, Regional ICT Agency, Regional Development Agency, beneficiaries, technological and industrial districts, HEIs, business community and associations, trade unions, local authorities, TSOs, civic society associations, citizens
5	LEs, SMEs, start-ups, spin-offs, business associations, HEIs, PROs, TTOs, Regional research observatory, living labs, bodies representing civil society, independent experts
6	Innovation Poles, Universities, Research Centers, business community representatives, social partners
7	Innovation Poles, Regional development agency, Les, SMEs, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, regional public utilities, business associations, financial institutions, TSOs, trade unions, associations, bodies representing civil society
8	Regional Innovation Agencies, Innovation Poles, industrial Districts, regional Clusters, business community, users community
9	Regional development Agency, Regional Technology Transfer and Innovation Agency, Regional Agency fo ICT, Regional High Technology Network, Lab for Internationalisation, business associations, business community representatives, start-ups, trade unions, qualified people
10	Business community, Universities, PROs, Institutional investors, bodies representing civil society
11	LEs, SMEs, start-ups, spin-offs, business associations, HEIs, PRCs, IRIs, MOCs, Regional development Agency, Regional Financial Agency, Chambers of Commerce, industrial and financial associations
12	Regional Innovation and Development Agency, Les, SMEs, PRCs, IRIs, Universities and HEIs, Innovation Poles and Technological Districts, start-ups
13	Regional agreement for growth (Region, Entrepreneurial System, TSOs and Trade Unions), regional Clusters, qualified people (business community, Research and innovation community, universities, social partners, bodies representing civil society)
14	Qualified people from Research and Business community, user needs representatives, financial institutions
15	Universities and PRCs, IRIs, Innovation Park, Chamber of Commerce, Local Development Agency, business Associations, SMEs, TSOs, bodies representing civil society
16	Innovation users, boundary spanners, HEIs, business Associations, business community, Territorial Innovation Accelerator, Local Development Agency, Qualified People
17	Universities and HEIs, PRCs, Entrepreneurial System, Social Partners, Financial Intermediaries and Foundations
18	Technological Districts, Innovation Poles
19	HEIs, Chambers of Commerce, TSOs, SMEs, Trade Unions, local authorities, Industrial and Financial Associations, bodies represen
20	Local authorities, Chamber of Commerce, Innovative Enterprises, HEIs, PROs, Trade Unions
21	LEs, SMEs, Universities and HEIs, PROs, Chambers of Commerce, Business Associations, Financial Associations, Financial Intern Regional Financial Agency

HEIs=Higher Education Institutions
TTOs=Technology Transfer Offices
ILOs=Industrial Liaison Offices
PROs= Public Research Organizations
PRCs=public research centres and councils
RTOs=Research Technology Organisations
IRIs=Independent Research Institutes
MOCs= Mission-Oriented Centres
TSOs=Third Sector Organisations

Source: Elaboration on RIS3 documents

Emerging practices within Italian RIS3s: evidences from regional cases

The case of Abruzzo: a Transition Region

S3 perceived as an **opportunity**:
- to capture not only the **current main assets** of the Region but also the **potential ones**, that have to be encouraged and extracted;
- to extend some principles and good practices to the **ordinary policies.**

EDP aimed at **identifying and involving all the innovators, scouting and supporting their emersion from isolation**, creating a wider network of the actors within the regional innovation system (april 2013; discussion with 14 regional Innovation Poles and universities – thematic workgroups).

Involvement of relevant stakeholders during the implementation **(Monitoring Committee).**

"Carta di Pescara", a joined process Region-firms that gives enterprises administrative, fiscal and financial advantages, if they respect specific criteria in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability. Monitored by a **Steering Committee** (Annual Report).

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Emerging practices within Italian RIS3s: evidences from regional cases

The case of Basilicata: a Less Developed Region

In the RIS 3 implementation governance system of Basilicata a central role is played by the **working thematic groups** in decision making (one for each specialization domain: Bio-economy, Automotive, Aerospace, Energy, Cultural and Creative Industry) supporting the Cabina di Regia (Interdepartmental Committee).

The RIS 3 supports the **transformation of working thematic groups into Regional Clusters,** aiming to define the **implementation agenda** and processing **operational proposals**, **feeding, sharing and validating** context analysis, dissemination of results and good practices.

Leading role of the **University of Basilicata** in animation activities aiming to create and reinforce regional clusters: recent creation of **Bio-Economy** regional Cluster and in progress constitution of **Automotive** one.

