

Please note that this document is written in a personal capacity, I am not representing an institution.

A revised Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), suitably adapted for a region-specific approach will hopefully facilitate R, D and I and enable a Quadruple Helix Model of Innovation. It would be advisable that such projects move upwards on the “trajectory” beyond knowledge exchange to R&I projects that will result in high quality outputs.

This new S3 strategy should enable the effective use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), particularly ERDF to support R&I in the regions. As I have previously promoted as Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) National Delegate and which is now possible under Horizon Europe, ESIF could be used to co-fund **MSCA COFUND research and training programmes** (Postdoctoral fellowship and PhD programmes which involve intersectoral collaboration). ESIF can also be used to finance projects which are awarded a ‘Seal of Excellence’ but due to the competitive nature of the call are not funded. This is **a key mechanism whereby WIT and the future Technological University could build research capacity at scale** and excellence is in-built in all stages from evaluation and recruitment to training.

WIT has three associated Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateways, all conducting research and providing services to industry in domains of critical importance to the economy (IT, Communications, AI, Pharmaceuticals and therapeutics, Additive manufacturing and materials). The RIKON Centre provides services and works closely with local SMEs. The CALMAST centre, affiliated with the School of Life Long Learning and Education at WIT, regularly organises public outreach events. Thus, the facilitators/structures are in place to deliver such programmes but funding to increase research talent in both HEIs and companies is lacking.

Such research and training projects represent an ideal mechanism to achieve the following:

- Digitalisation and digital transformation
- Innovation diffusion
- International collaboration on RD&I
- Improve the national or regional enterprise research and innovation system
- Enhance research capacity of SMEs via academic-industry collaboration.

Ireland 2040 requires a doubling in the growth rate for regional cities compared to Dublin.

The data below, compiled by Dr. Ray Griffin at WIT, shows the disparities in terms of Share of Third level research income per capita.

The South East of Ireland accounts for almost 9% of the total population and must continue to provide for the Higher education and Research and Innovation needs of the region.

The SE regional GDP is €20 billion per annum and according to per capita GDP projections (Eurostat 2019 data) the figure should be €30 billion. This shortfall is due to the relative economic deprivation. Furthermore, FDI requires a pool of highly skilled graduates and talented researchers who can be attracted to and retained in the region. **ESIF/ERDF funding used for R&I projects in a regionally tailored manner is therefore vital and it is to be hoped that the forthcoming strategy will facilitate this.**

As such, in moving towards a knowledge-driven economy and delivering a Technological University of international standing, further investment and availability of funding to finance and facilitate R,D&I in the South East is needed.

	Share of national pop.	Share of 3rd income	Share of 3rd level state grant	Share of 3rd level fees	Share of 3rd level research income	Total Income (€ millions)	State Grant (€ millions)	Fees (€ millions)	Research (€ millions)
Border	8.3%	3.4%	6.1%	3.1%	0.8%	85,872	39,366	36,379	4,161
Dublin	28.3%	43.8%	39.5%	46.4%	46.2%	1,099,469	255,278	547,458	230,417
Mid East	14.5%	6.3%	6.0%	6.9%	6.0%	158,327	39,067	81,704	29,777
Mid West	6.1%	11.2%	12.8%	11.1%	11.5%	281,398	82,652	130,722	57,355
Midlands	9.5%	1.8%	2.9%	1.4%	0.8%	45,255	18,928	16,698	4,164
South East	8.9%	5.0%	7.4%	4.1%	3.2%	125,810	47,540	47,769	16,100
South West (Kerry & Cork)	14.5%	17.4%	15.3%	15.6%	20.1%	435,644	99,128	183,792	100,213
West	9.9%	11.1%	10.0%	11.4%	11.4%	277,446	64,518	134,905	57,002
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	2,509,221	646,477	1,179,427	499,189

Source: <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/10/Institutional-Profiles-2016-17.pdf>