



JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

RIO Country Report 2017: Italy

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Summary

Main R&I challenges and policy responses

- The low level of business R&I activities and unfavourable framework conditions

Business R&I activities have remained low, far below EU averages. The Italian economy is characterised by an overwhelming majority of small and micro enterprises active in industries with a low R&D intensity. The tight lending conditions and the small scale of the venture capital market are also hampering innovation activities, especially for new, small, innovative companies

- The public sector funding of R&I

Preserving the activities of the public research system and of Italy's universities is a serious challenge, in particular after the budget cuts affecting R&D expenditure and university staff; limited job opportunities are currently available for researchers in the public sector; and outward migration of researchers and Italians with tertiary education is increasing.

- Governance and management of the R&I system and policies

The Italian R&I system has been characterised by a number of issues affecting the management of R&I policies: fragmentation of strategies, with many initiatives at both national and regional levels; delays in the implementation of measures; and instability regarding budget availability and allocations. For universities and PROs evaluation activities have expanded and are used as the basis for merit-based funding.

- Addressing territorial disparities

Italy has long suffered from large divergences between the North and the South with respect to economic structures, technological activities, incomes, unemployment, female participation, etc. The impact of the recession has been more severe in the South and several policies – including the allocation of university funds – have reduced available resources for the South.

Smart specialisation

In 2015, MISE and MIUR validated the national Strategy of Smart Specialisation 2015-2020, approved in April 2016 by the EU Commission. The Strategy identified five national thematic areas and twelve regional thematic areas of specialisation. The PNR 2015-2020 has been organised accordingly around the five national areas and twelve regional areas of specialisation.

In 2016, the agency for territorial cohesion, in charge of monitoring RIS3, published the national strategic document on RIS3, which outlines the efforts towards integration of policy measures and R&I programmes. The Agency has worked on the standardisation of regional monitoring indicators.

In 2016, each region released a regional strategy with a regional monitoring system, usually with attention also to other innovation policies, such as the Start-up law and innovative financing tools. The policy instruments available for the implementation of the national strategy are described in the national strategic document and are integrated with current measures for R&I.

RIS3 areas have been included in the PON (Piani Operativi Nazionali) and Regional Operational Programmes for the use of European Structural Funds.

Local research systems, including universities and PROs, are considered as a major stakeholder of RIS3 and in some cases they are included in the governance bodies. Public-private partnerships are widely encouraged by the RIS3 national framework since

their weak diffusion is considered as a factor of weakness of Italy's R&I system, as argued by the SWOT analysis of the strategic document.

A large policy effort has been developed around the Smart Specialisation Strategy; however, its implementation is still at an early stage at both the national and regional levels; a proper assessment of its operation and impact is not yet available.

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