

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: 6 March 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 enlargement towards the Western Balkans remains on the agenda with a special focus on fostering progress towards EU membership, 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 have been 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 must monitor and adjust activities based on performance to ensure an effective use of public investments.

The Commission with the Bulgarian Presidency 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. After setting the scene and presenting the facets of the innovation landscape in Europe, policy-makers, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at National Palace of Culture, Sofia, Bulgaria

**Estimated number of participants:** 250 – 300

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



Draft agenda  
*All speakers tbc, unless otherwise indicated*

Time	DAY 1: Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018
9:15-9:30	<p><b>Opening and Welcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Yordanka Fandakova</u>, Mayor of Sofia, Bulgaria</li> <li>▪ <u>Vladimir Šucha</u>, Director-General, Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</li> </ul>
9:30-10:15	<p><b>Opening statements: Innovation, a response to Europe's challenges</b> <i>Moderator: <u>Vladimir Šucha</u>, Director-General, Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Tomislav Donchev</u>, Deputy Prime Minister, Bulgaria</li> <li>▪ <u>Mariya Gabriel</u>, European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society [<i>confirmed</i>]</li> <li>▪ <u>Corina Crețu</u>, European Commissioner for Regional Policy</li> <li>▪ <u>Markku Markkula</u>, Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions</li> <li>▪ <u>Kristalina Georgieva</u>, Chief Executive Officer, World Bank</li> <li>▪ <u>Andrey Novakov</u>, MEP</li> </ul> <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	<p><b>Panel discussion: The innovation landscape in the EU - Main actors, initiatives, tools and outcomes</b> <i>Moderator: <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission</i></p> <p>Scene setter: <u>Normunds Popens</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG REGIO, European Commission [<i>confirmed</i>]</p>

	<p>Responders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Khalil Rouhana</u>, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT), European Commission</li> <li>▪ <u>Slawomir Tokarski</u>, Director, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), European Commission</li> <li>▪ <u>Román Arjona Gracia</u>, Chief Economist and Head of Unit, DG RTD, European Commission</li> <li>▪ <u>Iliyana Tsanova</u>, Deputy Managing Director of the European Fund for Strategic Investments at the European Investment Bank</li> </ul> <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><b>11:30-12:00</b></p>	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>
<p><b>12:00-13:00</b></p>	<p><b>Sharing experiences I: Innovation in places - Making smart specialisation a success story</b>  Moderator: <u>Alessandro Rainoldi</u>, Head of Unit, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Key ingredients of place-based innovation policies</i> - <u>Peter Berkowitz</u>, Head of Unit, DG REGIO, European Commission, <i>Making the intervention logic work for a holistic innovation policy</i> – <u>Jurgita Petrauskienė</u>, Lithuanian Minister of Science and Education [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <i>TBD Hugo Hollanders</i> – University of Maastricht</li> <li>▪ <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]</li> <li>▪ <i>Lessons learned from the early stages in Serbia</i> – <u>Viktor Nedovic</u>, Assistant Minister, Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development [confirmed]</li> </ul> <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><b>13:00-14:00</b></p>	<p><i>Lunch</i></p>

<p><b>14:00-15:00</b></p>	<p><b>Sharing experiences II: Success factors in R&amp;D and innovation – How businesses cooperate with academia</b>  <i>Moderator: <u>Sasha Bezuhanova</u>, founder and board chairperson of MOVE.BG</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Atanas Kiryakov</u>, CEO of Ontotext</li> <li>▪ <u>Ivan Mrvoš</u>, CEO and founder of the hardware company 'Include'</li> <li>▪ <u>Bindi Karia</u>, Advisor of the European Innovation Council</li> <li>▪ <u>Momchil Kyurkchiev</u>, CEO and co-founder of Leanplum [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>TBD</u>, DG EAC, European Commission</li> </ul> <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>	
<p><b>15:00-15:30</b></p>	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>	
<p><b>15:30-16:45</b> Parallel sessions</p>	<p><b>PARALLEL STREAM 1: Smart specialisation</b></p> <p><b>1.1 Reforms of Research and Innovation Systems: the Role and Benefits of Smart Specialisation</b>  <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"> <li>▪ <i>Cross-innovation and moving towards non-R&amp;D innovation – <u>Marzena Schoene</u>, Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Mobilising innovation partnerships – <u>Karolina Lipinska</u>, Pomorskie Region plus <u>representative</u> from Pazardzhik, Bulgaria</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Creating coherent strategies together with stakeholders – <u>Peter Wostner</u>, Slovenian Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Involving all relevant actors: The role of academia and</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>PARALLEL STREAM 2: Technology transfer</b></p> <p><b>2.1 Innovation Ecosystems: Science Parks, Incubators and Areas of Innovation as main drivers for growth, an interactive panel</b>  <i>Moderated by <u>Luis Sanz</u>, Director General of the International Association of Science Parks [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Gordana Grkovic</u>, Belgrade Science Park [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Alessandro Fazio</u>, Plexal, UK</li> <li>▪ <u>Sergio Paoletti</u>, Area Science Park [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Alberto Mina</u>, AREXPO, Milan [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Paris Kokoritsikos</u>, Innovation for Growth Incubator [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Tbd</u>, Ljubljana Technology Park [confirmed]</li> </ul> <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</i></p>

