

Conference under the auspices of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Smart Specialisation and Technology Transfer as Innovation Drivers for Regional Growth

[Version: 20 April 2018]

Rationale

The Trio Presidency Estonia-Bulgaria-Austria identified investments in research, innovation and human capital as key priority areas for boosting jobs and growth, particularly in the context of digital economies. At the same time, EU support towards the Western Balkans remains on the agenda with a special focus on fostering progress, inclusive regional cooperation and promoting socio-economic development.

The proposed conference will consider the opportunities and challenges for Europe, notably South-East Europe, in research, development, education, employment and innovation and in particular, the process of skills creation, knowledge and technology. This conference underlines the importance of evidence informed policy-making – notably for an efficient allocation of resources – embodied in the strategic concept, methodology and application of "Smart Specialisation," an approach extensively applied in the EU's regional and cohesion policies. In addition, knowledge and technology transfer is recognised as proven enabling operational tools for boosting local and regional economic and social impact.

Designing comprehensive innovation strategies together with local stakeholders provides a coherent framework for prioritising public investments in economic domains that are relevant for transforming and modernising regional economies. Choosing the right instruments to achieve this transformation is a second key step. Finally, governments need to monitor and adjust activities based on performance to ensure an effective use of public investments.

The Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) of the European Commission, with the Bulgaria Presidency of the Council of the EU, will provide a platform to discuss and commit to place-based innovation as a priority for Europe, with a focus on South-East Europe, including the Western Balkans, and an arena for constructive dialogue between institutions and businesses. After setting the scene and presenting the facets of the innovation landscape in Europe, policymakers, scientists, businesses, regional authorities and universities will engage in a debate on good practices and key success factors to inspire countries, regions and stakeholders willing to reap the potential of Smart Specialisation. On this basis and building on a variety of examples from the EU, participants will have the opportunity to dig into the policy mix needed to connect actors from the quadruple helix (businesses, academia, government and civil society). This will take place through two parallel streams focusing on: (i) the four challenges to regional innovation outlined by the European Commission in its July 2017 Communication on Smart Specialisation; and (ii) technology transfer and the digital economy. These exchanges will highlight the ingredients to make the most of innovation ecosystems and make Smart Specialisation a success story.

Date and venue: Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th May 2018 at National Palace of Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria

Number of participants: 300-350

Event page: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/event/conference/smart-specialisation-technology-transfer-and-digital-economy>



Draft agenda¹

Time	DAY 1: Thursday 3 rd May 2018
08:00	Registration
09:00-09:15	Opening and Welcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Yordanka Fandakova</u>, Mayor of Sofia, Bulgaria [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Vladimir Šucha</u>, Director-General, Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]
9:15-10:15	Opening Statements: Innovation - A Response to Europe's Challenges <i>Moderator: <u>Vladimir Šucha</u>, Director-General, Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Tomislav Donchev</u>, Deputy Prime Minister, Bulgaria [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Lilyana Pavlova</u>, Minister for the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council 2018, Bulgaria [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Mariya Gabriel</u>, European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Markku Markkula</u>, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Julian Revalski</u>, President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences [<i>confirmed</i>] <p><i>Place-based innovation policies have moved centre stage in the EU priorities for jobs, growth and investment. The EU's new industrial policy strategy and the Communication on Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions outline what needs to be done to harness the benefits of globalisation. It will be critical to enhance the effectiveness of research, development, education and innovation both in the EU and in enlargement countries. This high-level opening session will highlight those common challenges from the speakers' different perspectives and outline how they see this conference contributing to the contemporary debate on innovation policy and what they expect as outcomes from the discussions.</i></p>
10:15-11:30	Panel Discussion: The Innovation Landscape in the EU - Main Actors, Initiatives, Tools and Outcomes <i>Moderator: <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Khalil Rouhana</u>, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Rudolf Niessler</u>, Director, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]

