

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate distribution

### **Mobilising European partnerships towards innovative and competitive economy**

Riga, 13 February 2015 – Opened by Latvian Minister for Education and Science Mārīte Seile, the conference on “Smart Specialisation Strategy: New Approaches for Partnerships among Education, Research and Industry in Regions” on 12-13 February pushed forward the new innovation policy on smart specialisation within the European Union (EU). With Europe being on the track to raise its competitiveness, nearly 200 experts discussed in Riga such issues as catching up with innovation leaders, small countries mobilising their potential, increasing effective cooperation among industry, research and higher education, as well as solutions for tackling brain drain and skills gaps to enable brain gain for economic growth.

Developed since 2009, the Smart Specialisation Strategy is the key factor for competitiveness in regions. Through selecting and supporting a limited number of priority areas for knowledge-based investments, a country or region can rally stakeholders and resources to increase their competitive advantages.

“We had the opportunity to see how Smart Specialisation Strategies can be put in practice and how European Partnerships can be implemented,” said Ms Seile. “Local and regional authorities have the key role in implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy and delivering on its promises. Creating growth and jobs depends so much on our ambition and commitment at EU, national, regional and local level. I am convinced that our regions and cities do have this ambition.”

"This Riga Conference could not come in a more timely moment. Most Cohesion Policy programmes are already in place, so regions facing similar challenges can take the opportunity to exchange experience, learn from each other and bring home new ideas. I firmly believe that the cumulated experience of almost 300 European regions can be the starting point for thousands of valuable projects, which can make difference on the ground in terms of growth and jobs for people," said Corina Crețu, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy.

Organised by the Ministry of Education and Science and the State Education Development Agency, the conference brought together participants from 17 countries. This was the first conference under the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU addressing research and innovation issues. Upcoming Riga-based event covering research and innovation – the Plenary Meeting of the European Research Area Committee and the Research Working Party – will take place on 16-17 April.

Having declared Competitive Europe as an overarching priority for the agenda of the first half of 2015, the Latvian Presidency has pointed at a need to bridge research and innovation through fostering networks without barriers and full exploitation of the potential of national research and innovation systems.

**Conference website:** [www.ris3riga2015.lv](http://www.ris3riga2015.lv)

**Photos from the conference are available here:**

[https://www.flickr.com/photos/izglitibas\\_ministrija/sets/72157650785769061/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/izglitibas_ministrija/sets/72157650785769061/)

#### **Contacts:**

Ieva Nora Firere, Senior Communication Expert

Ministry of Education and Science

Phone: +371 67047784; +371 29146366

E-mail: [ieva.firere@izm.gov.lv](mailto:ieva.firere@izm.gov.lv)

[www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv)