

Advancing the Pomorskie RIS3 Multi-Level Implementation Scheme

Propozycja usprawnienia wielopoziomowego systemu wdrażania Strategii Inteligentnych Specjalizacji (RIS3) w regionie Pomorskim

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Abstract: The aim of the proposed scheme is to assist the Pomorskie regional authority in further implementation of the smart specialization concept for the benefit of the blue growth sectors that are considered as a competitive advantage of this region against all other Polish regions. Current implementation system is based on Agreements on Pomorskie Smart Specializations and on the regulation on the Council performance. The regional self-government is the owner of the implementation process, including the entrepreneurial discovery process. The proposed advanced implementation system postulates that the Council should become the owner of the latter process, its operation should be based on the regulation concluded between the Marshal and the Council. Moreover, it is proposed that the Council is supported by a dedicated and experienced coordinator well rooted in the domain of the smart specialization. Activities of the coordinators are financed by the regional self-government authorities via dedicated financial tool, so called strategic project. Advanced implementation scheme is expected to enable the regional authorities to create functional and efficient set up of RIS3 for the next financial perspective.

Keywords: Blue Growth, RIS3 Policy, Smart Specialization

Streszczenie: Proponowany w artykule zaawansowany system wdrażania RIS3 ma na celu pomoc władzom Województwa Pomorskiego w wykorzystaniu polityki inteligentnej specjalizacji na rzecz dalszego wzrostu niebieskich sektorów w regionie, które są uważane za przewagę konkurencyjną tego regionu wobec wszystkich innych polskich regionów. Obecny system wdrażania opiera się na porozumieniach partnerstw inteligentnych specjalizacji i rozporządzeniu regulującym prace rad IS. Samorząd regionalny jest właścicielem procesu wdrażania RIS3, w tym także procesu przedsiębiorczego odkrywania. Zaproponowany zaawansowany system wdrażania zakłada, że Rada powinna stać się właścicielem tego ostatniego procesu, a jej działanie powinno opierać się na porozumieniu zawartym między Marszałkiem a Radą. Ponadto proponuje się, aby Rada była wspierana przez wyspecjalizowanego i doświadczonego koordynatora posiadającego wiedzę z dziedziny inteligentnej specjalizacji. Działania koordynatorów są finansowane przez samorząd województwa poprzez dedykowane narzędzie finansowe, tzw. projekt strategiczny. Oczekuje się, że zaawansowany system wdrażania umożliwi władzom regionalnym stworzenie funkcjonalnego i wydajnego systemu RIS3 w następnej perspektywie finansowej.

Słowa kluczowe: niebieski wzrost, polityka RIS3, inteligentna specjalizacja

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DED Department of Economic Development of Marshal Office of the Pomorskie Voivodship
EIAH European Investment Advisory Hub
EU COM European Commission

ICT Information and communications technology
MIG Maritime Institute in Gdańsk
NCP National Contact Point
NCRD National Centre for Research and Development in Poland
NGOs Non-governmental organizations

NSS	National Smart Specialisation
OP KED	Operational Programme „Knowledge Education Development”
OP SC	Operational Programme „Smart Growth”
PCP	Pomorskie Creativity Port
PRDS	Pomorskie Regional Development Strategy
PSME	Pomorskie System of Monitoring and Evaluation
PSS	Pomorskie Smart Specializations
R&D	Research and Development
RIS3	Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation
ROP PR	Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Region
RSP (s)	Regional Strategic Programme (s)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPUE	“Pomorskie in the European Union” Association

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a proposal of the multi-level implementation scheme dedicated to enhancement of blue growth actors' performance in the RIS3 processes in the Pomorskie Region. The proposal was prepared under the frames of the Smart Blue Regions project (SBR, <https://www.submariner-network.eu/projects/smartbluregions>). It builds on the functional review analysis carried out in the course of the SBR project in 2016, where the current implementation scheme was presented as well as findings from the evaluation of Pomorskie RIS3/PSSs done by external experts in 2017; it also takes into account experience gathered by the member of the PSS1 Council.

Given the fact that Blue Growth has become an important concept of use of marine and oceanic resources in Europe, implementation of the EU Smart Specialization Policy in many European regions is focused on topics addressed by Blue Growth. In September 2012, communication of the EU COM called the blue growth strategy in the EU [1] has been released. The goal of the blue growth strategy is „The use of the huge potential that from the point of view of creation jobs and economic growth have oceans, seas and coasts of Europe.” (EC 2012, 3) From the estimates presented in the Commission's Communication (EC 2012) it appeared that, at the time of its publication, economic industries related to the sea provided 5.4 million jobs in the EU and had gross value added reaching almost 500 billion a year [2].

The aim of the proposed scheme is to assist the Pomorskie regional authority in further implementation of the smart specialization concept for the benefit of the blue growth sectors in the region that are considered as a competitive advantage of this region against all other Polish regions. This advantage has been acknowledged by the regional self-administration and the first Pomorskie Smart Specialization (PSS1) – so called blue specialization – “Offshore, Port and Logistics Technologies” is dedicated to Blue Growth. Its objective is to gradually strengthen international competitiveness and accelerate the growth of maritime economy sector enterprises by carrying out R&D

works and developing innovative products, services and technologies in the field of environmentally sound exploration and exploitation of marine resources. The PSS1 partnership consists of 104 entities (as of April 2018, <https://drg.pomorskie.eu/jak-przystapic-do-porozumienia->).

The PSS1 scope covers:

- ◆ Universal solutions for exploitation of marine resources;
- ◆ Vehicles and vessels to be used in the marine and coastal environment;
- ◆ Equipment, techniques and systems for monitoring and cleaning the marine environment;
- ◆ Innovative ways and technologies for utilizing unique natural compounds from marine organisms;
- ◆ Technologies, equipment and processes aimed at improving the safety and efficiency of transport and logistics services in ports as well as their hinterlands and forelands.

Given the specificity of RIS3 implementation in the region, the scheme of its implementation is applicable to all PSSs, regardless their topic/scope. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the current implementation system as well as the proposal of the modified system presented in this paper are universal for all PSS. However, authors of this report are of the opinion that if implemented according to given recommendations and proposed solution, the modified system will strengthen performance of the blue growth sectors' stakeholders and raise their international competitiveness.

According to Szultka and Dzierzanowski [3] the strategic goal of the smart specializations policy is to find attractive areas/directions for investing public and private funds in the field of research, development and innovation (R&D&I) in order to enter new market niches and create globally competitive specializations of the future (development engines) - both new ones and such constituting continuations of the previous. This is to be achieved through: strategic prioritization (defining of specialization); good quality research and innovation projects (mainly from the enterprise sector but also from the university); key and horizontal projects (in the field of R&D infrastructure, education, specialist support, etc.); investment in development of ecosystems.

The key question concerning the smart specialization policy as introduced in the EU regional governance system is actually process ownership: is the owner the regional self-government administration or is it the entities gathered around (in) smart specialization? The regional management system regarding the smart specialization policy is coordinated by the regional self-government. According to the regional self-government authorities, each entity within a smart specialization (in particular, signatories of Agreements on smart specialization) together with local government are the owners of this process. Nevertheless, having in mind that the regional self-administration is obliged to define/select smart specializations and implement the RIS3 strategy, it is assumed that this entity is the main owner of the process. As a result, there are high



Fig. 1. PRDS implementation tools and their interrelations (Graphics: Magdalena Batko).

expectations, as well as obligations (including financial burdens etc.) imposed on the regional self-administration in the implementation process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM STATUS OF JUNE 2018)

The Regional Strategic Program “Pomorskie Creativity Port” is considered as the Pomorskie RIS3 document. The program is one of the six Strategic Programs accompanying the Pomorskie Regional Development Strategy (PRDS) (Figure 1.). At this point, it is important to note that such a complex set-up of RIS3 as adopted in the Pomorskie region causes certain inflexibility of the RIS3 implementation process: a change in one document entails the necessity of changes everywhere. This is, however, “a feature” that could be attributed to the whole smart specialization strategy in which the regional operational programs, the revision of which requires adoption by the EU COM, remains the main financial measure.

The governance structure of PRDS is presented in Figure 1. There is no separate structure dedicated to the RIS3/PSS – De-

partment of Economic Development of the Marshal's Office of the Pomorskie Voivodeship (DED) is responsible for operational implementation of the RIS3 process [4]. It is important to note that even though the agreements on PSS (described below) engage a large number of stakeholders, they do not have direct relations towards the governance of PRDS: neither PSS Councils nor the agreements' signatories are directly mentioned in the RDPS management (implementation) structure.

The process of identifying smart specializations of the Pomorskie region consists in six steps.