¹ Simultaneous interpretation BG – EN will be available. The event will also be webstreamed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Slawomir Tokarski</u>, Director, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Patricia Reilly</u>, Deputy Head of Cabinet, Commissioner Navracsics [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <u>Iliyana Tsanova</u>, Deputy Managing Director of the European Fund for Strategic Investments at the European Investment Bank [<i>confirmed</i>] <p><i>The EU has arguably one of the most complex and sophisticated research and innovation systems in the world. A plethora of actors, initiatives and tools are working towards the common goal of increased competitiveness and societal well-being. When designing and implementing policies in this context, evidence informed policy-making and involvement of key stakeholders are cornerstones for legitimate and sound innovation policies. The panellists will discuss key achievements and how they came about. Important lessons will be drawn also for enlargement countries.</i></p>
<p>11:30-12:00</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>12:00-13:00</p>	<p>Sharing Experiences I: Innovation in places - Making Smart Specialisation a Success Story Moderator: <u>Alessandro Rainoldi</u>, Head of Unit, DG JRC, European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Making the intervention logic work for a holistic innovation policy</i> – <u>Jurgita Petrauskienė</u>, Lithuanian Minister of Science and Education [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <i>Lessons learned from the early stages in Serbia</i> – <u>Viktor Nedović</u>, Assistant Minister, Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <i>Key ingredients of place-based innovation policies</i> - <u>Peter Berkowitz</u>, Head of Unit, DG REGIO, European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <i>The economic rationale for Smart Specialisation in the Western Balkans</i> - <u>Hugo Hollanders</u> – University of Maastricht, Advisory Board Member of the Global Innovation Index [<i>confirmed</i>] ▪ <i>Competing models and low-hanging fruits</i> - <u>Slavo Radosevic</u>, UCL London [<i>confirmed</i>] <p><i>Success stories from transition economies can provide inspiration and send positive messages concerning the potential of Smart Specialisation for economic transformation. In this context, panellists will present both academic insights and the practitioners' perspective of managing these processes in different types of territories, discussing specific challenges in place-based innovation policy.</i></p>
<p>13:00-14:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>

14:00-15:00	<p>Sharing Experiences II: Success actors in R&D and Innovation – How Businesses Cooperate with Academia <i>Moderator: <u>Sasha Bezuhanova</u>, founder of MOVE.BG and EDIT [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Title - <u>Peter Statev</u>, co-founder of DigiTech 4.0 [confirmed] ▪ Title - <u>Stefano Fantoni</u>, President of Fondazione Internazionale Trieste [confirmed] ▪ Title - <u>Isfandyar Khan</u>, Programme Leader on Smart Specialisation, World Bank [confirmed] ▪ Title - <u>Katerina Sereti</u>, Policy Officer, Stakeholder Relations Section, European Institute of Innovation and Technology [confirmed] ▪ <i>The potential of Smart Specialisation: the point of view from academia</i> - <u>Galia Angelova</u>, Institute of Information and Communication Technologies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences [confirmed] <p><i>Innovation policies must properly address real business needs. To identify these changing needs, iterative processes are needed. Smart Specialisation puts special emphasis on demand-driven policies and programmes and flexible approaches for implementation. Successful businesses will discuss key factors that governments can take into account.</i></p>		
15:00-15:30	Coffee break		
15:30-16:45 Parallel sessions	<p><u>Smart Specialisation</u></p> <p>Reforming R&I Systems: Stakeholder mobilisation <i>Moderated by <u>Manuel Palazuelos Martínez</u>, Leader of the Smart Specialisation platform, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Creating coherent strategies together with stakeholders</i> – <u>Gorazd Jenko</u>, Secretary at Slovenian Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy [confirmed] ▪ <i>Involving all relevant actors: The role of academia and universities in Smart Specialisation</i> – <u>Nikolay K. Vitanov</u> 	<p><u>Technology transfer</u></p> <p>Innovation Ecosystems: Science Parks, Incubators and Innovation areas Driving Growth <i>Moderated by <u>Luis Sanz</u>, Director General of the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Gordana Grkovic</u>, Belgrade Science Park [confirmed] ▪ <u>Alessandro Fazio</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed] ▪ <u>Sergio Paoletti</u>, Area Science Park [confirmed] ▪ <u>Alberto Mina</u>, AEXPO, Milan [confirmed] ▪ <u>Paris Kokoritsikos</u>, Innovation for Growth Incubator [confirmed] ▪ <u>Marjana Majerič</u>, Ljubljana Technology Park 	<p><u>Watify Inspire</u></p> <p>Boosting Technological Transformation in Europe <i>Moderated by <u>Ian Andersen</u>, Participatory Leadership Adviser, European Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Anna Rodrigues</u>, De Trog [confirmed] ▪ <u>Nerea Sopolana</u>, Trimek [confirmed] ▪ <u>Michael Behr</u>, Bächer Bergmann [confirmed] ▪ <u>Spas Kerimov</u>, Printivo [confirmed] ▪ <u>Georgi Dimitrov</u>, Evrotrust [confirmed]