In the regional will, Clusters allow to accelerate the creation of new relations and shared activities among stakeholders focusing on **building an innovation matrix**.

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Emerging practices within Italian RIS3s: evidences from regional cases

The case of Emilia Romagna : A More Developed Region

The Emilia Romagna RIS3 represents a good practice of **governance** of the implementation phase arranged around a wide system of horizontal and vertical structures coordinated by the regional administration and open to all the regional stakeholders.

Three main elements:

1. the **Regional Administration**, including three operating facilities (Aster, Ervet, Lepida) dedicated respectively to the technology transfer, to the territorial development policy and to the regional digital agenda;

2. **4 horizontal structures** (HT Regional Network, emiliaromagnastartup.it, Laboratory for internationalization, Urban Laboratory) ensuring care and continuity to the relationships among stakeholders and regional administration, stimulating the emergence of new projects;

3. **a vertical coordination system**, centered on the "Regional Committee for Growth" articulated on Thematic Forums, able to ensure convergence among policy goals and instruments related to the different RIS3 priorities.

The role of the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion

To build the **National S3**, a common setting was created for national and regional governments and for the economic and social partners to compare and share perspectives and strategic choices to build a common vision for the 2020.

The process of **entrepreneurial discovery** has been developed at the same time at **two stages**, national and regional, creating an osmotic information and experiences exchange.

It was facilitated by the implementation of **the technical assistance project** (2013 and 2014) "**Support to the Regions in the definition and implementation of their research and innovation policies RIS3**", managed by Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion (formerly Department for Development and Cohesion Policies) in collaboration with the Italian Agency for Foreign Investments Attraction (Invitalia SpA), involving the Italian Ministries for Economic Development (MISE) and for Research and Education (MIUR).

The role of the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion

Previous two editions (2007 – 2013): relevant issues for policy learning and change management in Regional Administrations were dealt with:

- how to perform medium-term planning through technological **foresight**;
- how to **improve innovation programmes** (demand side policies, ex ante selection of industrial research projects, financing of intermediaries, social innovation initiatives);
- how to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of policy instruments by **counterfactual evaluation**, **use of interim indicators and two stage calls for proposal**;
- how to assess the **performance of knowledge intermediaries**, like technology clusters and innovation poles, by the most appropriate indicators.

Third edition (2013-2014) objectives:

- to enhance the **soft coordination approach** successfully experimented in the previous editions, supporting the definition of the S3 at national and regional level;
- to build a **neutral and shared place for technical discussions**, in which the experiences of the most advanced Regions could be deepened, expanded and capitalized almost in real time;
- to contribute to the **development of the Italian S3s**.

The role of the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion

Following the guidelines of the S3 Platform, **5 events** – information and experience exchange workshops – took place to help public administrations in the phases of **context analysis, definition of the vision, priority setting, policy mix design, definition of the governance model, monitoring and evaluation.**

Results:
- as a direct effect in terms of stakeholders involvement: **600 attendees**, more than **60 stakeholder organizations;**
- as an indirect effect, representatives from the national administrations and from the project committee were called to **animate and contribute to local regional events** (covering all the regions).

The outputs of these workshops have been shared through a **digital platform** (www.researchitaly.it) and a **dedicated email** to provide to all the stakeholders reports and presentations about the discussed themes.

This activity brought to the **identification at national level of areas of specialisation and development trajectories**, providing **a standard framework** to share and reconcile the different contexts and strategic choices of the 21 strategies.

The role of the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion

At national level, the **entrepreneurial discovery process** opened the way to a **continuous process of shared planning** between the different government levels, involving also the regional institutions and economic and social partners.

The Agency is in charge for the **National S3 monitoring** and for the **coordination of RIS3 monitoring**, following a participatory approach to involve all the stakeholders as producers and users of information related to the implementation of the strategies.

It is also directly involved in the **National S3 implementing governance mechanism**, as part of the governing body (Cabina di Regia) for competent issues
- **performing technical functions** within the governing body
- **working closely with relevant central, regional, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders** to boost administrative actions
- **promoting convergence of public and private resources** on development trajectories.

Stakeholders are involved through **thematic tables** and **specific communication activities**.

The Agency is developing **pilot projects** focused **on the consensus space** combining the **helix model** with the **behavioral insight approach** to improve the decision making process in a multi-level and multi-stakeholder environment and to maximise economic and social outcomes.

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Thanks for your attention

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