Step 1 – reviewing and updating analyses concerning the region's economic profile to specify its characteristic (endogenous) resources, advantages, development barriers, and economic activity areas with high growth potential.

Step 2 – inviting partners that identify themselves with development of the above-mentioned economic activity areas to present initial proposals of smart specializations and actions aimed at strengthening their R&D potential and improving the region's competitive position in the call for proposals (I stage of the Call for Proposals).



Fig. 2. Current PSS operational scheme (Graphics: Magdalena Batko).

Step 3—presenting the submitted initial concepts and reviewing (analyzing) them with involvement of the Selection Council, which included experts with international business experience. Partners also presented their concepts in the form of a public hearing. They were thus encouraged to join forces in similar R&D areas.

Step 4—inviting Partnerships preparing initial applications to present final concepts of smart specializations (II stage of the Call for Proposals).

Step 5—negotiations of the Council of Pomorskie Voivodeship with Partnerships on the final shape and scope of specialization.

Step 6—signing Agreements regarding the Pomorskie Smart Specializations between Partnerships and the Council of Pomorskie Voivodeship for each selected PSS. The agreement is signed for a period of no longer than 3 years, with an option to further extension of the period of validity. As the agreements were signed in 2016, it is expected that the above-presented procedure will start again at the turn of 2018 and 2019. It is still unknown whether there will be a call for proposal of new specializations or whether the current ones will be maintained.

Initiated in 2013, the competition-based mode of PSSs identification and selection employed in Pomorskie launched a very active entrepreneurial discovery process engaging various partners from the region, representing business, science, business support institutions and non-governmental organizations. In total, 434 entities were involved in the process (including 292 enterprises, 43 schools and universities, 38 business environment institutions, 12 communes and municipal

associations, 6 hospitals and numerous non-governmental organizations). As a result, 4 PSSs have been selected. The agreements on each PSS between the Pomorskie Region Marshal and PSS partnership were signed in January 2016.

Each PSS partnership is represented by a Council consisting of 10 representatives of the partnership (6 from business, 4 from R&D and intermediary bodies). The Council's powers are specified in the agreement as well as in the regulations of the Council, and include requesting revision of the agreement upon an initiative of the partnership, including new members in the partnership (upon its request), proposing horizontal initiatives that must be agreed with the Marshal (President of the Region). The Pomorskie PSS organization scheme shown in figure 2 looks quite simple, but in fact its operational implementation is quite complex due to detailed provisions of the agreement and regulations.

According to regulations, the Council has to evaluate the implementation of the agreement and propose recommendations for its potential prolongation at least half a year before termination. Other important formal tasks of the Council include:

- ◆ meeting at least once per 6 months,
- ◆ yearly review and verification of horizontal projects,
- ◆ convening a general assembly of the partnership at least once in 12 months,
- ◆ reporting to the partnership in the scope of Council performance in the period between assemblies.

The PSS ecosystem as defined by DED takes into account cooperation and contribution of several institutions crucial in the RIS3 implementation process (Table 1.) and it is built of the following elements:

Tab. II. Selected institutions from Pomorskie being part of the Blue Smart Specialization (PSS1) ecosystem.

INSTITUTION	ROLE
Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, The Council of Pomorskie Voivodeship The Sejmik of the Region (regional self-governemnt parliament)	supervision and monitoring of the implementation Pomorskie Smart Specializations; the financial support instruments;
Local administration	intermediary role between the Marshal's Office and the beneficiary;
Gdańsk Science and Technology Park, Pomeranian Science and Technology Park in Gdynia Pomeranian Special Economic Zone, Słupsk Special Economic Zone,	support and development of enterprises in innovation, among others in the fields like biotechnology, energy and the environment; the platform for cooperation between science and business; cooperation with the local government of Pomorskie;
Polish Maritime Industries Association	creating conditions for development of the shipbuilding industry, the ship repairs and their research facilities; influencing for legislative solutions;
Polish Maritime Cluster Association	support for innovation and development in the field of research, business, and local government related to the Baltic Sea Region and economic and social links between Pomorskie and other countries of the Baltic Sea Region;
Pomorskie Development Agency	<u>Intermediate Body for ROP PR (1st Priority Axis)</u> actions for harmonious development of Pomorskie; support for entrepreneurs, business environment institutions and local governments; implementation of financial support instruments for small and medium-sized enterprises;
Pomeranian Regional Development Agency	economic development support based on innovative technologies in the middle of Pomorskie Region; supervision of the Słupsk Special Economic Zone in which it operates Technology Incubator in Słupsk;
Pomorskie in the European Union Association	Partnership's support of local governments in Pomorskie, universities and other institutions acting for development of Pomorskie;
Business Incubators	Słupsk Business Incubator www.sit.slupsk.pl Kwidzyn Science and Technology Park www.kptt.pl House of the Entrepreneur www.dp.tczew.pl Centre of Excellence ChemBioFarm Faculty of Chemistry, Gdańsk University of Technology www.biotechnologia.pl Education&Implementing Centre in Chojnice www.cew.bizneschojnice.eu Cierznie Business Incubator www.perlowainwestycja.pl