	<p>Vice Director of Institute of Mechanics, Plovdiv University, Bulgaria [confirmed]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Role of Clusters in Smart Specialisation in Transition Regions</i> – <u>Bianca Dragomir</u>, General Manager Cluster AVAENSEN, Valencia [confirmed] ▪ <i>Mobilising innovation partnerships</i> – <u>Karolina Lipinska</u>, Pomorskie Region [confirmed] <p><i>In the EU, more than 120 strategies for Smart Specialisation were designed and assessed by the European Commission. Over EUR 40 billion is invested until 2020 in the priority domains defined in these strategies. As a prerequisite for cohesion policy investment, Smart Specialisation has contributed to putting in place reforms in about half of the Member States and helped to address many research and innovation challenges. Panellists will build on this vast experience and present how Smart Specialisation has changed innovation policy-making in their countries and regions.</i></p>	<p>[confirmed]</p> <p><i>The aim of this session is to explore the different types of areas of innovation and consider the role that various stakeholders, both private and public, can play to generate a virtuous circle that can promote technology transfer, accelerate local economic development and drive regional competitiveness.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Andrei Bunis</u>, DG GROW, European Commission for Wafify <p><i>WATIFY is an awareness-raising campaign that stimulates the modernisation of European industry. The campaign focuses on the technological transformation of traditional SMEs, promotion of regional digitisation and uptake of advanced technologies – notably Key Enabling Technologies. WATIFY seeks to boost the rate of European industrial modernisation through increased productivity and efficiency, resulting in improved competitiveness and job creation.</i></p> <p><i>This session, organised in an innovative way to give an inspiring image, aims to pass sound messages on the modernisation of industry through digital transformation and advanced technologies, creativity and innovation.</i></p>
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16:45-17:45	<p>Strengthening Research and Innovation in Bulgaria Moderator: <u>Giancarlo Caratti</u>, Head of Unit, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Specific Support to Bulgaria under the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility</i> - <u>Luc Soete</u> on behalf of DG RTD, European Commission [confirmed] ▪ <i>Diagnostic Study for Sofia Tech Park</i> - <u>Stephen Taylor</u>, Director, Innovation and Complex Systems Department, Area Science Park [confirmed] ▪ <i>Fund of funds instruments to advance innovation</i>, <u>Svetoslava Georgieva</u>, Executive Director, Fund of Funds, Bulgaria [confirmed]
18:00 - 19:30	<p>Official opening of "Putting science at the heart of EU policymaking" exhibition, hosted by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Andrey Novakov</u>, MEP [confirmed] ▪ <u>Vladimir Šucha</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed] ▪ <u>Patricia Reilly</u>, Deputy Head of Cabinet, Commissioner Navrascics

