




World Bank Advises on How to Improve Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization in Poland

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The World Bank today launched the "Review of national and regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialization (RIS3) in Poland" report at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development. The main goal of the Review is to provide insights on how to improve the current Research and Innovation Strategies (RIS3), to better guide and increase the efficiency of public support for innovation at the national and regional level. To receive funds for innovation during the current 2014-2020 European Union (EU) financial perspective, Poland needs to develop a new innovation framework, including Research and Innovation Strategies (RIS3s), consistent with the new "smart specialization" concept developed by the European Commission. In this context, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development has requested the World Bank's assistance to (i) review (drafts of) the RIS3 strategies in Poland at the regional, macro-regional, and national level, and provide recommendations on how to help ensure their closer compliance with the European Commission's ex ante conditionality on "smart specialization"; and (ii) assess the internal coherence of RIS3 strategies at the regional, macro-regional, and national levels. Poland is expected to receive more than 782.5 billion in structural funds during the new 2014-2020 EU financial perspective, of which about 710 billion will be earmarked for national and regional innovation programs. Profitable investment of these large funds will be key to ensuring long-term and sustainable socio-economic transformation, and continued convergence with the more developed regions and countries, said Marcin Piatkowski, World Bank Senior Economist and one of the authors of the report. "We are very pleased we could assist the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development in reviewing the draft RIS3 strategies and provide recommendations on how to further improve them so that they become a real tool for structural transformation of voivodships economies. According to the Bank's Review, the existing RIS3 frameworks, while already quite developed, require additional work to be fully in line with the EC's conditionalities. The key challenges for an innovation framework for Poland are: RIS3 systems at the national and regional levels will need to be further enhanced to constitute a coherent whole; there needs to be more evidence that the newly proposed RIS3 framework goes beyond the "business as usual" from the previous EU financial perspective (2007-2013), which was focused on absorption rather than results; the demarcation between the national, macro-regional, and regional scope of action and lines of responsibility need to be fully clarified; there is also scope for enhancing trust and communication between national and regional governments as well as strengthening the capacity of institutions at all three governance levels; leadership could also be further strengthened to guide and steer the process of formulating and implementing RIS3s. The report also provides a list of recommendations on how to improve the RIS3s to enhance their impact on national and regional development and help meet the EC's requirements: improve RIS3s by making them truly operational and easily understandable to the public, introducing a clear action plan for implementation, and leaving space for the required flexibility; strengthen the rationale used to select smart specializations on the basis of robust evidence and a new business planning model; build more internal capacity among key stakeholders; introduce a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system and take steps towards measuring the net effects of public interventions; enhance internal coherence in individual regions between their RIS3, regional development strategy, and regional operational program to ensure that they complement each other; reform the innovation system to eliminate the fragmentation and duplication of resources and responsibilities; provide stronger ownership and leadership, ensuring that the RIS3 belongs to the respective regions, reflects their actual development priorities, and promises efficient implementation; look beyond the current financial perspective by ensuring that the innovation system remains self-sustainable, even after the flow of EU funds into the country is reduced post-2020 (to plan how to live without "easy money"). The RIS3 project complements a number of other engagements with the Polish authorities on supporting innovation. The World Bank
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