

Lot 1 Input Paper

Workshop 5: ERA call for Innovation Agencies

1 Introduction

In the effort to launch a joint call for national innovation policy agency collaboration in October 2005, the European Commission endorsed the decision to carry out a policy review workshop in which government bodies involved in the design, management and/or implementation of policy programmes will have the opportunity to discuss areas and opportunities where joint programmes may be developed.

The main tasks in this exercise will be:

- To discuss present trans-national collaboration innovation programmes in Europe
- To investigate some of the most innovation-related ERA-NET projects existing today
- To identify interesting topics for future collaboration in this area

This paper has been written to provide some of the analytical input to this workshop. The paper is partly based on results obtained in a questionnaire based survey that was undertaken early in 2005, and which was designed to facilitate the identification of the relevant institutional structures in European countries, relevant policy practitioners, as well as current developments with respect to cross-national collaboration. 25 Trend Chart country correspondents provided information about the situation in their respective countries.¹

2 On policy learning and cooperation

2.1 Policy learning

Learning is as important in the public sector as it is in companies. Policy makers also learn and innovate, and like company engineers and researchers, they need to get access to relevant information in order to build the necessary competences.

The Nordic GoodNIP project² defined policy learning as “the process underlying any changes in the political ‘behaviour’ of an agency, its portfolio of policy instruments (institutions, programmes, funding schemes, regulatory frameworks etc.), objectives and management for or of these, their constitution and the relative weight of instruments in the portfolio.”

¹ Information was provided on the situation in the following countries: Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The replies are available at the workshop home page at http://trendchart.cordis.lu/ws_overview.cfm?id=5.

² J P. Koch and J. Oksanen (eds): Good Practices in Nordic Innovation Policies, Part 2: *Innovation Policy Trends and Rationalities*, Oslo 2003 www.step.no/goodnip

Obviously, such learning processes go far beyond the application of research results in policy practice.

GoodNIP suggested four generic modes of policy learning:

- *Explicit conceptual delivery and acquisition*
This mode entails an explicit and direct interaction between the policy making agency and an external institution, normally a research institution or a consultancy.
- *Benchmarking and other indicator-based or best-practice approaches*
At one end of the spectrum are formalised indicator based reporting systems, at the other “one shot” or sporadic assessments, evaluations and analytical studies.
- *Learning networks*
Policy agencies are often involved in permanent or long-term networks where a primary objective is the sharing of information or other conceptual resources among its members. Such networks may include individual experts’ formal and informal professional networks, long term institutional networks, dialogue with the members of the constituency the relevant policies address, intra- or inter-ministerial networks, and international networks (e.g. EU and OECD-based working groups).
- *Continuous improvement*
There are also informal processes and learning by doing, which generates capabilities and competences that are operational, “tacit” and experience-based. These processes and capabilities are shaped by the impact of an evolving policy culture, including the ministerial or departmental perception of the organisation's policy agenda, dominating rationalities or world-views, general political objectives, and divisions of labour between ministries, departments and agencies.

The policy maker must also know the workings of the political system and the relevant policy instruments. Moreover, this knowledge must go far beyond an understanding of organisational charts and formal procedure. They must develop an intimate knowledge of the cultural aspects of the political and administrative environment, and learn what is possible within the present administrative structure and political context.

The EU 4th Framework Programme project RISE³ interviewed policy makers about policy learning. The policy makers expressed a need for

- An understanding of the different cultures of industry, universities/university colleges and industrial institutes. Work experience from the respective organisation types was mentioned as a major contributor to such competences,
- Knowledge about relevant science and technology,
- Factual knowledge about the relevant industrial sector (structure, organisation etc.),

³ RISE was a EU TSER project on research & technology organisations in the service economy led by Mike Hales, CENTRIM, cp.
<http://centrim.bus.brighton.ac.uk/open/we/do/proj/rise/riseindex.htm>

- Awareness of what is currently going on in research, industry and policy development,
- Knowledge about what it is possible to do and how to do it (available instruments and the limitations inherent in the policy area, system or technologies),
- Experience from large development projects,
- An inclination to act, even if one have a partial and imperfect understanding of all the dimensions of the topic at hand,
- An insight into the policy development in other countries,
- An insight into the present interests of managers on various levels in the relevant industries or parts of the system.

The major source of competence building is day-to-day practice and collaboration with colleagues and other people involved in the processes of policy development. Hence both GoodNIP and RISE respondents mentioned networks and personal contacts as the most important sources of information and knowledge. However, from these studies it seemed that contact building primarily is an individual activity with little managerial input. Hence there seems to be a general lack of strategies for policy learning and networking in many ministries and policy agencies.

Moreover, collaboration is also partly based on individual contacts and ad-hoc efforts. There is in fact nothing wrong with such networking. Personal contacts will always play an important role in policy learning. However, if learning is anchored in individuals only and not the organisation as such, the organisation becomes very vulnerable. If the employee leaves, the organisation may loose touch with the relevant networks. Because of this there is a need for more formalised networks of policy learning and innovation.

2.2 International policy learning

Given the overarching goals of sustainable growth and welfare development, policy learning is important. However, much policy development takes place on the national arena, which requires an intimate knowledge of the peculiarities of the local innovation system and the national governance structure. Political systems differ widely not only as regards organisational structures and regulation, but also as regards the “tacit” dimension of policy learning: all the different cultural rules that are not written down on paper but that nevertheless shape policy development.

