



Integration of Baltic Small and Medium-Sized Ports in Regional Innovation Strategies on Smart Specialisation (RIS3)

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Abstract. Small and medium-sized ports in the Baltic Sea Region experience to echo themselves in a dilemma to participate and utilize of governance innovation policies such as Smart Specialisation. The Smart Specialisation policy introduced by the European Commission supports regional economic and innovation development focusing on regional strength through selection of defined priorities, offering smaller ports an opportunity to overcome their dilemma. Currently, all European regions are monitoring and evaluating their performances alongside with the Smart Specialisation policy to make adjustments for the upcoming funding period. The Blue Growth concept entitles a large contribution to reach the emphasized goals and thus, ports can be an important actor and key driver for a sustainable and green future development. Hence, this paper analyses the current significance of smaller ports in Baltic Sea NUTS-2 regions reflected in the individual RIS3 maritime and / or logistic priorities as well as Blue Growth sub-sectors from the funding period 2014 – 2020 to contribute to the future design of RIS3. Yielded results will illustrate whether regional governances are aware of the potentials small ports bring up to their economies with consideration to Smart Specialisation, Green Deal and Blue Growth Strategies and how RIS3 might effects small port performances.

Keywords: Small and medium-sized ports, Baltic Sea, Blue Growth, Blue Economy, Smart Specialisation, RIS3, Regional development

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1. Introduction

The Baltic Sea is one of the top seas worldwide regarding maritime traffic [1], putting seaports into focus as regional nodes and gateways for economic and social interactions, thus, playing a key role in distribution and transportation of goods and services. Nevertheless, Small and Medium-Sized Ports (SMSPs) recognize a specific role for regional development as well as partly individual challenges and obstacles in the maritime sector. However, besides the growing economic pressure, SMSPs lack on policy conformity and compliance [2] when it comes to governmental strategy exploitation such as the Regional Innovation Strategies on Smart Specialisation (RIS3). This especially includes disadvantageous positioning for fund allocation [3].

In line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the RIS3 approach was launched as one key pillar for regional economic development as well as growth policy thinking [4]. As an instrument to enable efficient fund distribution among European regions [5], this governance innovation policy approach contributes to Smart Growth, Sustainable Development Goals of the UN and the recently launched European Green Deal [6-8]. The core elements of RIS3 implementation are the individually developed and implemented strategies determining the key priorities of a NUTS-2 region, which are currently elaborated and revised for the upcoming funding period [9] using gained experiences and knowledge [10].