	<p><i>universities in smart specialisation – <u>Nikolay K. Vitanov</u> Vice Director of Institute of Mechanics, Plovdiv University, Bulgaria [confirmed]</i></p> <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><i>and drive regional competitiveness.</i></p>
<p><b>16:45-17:45</b></p>	<p><b>Closing Plenary session, Day One</b>  <i>Moderator: <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>A vision for the future of Sofia Tech Park - <u>Giancarlo Caratti</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Specific Support to Bulgaria under the Horizon 2020 Policy Support Facility - <u>Luc Soete</u> on behalf of DG RTD, European Commission [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Diagnostic Study for Sofia Tech Park - <u>Stephen Taylor</u>, Marketing Director, Area Science Park [confirmed]</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>17:45-18:45</b></p>	<p><b>Cocktail and exhibitions of DG JRC, incl. Art &amp; Science – Official Opening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vladimir Šucha, DG JRC, European Commission</i></li> <li>• <i>Commissioner Cabinet</i></li> <li>• <i>BG VIP</i></li> </ul>	

Time	DAY 2: Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2018
09:15-11:00	<p><b>Statements on Opportunities and Challenges in the Region: The Innovation Roadmap</b>  Moderator: <u>Christian Danielsson</u>, Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Ekaterina Zaharieva</u>, Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria</li> <li>▪ <u>Lilyana Pavlova</u>, Minister for the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council 2018, Bulgaria</li> <li>▪ <u>Nicolae BURNETE</u>, Minister for Research and Innovation of Romania</li> <li>▪ <u>Mladen Šarčević</u>, Minister for Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia</li> <li>▪ <u>Lindita Nikolla</u>, Minister of Education, Sports and Youth of Albania</li> <li>▪ <u>Sanja Damjanović</u>, Minister of Science of Montenegro</li> <li>▪ <u>Elvira Dilberović</u>, Minister of Education and Science of Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>▪ <u>Kreshnik Bekteshi</u>, Minister of Economy, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</li> <li>▪ <u>Shyqiri Bytyqi</u>, Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo</li> </ul> <p><i>For Western Balkan countries, 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 that is enshrined in the "acquis communautaire". Starting early to transform research and innovation systems accordingly is an important precondition for success. The countries just starting their smart specialisation process should benefit from a sound and objective analysis of their economic potentials, similar to what DG JRC is currently doing in Serbia. To assess these countries' relative performance and potentials, a comparative analysis of the entire region is necessary. The keynote speaker will provide original data from a commissioned study based on a methodology developed together with DG JRC. This will give substance to the subsequent debate among high-level actors who played a key role in preparing the grounds for smart specialisation inside the EU and can outline possible scenarios for the Western Balkans, and representatives from South-east Europe. Western Balkans representatives will sign a political declaration committing to develop and implement innovation strategies for smart specialisation. This discussion underlines the importance of cooperation in economic, innovation and research policies that benefits partners from the Western Balkans and EU Member States and regions. It can deliver positive economic effects and help integration processes.</i></p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee break and group photo