Knowledge and Mentoring

- ◆ market analyses, including analyses of the needs of the labor market, economic trends, prospective directions of development (in co-operation with the OECD),
- ◆ expert support in facilitating the activity of PSSs,
- ◆ specialist advisory services provided by business environment institutions,
- ◆ dedicated analyses and models facilitating internationalization of companies entering foreign markets (prepared in co-operation with the European Commission),
- ◆ participation in domestic and international platforms for co-operation, e.g., S3,
- ◆ use of the potential of national and regional key clusters and innovative Pomeranian companies,
- ◆ meetings of PSS Councils.

Financing

- ◆ dedicated actions and point preferences for PSSs under structural funds,
- ◆ regional (subsidized and non-subsidized) funds under:
 - Regional Operational Program for the Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020,
 - Development Fund for the Pomorskie Region 2020+,
 - ◆ national funds:
 - Operational Program Smart Growth (OP SG),

– Operational Program Knowledge Education Growth (OP KEG),

– international funds, including: Horizon 2020, INTERREG, COSME, LIFE,

- ◆ own funds of the Pomorskie Region Self-Government,
- ◆ companies' private capital.

Projects falling under the PSS scope are given preferences during the application for public funding at different levels (regional, national, international). The main public financial implementation measure of blue growth related PSS is ROP PR, however several national Operational Programs are considered as important for PSS development, such as OP KED and OP SG plus other national programs [1].

It is important to mention that these public funds are dedicated only to innovative and horizontal projects falling under PSS themes. So far, apart from technical assistance available for DED, there is no public financial source available for operational implementation of PSSs to support the Council and partnership in their tasks stipulated in the regulations.

Joint undertakings

- ◆ R&D undertakings implemented in response to market needs aimed at developing modern products, services, and technologies,
- ◆ research infrastructure, including modern laboratory and research equipment for companies and research units,

- ◆ horizontal (partner) projects – projects of great significance for the competitiveness of the region,
- ◆ incubation and acceleration of the platform for co-operation between companies – sharing experiences and good practices.

R&D facilities

- ◆ Research units' R&D infrastructure for the development of joint projects with entrepreneurs,
- ◆ infrastructure of business environment institutions, e.g., Pomeranian Science and Technology Park Gdynia, Gdańsk Science and Technology Park, Kwidzyn Industrial and Technology Park,
- ◆ specialist laboratories, R&D departments, R&D centers in companies,
- ◆ incubators supporting innovative start-ups, e.g., STAR-TER, Constructor Park.

Human capital

- ◆ thematic meetings, conferences, training sessions and workshops,
- ◆ improvement of competitiveness and internationalization of academic centers of the Pomorskie Region under "Study in Pomorskie" strategic project,
- ◆ undertakings implemented by the Regional Labor Office,
- ◆ development of staff and competences in response to market expectations, (regional education and infrastructure).

Promotion

- ◆ participation in fairs, trade missions, e.g., under the "Pomeranian Export Broker" project,
- ◆ support in searching for project partners, e.g., the "Pomorskie in the European Union" Association, the Regional Office of the Pomorskie Region in Brussels,
- ◆ activities aimed at increasing the region's investment attractiveness and effective service of external investors under "Invest in Pomerania".

NATIONAL SMART SPECIALIZATION (NSS) SYSTEM

The Pomorskie blue PSSs – thanks to combined efforts of coastal regions (Pomorkie, Western-Pomerania, Warmia-Mazury) – has been "transposed" to the National Smart Specialization (NSS) system. The NSS system is described in the contents of a portal dedicated to the system, however, information about specific elements of this system (e.g., Economic Observatory or the Consultative Group) available there at the time this paper was prepared is very limited and most probably outdated (<http://www.smart.gov.pl/specjalizacje>; <https://www.mpit.gov.pl/stromy/zadania/wsparcie-przedsiębiorczosci/innowacyjnosc/krajowe-inteligentne-specjalizacje/>).