Time	DAY 2: Friday 4 th May 2018
09:00-10:30	<p>Statements on Opportunities and Challenges in the Region: The Innovation Roadmap Moderator: <u>Christian Danielsson</u>, Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), European Commission [confirmed]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>tbd</u>, Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council 2018, Bulgaria ▪ <u>Ciprian-Ion PREDA</u>, Secretary of State, Ministry of Research and Innovation, Romania [confirmed] ▪ <u>Viktor Nedović</u>, Assistant Minister, Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development [confirmed] ▪ <u>tbc</u>, Deputy Minister of Education, Sports and Youth of Albania [confirmed] ▪ <u>Sanja Damjanović</u>, Minister of Science of Montenegro [confirmed] ▪ <u>Biljana Čamur Veselinović</u>, Assistant Minister for Science and Culture, Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina [confirmed] ▪ <u>Kreshnik Bekteshi</u>, Minister of Economy, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ▪ <u>Arber Geci</u>, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo² [confirmed] <p><i>For Western Balkans, Smart Specialisation is not an ex ante conditionality like it is for the EU Member States. It is, however, an increasingly popular innovation policy concept spreading worldwide. Starting early to transform research and innovation (R&I) systems is an important precondition for success. Those just starting their Smart Specialisation process could benefit from a sound and objective analysis of their economic potentials, similar to what the European Commission has been doing in Serbia. To assess relative performance and potentials, a comparative analysis of the entire region is necessary. This discussion will underline the importance of cooperation in economic, innovation and research policies that benefits partners from the Western Balkans and EU Member States and regions that can deliver positive economic effects and help integration processes.</i></p>
10:30-11:00	Coffee break and group photo

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<p>11:00-12:15 Parallel sessions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Smart Specialisation</u></p> <p>Increasing Transnational Cooperation for Innovation Investments <i>Moderated by <u>Nikos Pantalos</u>, DG GROW, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Thematic platforms (industrial modernisation, energy, agri-food) – representative from lead/participating regions – <u>Ilari Havukainen</u>, bioenergy partnership [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Vanguard Initiative – <u>Wim De Kinderen</u> [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Beyond the EU: Preparing the grounds for Smart Specialisation in enlargement countries – <u>Alexander Kleibrink</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i> ▪ Tbd – <u>Georgi Todorov</u>, Technical University of Sofia, Bulgaria <p><i>Smart Specialisation has a fundamental role in driving a more effective innovation policy and pushing interregional cooperation in new cross-border value chains. To help European regions upscale Smart Specialisation investments and achieve critical mass, the European Commission launched three Smart Specialisation thematic platforms focusing on interregional innovation activities. This</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Technology transfer</u></p> <p>From Lab to Market: How to Commercialise Innovations <i>Moderated by <u>Elena Andonova</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Henric Rhedin</u>, President, ASTP Proton [confirmed] ▪ <u>Barbara Diehl</u>, UCD, Ireland [confirmed] ▪ <u>Steffen Preissler</u>, Fraunhofer Society [confirmed] ▪ <u>Julia Djarova</u>, EU4TECH [confirmed] ▪ <u>Dragan Soljan</u>, European Investment Bank [confirmed] ▪ <u>Nina Anticic</u>, Zagreb University [confirmed] <p><i>This session covers various aspects relating to technology transfer models and processes for the development of innovative products and services. Issues to be discussed involve opportunities, such as access to international excellence, and challenges such as funding, intellectual property management, and cultural differences of the university-industry interface.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Digital Economy</u></p> <p>Digital Transformation: Setting the Scene <i>Moderated by <u>Alessandro Annoni</u>, DG JRC, European Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Digital Single Market and Artificial Intelligence – <u>Cécile HUET</u>, Deputy Head of Robotics & Artificial Intelligence Unit, DG CNECT, European Commission [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Better Use of ICT to leverage the competitiveness of companies in the Industry 4.0 era - <u>Valerio Alessandroni</u>, EFCC Estonian Fieldbus Competency Centre and WATIFY Ambassador [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Platform economy - <u>Nestor Duch Brown</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Economic governance of data-driven markets - <u>Daniel Castro</u>, Center for Data Innovation [confirmed]</i> <p><i>Digital transformation refers to the profound changes taking place in the economy and society as a result of the uptake and integration of digital technologies in every aspect of human life. It has a pervasive impact and all sectors will be affected.</i></p>
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	<i>session will build on this example and on the experience of the Vanguard Initiative to generate a debate about the importance of exploiting inter-regional and cross-border complementarities to build and reshape EU-wide value-chains.</i>		
12:15-13:00	Lunch		
13:00-14:15 Parallel sessions	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Smart Specialisation</u></p> <p>Leveraging R&I in Less Developed and Industrial Transition Regions <i>Moderated by <u>Marek Przeor</u>, DG REGIO, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Implementing Smart Specialisation in less developed regions - <u>Marina Ranga</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Doing Smart Specialisation at the local level - <u>Desislava Koleva</u>, Head of Economic Development Department - Municipality of Gabrovo [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Smart Specialisation from the perspective of knowledge actors - <u>Atanas Kocov</u>, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University St. Cyril and Methodius Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [confirmed]</i> <p><i>While Smart Specialisation is relevant to all regions, less developed regions and industrial transition regions face specific</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Technology transfer</u></p> <p>Harnessing Synergies between EU Policies and Instruments for Financing <i>Moderated by <u>Fabio Mondini de Focatiis</u>, Idinvest Partners [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Title - <u>Andrea Marcello</u>, Investment Manager, EIF ▪ Title - <u>Almudena Trigo Lorenzo</u>, BeAble Capital [confirmed] ▪ <i>Early stage investment gaps – <u>Luigi Amati</u>, Business Angels Europe [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Financing eco-system development – <u>Anwar Aridi</u>, World Bank [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>The Venture Capitalist's point of view – <u>Robert Bush</u>, Investor and advisor to technology companies [confirmed]</i> <p><i>In this interactive session, there will be opportunities to hear about existing funding schemes for technology transfer projects and the perspectives of early stage investment funds, such as Proof of Concept vehicles and</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Digital Economy</u></p> <p>Going Deeper into Digital Transformation <i>Moderated by <u>Alexander Kotsev</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Digital Transition Partnership and Digital City Challenge – <u>Vladimir Danailov</u>, Sofia Investment Agency [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>New challenges and opportunities for the ICT industry - <u>Ognyan Trajanov</u>, Bulgarian Association of IT Companies [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Data-driven innovation in the Western Balkans - <u>Darko Vucetic</u>, Republic Geodetic Authority of Serbia [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Artificial Intelligence can change our world now – <u>Martin Pecar</u>, OmniOpti and WATIFY Ambassador [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>The Impact of Blockchain goes beyond Financial Services - <u>Georgios Petropoulos</u>, Bruegel [confirmed]</i>

