

# Organisational Coaching Tool (OCT)

## Internal OCT – Rostock Business

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## 1. Introduction

When it comes to the regional implementation of the smart specialisation strategy (RIS3), organisational coaching tools are an important instrument. According to the experiences of Rostock Business, the implementation process needs to be started inside the mainly relevant institutions. Rostock Business, project partner in the EmpInno project, has several years of related experience, based on which the institution has developed its own organisational coaching tool (OCT) aiming at qualifying its staff regarding smart specialisation areas, eco-systems and proceedings in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV), Rostock region and Rostock. Having implemented this tool, newly developed in the institution for over 3 years now, the organizers draw a positive summary on its effects: it has qualified all members of Rostock Business towards a deep understanding of the RIS3 strategy of MV and was actively integrated into their daily work as a business supporting agency. Becoming a part of the daily routines of the institution over the past years, it has been perceived to be very efficient especially by those staff members who actively work in the RIS3 field. They stated that it equipped them with more practice-related knowledge about the RIS3 and related implementation opportunities, mainly on the local level. So far and in the future it has helped and will help them to obtain, improve and retain the skills and knowledge needed to competently fulfil their professional tasks. Accordingly, the tool will be further used in the institution and recommended for adaptation by third parties.

## 2. The RIS3 Strategy in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

On 6 March 2014, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's Strategy Council Economy adopted the RIS3 strategy of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (MV) with the overall aim of further profiling the federal state as a research and technology location and determining the key aspects of the future funding policy of the state government over the coming decade. In doing so, it fulfilled the task assigned to them by the European Commission to develop a strategical overall concept for the period 2014 to 2020 that gives orientation for the state's funding policy. The concept identifies unique selling points and aims at mobilizing regional protagonists and resources for enabling intelligent, sustainable and integrated growth. Thus, a positive innovation climate shall be generated in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which further motivates business and science of the state to develop competitive products and to create future-oriented and attractive jobs. The following related key objectives were specified by the strategy:

- ❖ Further enhancement of the research, development and innovation activities in the corporate sector
- ❖ Expansion of the application-oriented research and innovation capacities at universities and extra-university research institutions
- ❖ Improvement of the cooperation between companies and public research institutions regarding application-oriented research, development and innovation
- ❖ Profiling the research and technology location MV in the **thematic future fields of the state, which are: energy & climate, food, information & communication, health & life sciences, mobility and sustainable production technologies plus new materials, especially in mechanical engineering**

To achieve this, research, development and innovation in companies, mainly SME, related to all types of technologies shall be funded, application-oriented research infrastructure shall be promoted and expanded and the knowledge and technology transfer shall be accelerated as much as possible. These three strategic activities were implemented in all aforementioned future fields (identified via a SWOT analysis). Each of the future fields is assigned a leader and a steering group that work on identifying relevant research and development projects in the state and to interlink them. This whole process is accompanied by the Strategic Advisory Board for Science and Economic Matters of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which comprises of representatives of the five chambers of commerce, the universities, the extra-university research institutions, the technology centres, the four state ministries for economy, education, energy and agriculture. They all cooperate under the guidance of the State Secretary for Economy, Labour and Health. The bodies established for the RIS3 implementation in MV organize annual Technology and Industrial Policy Conferences, the 7th of these implemented in 2017.

### 3. The internal Organisational Coaching Tool (OCT) at Rostock Business

As indicated above, the organisational coaching tool has been implemented at Rostock Business over the past 3 years, aiming at qualifying all staff members how to actively contribute to the implementation of the RIS3 strategy. From the institution's profile, a focus on the two of the four key objectives of the RIS of MV were derived, namely the further enhancement of the research, development and innovation activities in the corporate sector and the improvement of the cooperation with companies and public research institutions regarding application-oriented research, development and innovation. All this was processed with a geographical focus on the City of Rostock and the surrounding regions, but in consideration of the activities implemented all over MV and even nationwide to ensure a competitive approach.