<p><b>11:30-12:45</b> <b>Parallel sessions</b></p>	<p><b>PARALLEL STREAM 1: Smart specialisation (cont.)</b></p> <p><b>1.2 Increasing Cooperation in Innovation Investment across Regions</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Mark Nicklas</u>, DG GROW, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Thematic platforms (industrial modernisation, energy, agrofood) – representatives from lead/participating regions – <u>Ilari Havukainen</u>, bioenergy partnership [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Vanguard Initiative – <u>Wim De Kinderen</u> [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Beyond the EU: Preparing the grounds for smart specialisation in enlargement countries – <u>Alexander Kleibrink</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></li> </ul> <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><b>PARALLEL STREAM 2: Technology transfer (cont.)</b></p> <p><b>2.2. From Lab to Market: How to commercialise innovations, an interactive panel</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Elena Andonova</u>, DG JRC, European Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Henric Rhedin</u>, President, ASTP Proton</li> <li>▪ <u>Ian Tracey</u>, KTN [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Steffen Preissler</u>, Fraunhofer Society [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Julia Djarova</u>, EU4TECH [confirmed]</li> <li>▪ <u>Olivier Eulaerts</u>, Technology Innovation Monitor, DG JRC, European Commission</li> <li>▪ <u>Nikolas Chalkias</u>, Operations Director, OxSonics</li> </ul> <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><b>PARALLEL STREAM 3: Digital Economy</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Digital Transformation: Setting the Scene</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Alessandro Annoni</u>, DG JRC, European Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>The Digital Single Market - <u>Gerard de Graaf</u>, DG CNECT, European Commission</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Platform economy - <u>Stefan Krawczyk</u>, President EDiMA</i></li> <li>▪ <i>New challenges and opportunities for the ICT industry - <u>Ognyan Trajanov</u>, Bulgarian Association of IT Companies [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Economic governance of data-driven markets - <u>Daniel Castro</u>, Center for Data Innovation [confirmed]</i></li> </ul> <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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	<p><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></p>		
<b>12:45-13:45</b>	Lunch		
<b>13:45-15:00</b> Parallel sessions	<p><b>PARALLEL STREAM 1: Smart specialisation (cont.)</b></p> <p><b>1.3 Leveraging Research and Innovation in Less Developed and Industrial Transition Regions</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Marek Przeor</u>, DG REGIO, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Implementing smart specialisation in Romania - <u>Marina Ranga</u>, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Coordinating national with regional level - <u>Katarzyna Kaczkowska</u>, Polish Ministry for Development</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Doing smart specialisation at the local level - <u>Tanya Hristova</u>, Mayor of Gabrovo</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Clusters in Industrial Transition Regions – <u>Bianca Dragomir</u>, General Manager Cluster AVAESSEN, Valencia</i></li> </ul> <p><i>While smart specialisation is relevant to all regions, less developed regions and</i></p>	<p><b>PARALLEL STREAM 2: Technology transfer (cont.)</b></p> <p><b>2.3 Harnessing Synergies and Complementarities between EU Policies and Instruments: the case of Funding for Innovation</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Jose Romano</u>, EIF</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>EIT KICs and their outreach programme - <u>Karel Haegeman</u>, DG JRC, European Commission &amp; <b>tbd</b>, EIT representative</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Innovfin, <u>Piyush Unalkat</u>, EIF [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Early stage investment gaps - <u>Luigi Amati</u>, Business Angels Europe [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Financing eco-system development – <u>Anwar Aridi</u>, World Bank [confirmed]</i></li> </ul> <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><b>PARALLEL STREAM 3: Digital Economy (cont.)</b></p> <p><b>3.2 Going deeper into Digital Transformation</b> <i>Moderated by <u>Alexander Kotsev</u>, DG JRC, European Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>The Digital Transition Partnership – <u>Vladimir Danailov</u>, Sofia Investment Academy [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Artificial Intelligence can change our world now - <b>tbd</b></i></li> <li>▪ <i>The Impact of Blockchain goes beyond Financial Services - <u>Georgios Petropoulos</u>, Bruegel [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Robotics - <u>Rodolphe G�lin</u>, SoftBank Robotics</i></li> </ul> <p><i>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,</i></p>



	<i>industrial transition regions face specific 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.</i>	<i>venture capital funds. The session will also touch upon the Commission's initiatives related to bridging the 'valley of death' and relevant technical assistance.</i>	<i>Blockchain and Robotics. Special attention will be given to their global, cross-sector and cross-technology nature.</i>
<b>15:00-15:30</b>	<i>Coffee break</i>		
<b>15:30-16:30</b>	<p><b>Final Plenary Panel discussion: Coordinating processes and synergies – Bringing multiple initiatives together</b>  <i>Moderated by <u>Normunds Popens</u>, Deputy Director-General, DG REGIO, European Commission [confirmed]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Instruments to support regional cooperation - <u>Colin Wolfe</u>, Head of Unit, DG NEAR, European Commission</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Building an Action Plan for Smart Growth in the Western Balkans - <u>Lucian Brujan</u>, German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Macro-regional strategies: Linking priorities with EU objectives - <u>Jean-Pierre Halkin</u>, Head of Unit, DG REGIO, European Commission</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Andrey Novakov, European Parliament</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Gazmend Turdiu, Deputy Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council [confirmed]</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Marzena Kisielewska, OECD [confirmed]</i></li> </ul> <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>		
<b>16:30</b>	Closing remarks by <u>Charlina Vitcheva</u> , Deputy Director-General, DG JRC, European Commission [confirmed] and <b>Tbd</b> , Bulgarian Presidency representative		