The NSS system is based on work of the following bodies: Working Groups (one for each NSS), Economic Observatory, Steering Committee, Consultative Group. Working Groups are

responsible, among others, for detailed and precise description of individual smart specializations, indication of their objectives and development vision, as well as observation of the changing socio-economic factors, development trends and recommendation of changes in the implementation system or in the shape of specializations themselves based on the above-mentioned monitoring. The Economic Observatory has been established to perform qualitative analysis of the available and emerging R&D&I potential in Poland, including identification of barriers, threats as well as opportunities, market niches, development trends, observation of positively completed implementations of R&D results, preparation of regular reports on NSS implementation, the current level of innovation and change in the economic structure. The Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of Enterprise and Technology, is of managerial character. Its task is to control the implementation of NSS in order to achieve the assumed effects as well as strategic and detailed objectives, and moreover, selection of experts for national smart specializations' Working Groups on. In order to ensure consistency of work at national and regional levels, a Consultative Group has been established within the monitoring system. The representatives of all 16 regions have been invited to the Group, except for representatives of relevant ministries. The work of the Consultative Group consists in issuing recommendations for the implementation and monitoring of national smart specializations and identifying potential changes in the field of NSS on the basis of experience resulting from the implementation of operational programs.

A pilot project carried out by the Ministry of Economy in 2014-2015 covering four selected NSS assumed creation of so-called Smart Labs, intelligent task forces focusing on the development of national smart specializations and strengthening the synergy between the innovation support system at national and regional levels. Regrettably, the authors of this paper could not find any publicly available information regarding this project's outcomes/findings, apart from its announcement on the above-mentioned website. The main objective of the Smart Labs was to initiate and continue cooperation of business, R&D units and business environment institutions for the development of smart specializations by identifying business areas/themes (in terms of the already selected national smart specializations or potentially new ones), under which it would be possible to jointly operate and implement new innovative business ideas. The remaining regions were supposed to be gradually included in the work under this pilot project so that from the beginning of 2016, the entrepreneurial discovery process was expected to be fully implemented throughout the country.

Reflection on findings of the current RIS3 implementation system

In 2017, two important evaluations of the Pomorskie RIS3 quasi-strategy have been carried out: self-assessment of the implementation of PRDS and external evaluation of the RIS3 system.

Self-assessment of PRDS identifies the following problems related to the PSS ecosystem:

- ◆ incomplete adjustment of the targeting of interventions to current needs of the economic development in the area of development of smart specializations and supporting ventures
- ◆ in the area of ISP and policy changes in relation to cluster initiatives;
- ◆ low level of internal PSS maturity, manifested by insufficient level of cooperation
- ◆ and coordination within the PSS, lack of a proper level of operational independence and relatively high degree of uncertainty in the implementation of common innovative ventures;
- ◆ no decisions regarding the further role of self-governmental administration in animating activities dedicated to the development of selected PSSs;
- ◆ difficulties in monitoring PSS.

External evaluation of the RIS3 system focused more on PSSs performance and identified almost the same critical barrier for PSS1 development: the lack of ability to conduct current and regular animation activities. The evaluators – based on intensive interviews with members of the PSS1 – concluded that a large pool of companies and organizations from the PSS1 area remains consciously outside the Agreement. They recommended the regional self-government to treat PSS1 as a priority due to the relationship between PSS1 and NSS 17 (blue national specialization). According to the evaluators, such attention and commitment of the regional administration in the stage of PSS1 self-empowerment creation based on the existing BSO should lead to a rapid qualitative change in terms of independence and efficiency of specialization.

Based on findings of the above-mentioned evaluations, in May 2018 the Council of the Pomorskie Voivodeship adopted updated RSPs including the “Pomorskie Creativity Port”, based on inputs prepared by the Department of Economic Development (DED) responsible for RIS3.

This update concerned the following points:

- ◆ Updating information regarding the mechanism of identification and verification of PSS. The “Pomorskie Creativity Port” Program has been adopted before PSS have been constituted; once the PSS has been selected, this Program was updated only with the annex listing the PSS.
- ◆ Updating information regarding the PSS evaluation and monitoring procedure, including the proposed indicators.
- ◆ Inclusion of a strategic project “Animation of the development of areas of Pomorskie Smart Specializations as an element of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process”.