	<p>challenges. In this session, policy-makers and experts in this area will discuss about how to best address these challenges to make the most of their innovation capacity and move up the value chain.</p>	<p>venture capital funds. The session will also touch upon the Commission's initiatives related to bridging the 'valley of death' and relevant technical assistance.</p>	<p>This session will present the Digital Transition Partnership and will provide a closer look at some of the main technologies shaping the Digital Transformation: Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Robotics. Special attention will be given to their global, cross-sector and cross-technology nature.</p>
<p>14:15-15:30</p>	<p>Final Plenary Panel discussion: Coordinating processes and synergies – Bringing multiple initiatives together <i>Moderated by <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Building an Action Plan for Smart Growth in the Western Balkans - <u>Lucian Brujan</u>, German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina [confirmed]</i> ▪ Tbd - <u>Gazmend Turdiu</u>, Deputy Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council [confirmed] ▪ <i>Evidence-based policies: analytical support for successful strategies in the Western Balkans, <u>Marzena Kisielewska</u>, Head of Division, OECD [confirmed]</i> ▪ <i>Smart Specialisation and the circular economy in the Western Balkans and South-East Europe: upgrading international cooperation, <u>Christophe Yvetot</u>, UN Industrial Development Organisation [confirmed]</i> <p><i>Multiple initiatives already co-exist in South-East Europe. The European Commission and the international community are committed to continue looking for synergies and value added in the policies they design and implement. The invited panellists will discuss selected initiatives and how they can be better coordinated for increased impact.</i></p>		
<p>15:30</p>	<p>Closing by <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</p>		