

Statement by Ms. Charlina Vitcheva, Deputy Director-General, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

Delivered at Ministerial Segment: 'Strengthening capacity and policy for the development of STI roadmaps' (Tuesday 14 May 2019 from 12.00 – 13.00, Conference Room 4, UN)

1. EU Approach

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to speak at this Ministerial Session.

As the European Union, we have a lot to share and can meaningfully contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals through Science, Technology and Innovation Roadmaps (STIs for SDGs).

In fact the EU has been implementing localised STI roadmaps in its Member States since 2014 with the total investment of €68 bn by 2020.

This policy will be continued in the years 2021-2027.

These roadmaps include targeted actions but they also stimulate cooperation at national, sub-national and international levels.

As our approach is taken up at the global level by more and more countries, we are very happy to share this experience in the UN context, and to develop a structured cooperation on STI Roadmaps for SDGs in the future.

2. Smart Specialisation as a tool for innovation

What I am talking about is a process called Smart Specialisation Strategies for innovation-led socio-economic transformation.

Our motto is leaving no one and no place behind.

Under EU Cohesion policy, the Smart Specialisation approach was originally conceived to reduce the territorial inequalities and enhance territorial opportunities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and development across the entire EU.

As an EU-made approach for localising policy support to innovation, more than a hundred Smart Specialisation Strategies were developed reflecting both the specificities of places and of societal challenges faced by people in the EU.

3. Smart Specialisation contributes to SDGs

Smart Specialisation is a bottom-up process that identifies a set of priorities for public and private investment.

In the EU, many of these priorities contribute directly to SDG targets, supporting projects such as industrial modernisation, energy transition, climate action and many others.

It is made possible by allowing for a better prioritisation of STI resources through evidence-based diagnostics of needs and potentials.

Notably by mapping of place-specific business and population needs and matching them with STI potential.

Smart Specialisation thus embeds key elements and dimensions of STI for SDGs roadmaps, including prioritisation, mobilisation of stakeholders, localisation and customisation for different contexts.

4 What has been impact of Smart Specialisation?

In the EU, Smart Specialisation has also proven to be a relevant approach to boost interregional and international collaborations around thematic innovation priorities or shared societal challenges across different places.

At the moment there are 31 international partnerships operating under three thematic Smart Specialisation platforms on agri-food, energy and industrial modernization, mobilising 153 regions from 28 countries.

The evidence shows also that the Smart Specialisation approach leads to significant innovations in policymaking itself.

Such as encouraging the inter-sectorial cooperation, bridging silos and encouraging multi-level governance with strong involvement of stakeholders.

5. How can Smart Specialisation contribute to SDG Global Agenda?

Smart Specialisation can bring relevant experiences and evidence for the achievement of SDGs Agenda at the worldwide level and has already been taken up by 23 countries beyond EU.

Evidence from the international Smart Specialisation experiences, for example, in Latin America, Australia, Western Balkans and more recently Africa, shows that the SDG agenda drives many national development programmes and needs to be taken into account also in the smart specialisation process.

We can support this by further developing our methodological approaches.

For example, we have just launched a new pilot project on Smart Specialisation and SDGs, where we will be working with Serbia on better identification of challenges, gaps and potentials through which SDGs can be addressed.

6 Concluding remarks

The European Union is fully committed to the achievement of SDGs, as is clearly shown in our recent reflection paper Sustainable Europe by 2030.

Today, I focused mostly on our localised STI Roadmaps, but there is a lot more happening in the EU, including mission-oriented research, our environmental policies and many others.

We remain fully open to bring all this wealth of actions and experiences to the table and share it in the global context, not only showing what we have done but also learning from the valuable experience of others.

Thank you for attention.