Parallel to this process, the Pomorskie Regional Operational Program has been updated to enable the regional authority to allocate necessary finances to the strategic project. The new strategic project has been included in ROP. The revised ROP needs to be accepted by the EU COM – it is expected that COM

will approve the proposed change in the third quarter of 2018. At the moment, DED is preparing administrative procedures necessary to open the call for this strategic project.

Having in mind findings from the SBR project, the idea of the strategic project proposed by DED may be considered as an equivalent of one of the most interesting RIS3 implementation measures identified in SBR: management of clusters in Schleswig-Holstein. Having in mind that one of the crucial tasks of the PSS Council is to coordinate (steer) PSS partnership towards the achievement of PSS objectives, the Council should be considered as a cluster. Thus, the proposed strategic project aiming at animation of PSS constitutes support to cluster management. It has to be mentioned, however, that this new measure is not directed only to “blue” PSS: all PSSs will benefit from it. In practical terms, it means that PSS1 will “receive” approximately EUR 125,000 for animation of its development. It is also important that this will constitute an indirect form of support to PSSs – according to the proposal, the regional self-administration is a beneficiary of the strategic project.

Until ROP will be approved by EU COM and it will be possible to implement the new strategic project, DED has decided to support PSS1 by initiating cooperation of the PSS1 Council with STARTER (http://www.inkubatorstarter.pl/en#We_about_ourselves). In April 2018 a letter of intent has been signed between these two parties and the details of this cooperation are now discussed (status as of mid-July 2018).

Although several important steps have been undertaken to address the evaluations’ findings, a few issues remain open. The most crucial one – in the opinion of the authors – is an unclear long-term vision/perspective of the regional smart specialization policy. It shall be taken into consideration that investing own funds in innovative research and development to gain a competitive advantage is a practice in today’s business – an ineffective RIS3 policy may not succeed in fostering an innovation process. Given the complex administrative procedures on the one hand, and the high risk of this type of investment, the use of public funds for projects under regional programs seems to be an inefficient measure: entrepreneurs avoid the additional burden related to subsidy settlement; regional governments have limited resources and qualifications for a proper assessment of future economic trends (necessary for targeting public intervention) and assessment of risks related to the proposed innovative projects. However, having in mind that the RIS3 policy remains a fact in the current financial perspective, the second crucial issue is to clarify ownership of the RIS3 implementation process. Both of the above-mentioned evaluations indicated immaturity of the PSS structures and their “weak” performance. In the opinion of the authors, this is a result of lack of clarity on “who needs whom”: who and how will he benefit from self-empowerment of PSSs? If PSS1 does not succeed in self-empowerment, does it mean that off-shore, logistic and port businesses are not an important and developing sectors in the region economy (each are a smart specialization by definition)? In other words: the implemen-

ting RIS3 policy should take into account the reality of regional economy which does not need RIS3. Given the origins of the RIS3 policy and its frames, the regional authorities are the owner of the process. Ownership implies that the regional authorities are obliged to secure resources for implementation of this policy. Ownership does not mean, however, that regional authorities must implement RIS3 themselves

– they may (and of course, they do) use executors. Assuming that it is possible - based on the performance of executors (i.e., PSS structures established by regional authorities: agreements, councils)

– develop niches that support the region's economic growth. It is necessary to appropriately assign the owner's and executors' competences and obligations. This should be accompanied with allocation of adequate financial resources. The proposed division of selected crucial competences and obligations could be as follows:

- ◆ Owner: focusing on the clearly defined long-term goals of RIS3, ensuring coordination of actions at national (NSS) and regional (PSS) RIS3 implementation level, securing funds for executors' performance, ensuring communication and information flow between PSSs and RIS3 implementation structures at regional and national level, providing opportunities for PSS expansion at national and international level, ensuring smooth reaction of the RIS3 system to recommendations proposed by executors, including changes in priorities for public funding (for instance, flexible ROP).
- ◆ Executors: regularly identifying and tracking trends, needs in the area of PSS; identifying and engaging crucial players (stakeholders), consolidation of industry focused on identified topics (projects), for example in the form of cyclical/thematic events, initiating and moderating/coordinating initiatives; formulating recommendations towards priorities for spending public funding at regional and national level, securing synergies between regional and national level initiatives (crucial for PSS1 and NSS17).

