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# AGENDA

## Smart Specialisation and Regional Excellence: Strengthening Centres of Vocational Excellence

23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2026 – 10:00-11:45 CET – ONLINE EVENT

**Registration link:** <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1ZVcacN0Rc6h-4E3cs1KBg>

The **ETF Network for Excellence (ENE)** brings together Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and key stakeholders committed to innovation, quality, and systemic impact in vocational education and training (VET).

**Smart Specialisation (S3)**, a policy approach developed by the **European Commission**, helps regions identify their unique strengths and focus investments where they can achieve the greatest impact. It encourages regions to:

- **Identify regional strengths and opportunities** – assess the industries, skills, and technologies with the highest potential for growth and innovation.
- **Engage stakeholders in strategic planning** – bring together education providers, businesses, research institutions, and policymakers to align priorities.
- **Focus resources for maximum impact** – target funding and programmes to sectors or activities where the region can become internationally competitive.
- **Monitor and adapt progress** – use indicators and evaluation tools to track results and refine strategies over time.

For Centres of Vocational Excellence, S3 provides a practical way **to link vocational education, innovation, and regional economic development**, ensuring that training, research, and industry needs reinforce each other. It also helps CoVEs to **secure funding, build partnerships, and strengthen their regional impact in a strategic and measurable way**.

### Focus of the Session

This session will explore:

- Introduction to Smart Specialisation strategies and methodology
- Platforms, tools, and governance approaches for S3 in EU and neighbouring regions
- Regional cooperation and practical experiences from North Macedonia
- Opportunities for cross-regional collaboration and capacity building

The objective is to inspire ENE members with practical examples and strategic reflections that can inform their own implementation of Smart Specialisation within CoVEs.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Owner</b>
10:00 – 10:10	<b>Introduction to the webinar</b>	Susanne Nielsen, ETF Expert
10:10 – 10:25	<b>Smart Specialisation Concept</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Smart Specialisation concept</li> <li>• Implementation of Smart Specialisation in the EU E&amp;N</li> <li>• Platforms and tools for implementing Smart Specialisation in the EU E&amp;N and opportunities for cross-regional collaboration</li> </ul>	Nikola Radovanovic, ETF Expert
10:25 – 10:40	<b>Unlocking Smart Specialisation through Skills: From Evidence to Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ETF methodology as a coherent progression</li> <li>• Overview of findings and next steps, example from Montenegro</li> </ul>	Pirita Vuorinen, ETF Expert
10:40 – 10:55	<b>Transformative innovation and challenge based-approaches complementary to Smart Specialisation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformative innovation policies</li> <li>• Place-based and challenge-based approaches</li> <li>• Open discovery processes</li> <li>• Possible role of CoVEs</li> </ul>	Ramojus Reimeris, JRC Expert
10:55 – 11:10	<b>Implementation of Smart Specialisation in North Macedonia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main achievements and challenges of the Smart Specialisation approach in North Macedonia</li> <li>• Current developments in the implementation process</li> </ul>	Ksenija Hadji Toseva Avramcheva, Assistant Head of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Education and Science, North Macedonia
11:10 – 11:25	<b>S3-CoVE related initiatives in the case of North Macedonia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reskilling and upskilling as an initiative within Smart Specialisation</li> <li>• Lessons learned and opportunities for Centres of Excellence and vocational providers</li> </ul>	Radmil Polenakovikj, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia
11:25 – 11:45	<b>Q&amp;A / Discussion</b> - Sharing experiences and challenges	ETF team