The organisational coaching tool is based on the principle that there is one specialist for each of the relevant future fields in the institution, but that each of these specialists also has a comprehensive overview on the RIS3 strategy of MV and the current status of implementation in general. The related structure was developed about 3 years ago, when the RIS3 strategy started to become a topic in more and more professional debates. By then, a survey among the staff members of Rostock Business was implemented and resulted in the recognition that the knowledge about the strategy within the team is very limited. Searching for solutions how to overcome this, two things were agreed upon:

1. The OCT should fully exploit related know-how and competences that already exist in the institution, i.e. benefit from those staff members who already work on technology issues related to one or more RIS3 future fields. They should become mainly responsible for coaching the team on this.
2. The coaching must not focus on short-term training measures, but has to be integrated into the institution's daily routines, so that it has a) the intended long-term effects and b) allows regular updates based on latest findings, developments and best practices from Rostock as well as MV in total.

Based on this, responsibilities in the team were officially defined and the weekly working meetings of the staff members, i.e. the Jour Fixe implemented every Monday under the guidance of the head of the institution, was used to identify suitable context. Having already existed as reliable working instrument in the institution for several years, the Jour Fixe ensures consistency of the internal exchange on RIS3 as well as sufficient spread of information in short-term intervals. The weekly routine and low-threshold implementation also allowed to reduce mental barriers, which were the only identified obstacle for the intended process: To some team members the RIS3 strategy for MV looked quite theoretical in the beginning. The relevance for their daily work was not fully clear to them. The developed organisational coaching tool was designed to overcome this issue, so it was agreed upon that the weekly „Jour Fixes“ would, from 2015 on, include weekly reports on latest RIS3 activities and developments in Rostock and/or discussions of the RIS3 relevance regarding the current activities of all employees, guided by the RIS3 experts of the institution.

After the internal organisational structure was defined that way, the needed competence and the regular acquisition of all relevant information by the RIS3 experts still had to be organized. In a first step, the relevant experts were given the opportunity to make himself/herself acquainted with the RIS3 strategy via the following tools:

- 1) Reading of the strategy papers
- 2) Participation in relevant information events, like the 5th Technology and Industrial Policy Conference of MV
- 3) Exchange with the leaders mainly responsible for the relevant future fields

Out of this introductory stage, the following steps towards the local product „Jour Fixe“ derived:

- 1) **Part 1 of the OCT:** A first outline of the RIS3 strategy to the entire team in the context of a Jour Fixe, where the expert summarized the information in a clear and comprehensive way and focused on those aspects that are most relevant for the institution's work.
- 2) **Part 2 of the OCT:** Publication of a short summary on the internet ([www.rostock-technology.com/foerderprogramme.html](http://www.rostock-technology.com/foerderprogramme.html)) as well as of a short presentation on the institution's internal server. This ensures that the staff members can re-read the basic information on demand, which gives more confidence when working with the topic.
- 3) **Part 3 of the OCT:** Development of an outline plus Powerpoint presentation for new staff members, to be used in personal introductions, but also in the Jour Fixe to be used as suitable and necessary materials for refreshing the knowledge in the team.
- 4) **Part 4 of the OCT:** First discussion in the internal working teams on how to integrate relevant RIS3 activities into the daily work, which also includes the communication and cooperation with the external target group. Identification of relevant communication channels and occasions.
- 5) **Part 5 of the OCT:** Increased awareness about RIS related activities among the staff members of the institution to facilitate the integration into the institution's future work (based on the decision to re-consider the RIS as principle as well as latest relevant developments in regular intervals) and integration of the topic into the institution internal working exchanges and day-to-day communication.

In a final step, the ongoing perception of latest RIS3 developments was structured, based on the understanding, that the RIS3 experts remain active as „communication interface“ here. For this, these experts have been actively invited to present latest developments on relevant events and team meetings respectively to report about this on the Jour Fixe on demand. The discussion of latest RIS3 relevant activities became one of the frequently checked agenda items in 2016 and has remained it since then. This has resulted into a general increase of related job activities of the staff members and a stable awareness of the relevant regional developments in the entire team.