The division proposed above is based on one important presumption: the regional authority is the owner of the RIS3 implementation process, while executors are owners of the entrepreneurial discovery process. The same presumption constitutes the basis of the proposed modification of the Pomorskie RIS3 implementation scheme presented in the next chapter.

Description of the advanced Pomorskie RIS3 multi-level implementation scheme

Modifications in the Pomorskie RIS3 multi-level implementation scheme proposed below focus on PSS1 with an aim to enhance Polish blue growth sectors' performance in the RIS3 policy. The advantage of the proposal is - according to the authors - its relative ease of implementation, resulting from the fact that the proposed advanced scheme does not require changes in any of the documents of the Pomorskie RIS3, only

changes in instruments created for the PSS operating system: partnership agreements and council regulations. The proposal refers to the concept of the strategic project "Animation of the development of areas of Pomorskie Smart Specializations as an element of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process" [1] as one of the most important financial tools of the advanced implementation scheme. It is important to note here that the implementation of RIS3 in a set up developed in Pomorskie cannot be successful without financing of the PSS administrative and coordinative tasks. This has been concluded in the course of the external evaluation and is supported by the experience of the author being a member of the PSS1 Council. The proposed modifications concern two fundamental issues: the role of the council as the owner of the entrepreneurial discovery process and means and measures of financing executors.

1. Strengthening the position of the Council as the owner of the entrepreneurial discovery process

Apart from acting through the Council, the PSS1 partnership has no other means to interfere in the RIS3 implementation process. On the other hand, any entrepreneur acting in the field of PSS1 (or NSS17) may apply for regional or national funds. This makes the agreement only an unnecessary formality (it is neither a benefit, nor is it practically binding on a signatory). At the same time, this formality limits the dynamics of the entrepreneurial discovery process. It is proposed to give up the partnership agreements and switch to a network system. Stakeholders gathered under PSS1 would create a network whose formal leader would be the Council elected by the members of the network. The Council composition should remain unchanged (10 representatives of the network: 6 from business, 4 from R&D and intermediary bodies). Members of the Council should work on the same voluntary basis as in the current system. The council should be supported by a professional administrator/coordinator funded from means allocated to support PSS1. This is proposed in line with the external evaluation of PSSs performance recommending support of a non-commercial entity operating a platform with possible supplementary activity in relation to the Council's expert resources, e.g., training, networking, acceleration programs etc. The coordinator should precise the structure of the network's operation and the Council's selection procedure. These shall constitute the regulations of the Network and the Council that should be approved by the Pomorskie Voivodship Council.

As the owner of the entrepreneurial discovery process, the Council shall focus on the following tasks: regular identification and tracking of trends, needs in the area of PSS; identification and assurance of engagement of crucial players (stakeholders), industry consolidation focused on identified topics (projects), for example in the form of cyclical/thematic events, initiation and moderation/coordination of initiatives; formulation of recommendations towards priorities for spending public funding at regional and national level, security of synergies between regional and national level initiatives (crucial for PSS1 and NSS17). The Council administrator/coordinator

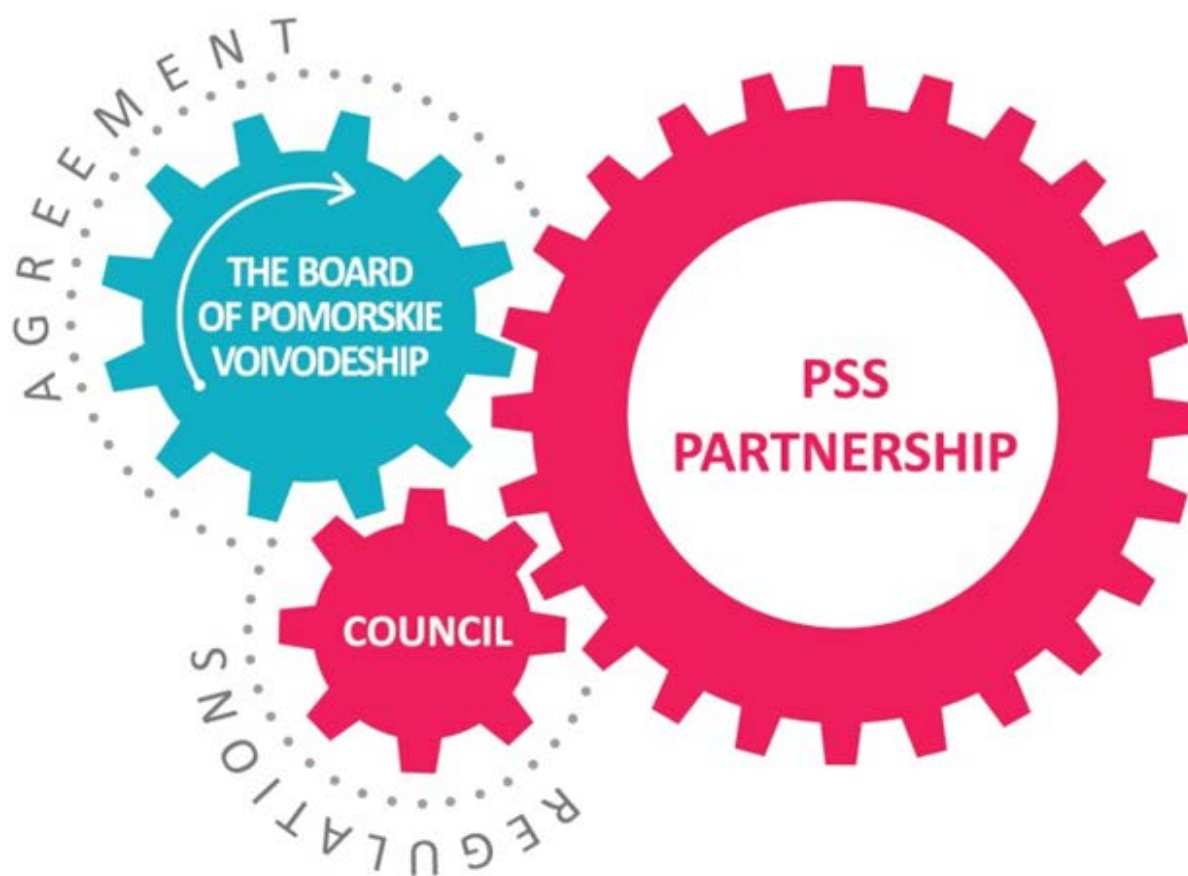


Fig. 3. Advanced PSS operational scheme (Graphics: Magdalena Batko).

should detail all these tasks and propose an action plan (including a division of responsibilities among the Council and network members) for each task. The Council administrator/coordinator should also be responsible for verification and update of the Council's tasks. The Council supported by a coordinator and acting as a leader of the entrepreneurial discovery process ensures concentration of the Pomorskie public funds on the most advanced/promising initiatives through recommendations of specific proposals for projects.

2. Means and measures of financing executors

Among the three options considered below, two of them (Option 2 and 3) are based on the assumption that the Council is the only executor receiving financial resources to implement RIS3. However, preference is given to the last one as it assumes direct interactions among entrepreneurs represented by the Council.

Option 1

As the owner of the process, the regional administrator receives finances from the strategic project "Animation of the development of areas of PSSs as an element of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process" dedicated to support PSS1. It is up to his decision whether this support is inbuilt into the regional operational structure (office resources) or delivered by the

selected subcontractor. The aforementioned support is used for: human resources for administrative works, organization of thematic and cyclical events, analysis and expert opinions. Assuming allocation from the strategic project of EUR 125,000 for 3 years for each PSS, a rough estimate of the group of costs can be done based on the authors' knowledge and experience: for organization of events – EUR 28,000, securing external expertise – EUR 25,000, human resources to perform administrative and organizational tasks – EUR 72,000.

Option 2

Members of the Network pay contributions from which the coordinator is financed. The exact amount of fees would depend on the number of members and number of tasks assigned to the coordinator. Assuming that the coordinator performs all the above-mentioned activities, and that the network consist of 104 entities, this fee can be estimated at a level of EUR 1,200 per member for the coming 3 years.

Option 3

The Council receives funds from the strategic project for the work of the coordinator as well as other activities. The estimates are similar to those from option 1. The above-mentioned advanced implementation system, if adopted, should be re-

sed and evaluated by both owners (regional authority and executors) in terms of cost-efficiency after one year of its implementation. The evaluation should cover at least two aspects: required human resources (including staff qualifications, number of staff, time engagement) and required financial resources (how many funds were spent).

Finally, it should be noted that if the RIS policy is extended to the next financial perspective, works on its implementation scheme should begin now. Experience gained through implementation of the proposed advanced system shall enable the regional authorities to create a functional and efficient set-up satisfying all stakeholders.

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