One could argue that these local characteristics make it impossible to learn from policy makers in other countries, as the uniqueness of the national system requires a special analysis and local solutions. There is some truth in this. The national innovation systems and the accompanying policy systems do differ as regards industrial and organisational structures and cultural traits. Strictly speaking one cannot talk about “best practice” as what is “best practice” in one nation state can fail miserably when implemented in another country due to different framework conditions.

That being said, studies like GoodNIP, RISE and MONIT⁴ clearly show that European policy makers do face common challenges. Moreover, they do report that

⁴ www.step.no/monit, see below.

they learn much from taking part in international collaboration. This is partly caused by the fact that by discussion policy development with colleagues from other countries they are forced to look upon their own policy system from another perspective. They suddenly see alternatives to phenomena that originally seemed self-evident and unavoidable.

And even if they cannot copy and paste a policy or a policy instrument developed for another innovation system, they can be inspired by it and try to adapt similar measures for their own country. If there are no “best practices”, there are certainly “good practices”.

Moreover, in a globalised economy there is a need for trans-national cooperation for the solving of international problems, and trans-national policies and policy-instruments must be based on trans-national policy learning. The ERA-NET is developed exactly to meet such challenges.

2.3 Mapping of collaboration efforts

ERA-NET⁵ distinguishes four types of collaboration efforts between innovation agencies, ranging from the sharing of information to the implementation of joint, trans-national research activities (box 1 below).

Box 1: Types of collaboration efforts

- **A: Systematic exchange of information and good practises on existing programmes.**

For example: Improving communication between agencies of different Member States, trust-building among programme managers from similar scientific and technological areas, etc.

- **B: Identification and analysis of common strategic issues.**

For example: Identification and analysis of research activities carried out by different programmes in different Member States and define opportunities for the design of future multinational schemes, identification and analysis of barriers that hinder trans-national cooperation activities, exploration of possibilities of setting up common evaluation systems, identification of mutual complementarities, etc.

- **C: Development of joint activities between national or regional programmes.** For example: Development of mechanisms for clustering nationally/regionally funded research projects, development of schemes for joint training activities, development of schemes for mutual opening of facilities or laboratories, development of common schemes for programme monitoring and evaluation, development of schemes for personnel exchange

- **D: Implementation of joint trans-national research activities.**

For example: Setting up a common strategy, a joint work programme, pilot activities, common (mutually open) or joint calls for proposals; a common multinational evaluation system and a common plan for dissemination of results or experiences; etc.

The questionnaire that was sent out to the national Trend Chart Correspondents used this typology as the basis. The correspondents were asked to provide information whether there are “any collaboration initiatives between innovation agencies in your

⁵ For more information on ERA-NET, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/coordination/era-net_en.html

country with one or more agencies in other countries” of the four specified types (A-D). As a follow-up, the correspondents were asked to provide more detailed information about up to three of the most significant examples of collaboration of these types.

The concluding questions in the questionnaire asked the correspondents to provide detailed institutional and personal information regarding candidates that would have an interest in developing collaborations with other countries or regions using the ERA-NET scheme.

It should be noted that this survey does not give a complete picture of these types of inter-agency collaboration in Europe, as there may be measures that have not been captured. This is partly caused by the fact that these measures are not normally covered by the Trend Chart database. Moreover, the correspondent’s local sources of information may not know about all relevant measures in this area.

It should also be noted that some countries give the responsibility for developing and administering innovation policy instruments to one agency. Others divide the tasks between several agencies. The division of labour between agencies and ministries may also vary. Hence, counting the number of measures or innovation agencies will only give you a partial impression of what is really going on. To a certain extent the same function might be covered by ministries, and they are not normally included in this survey.

Moreover, there will also be measures that do not fit well within our typology or that bridge several types of interaction. Hence these figures and examples should be used as sources of information and inspiration, and not read as a final analysis of trans-national instruments for innovation policy cooperation and learning in Europe.

In the following we use the results obtained to describe some main patterns of existing collaborations between innovation agencies in EU countries. In section 4, we present some more specific information on the examples of significant collaborations that have been reported. We draw some conclusions of our analysis in section 5.

3 Existing collaborations between agencies in the EU countries

3.1 How common are national innovation agency cross-border collaborations?

As a simple way of characterizing what kinds of collaboration is taking place between innovation agencies in Europe today, we can take stock of to what extent innovation agencies are engaged in the four diverse types of collaboration efforts specified in the questionnaire sent to Trend Chart correspondents.

The 25 answers obtained indicate that while national innovation agencies in 20 of the 25 countries included (80%) do share information with innovation agencies in other countries (this is what we call type A collaboration), agencies in 15 countries (60%) are engaged in efforts to identify and analyse common strategic issues (type B collaboration).⁶

⁶ Note that some countries may have more than one innovation agency.

When it comes to efforts to implement joint innovation activities (type D), 10 (40%) report that this is going on, while only 6 (24%) report that the national innovation agency is active in developing joint activities between programmes (bridging similar projects across national or regional borders, type C collaboration).

On this basis, we may conclude that innovation sharing is common, and joint efforts to analyse challenges are also fairly common. Most agencies however, do not engage in cross-national program efforts, and only one out of four are engaged in trying to bridge national efforts across national borders. Given that this kind of collaboration is important, there is obviously significant room for improvement.

The situation is illustrated in figure 1.

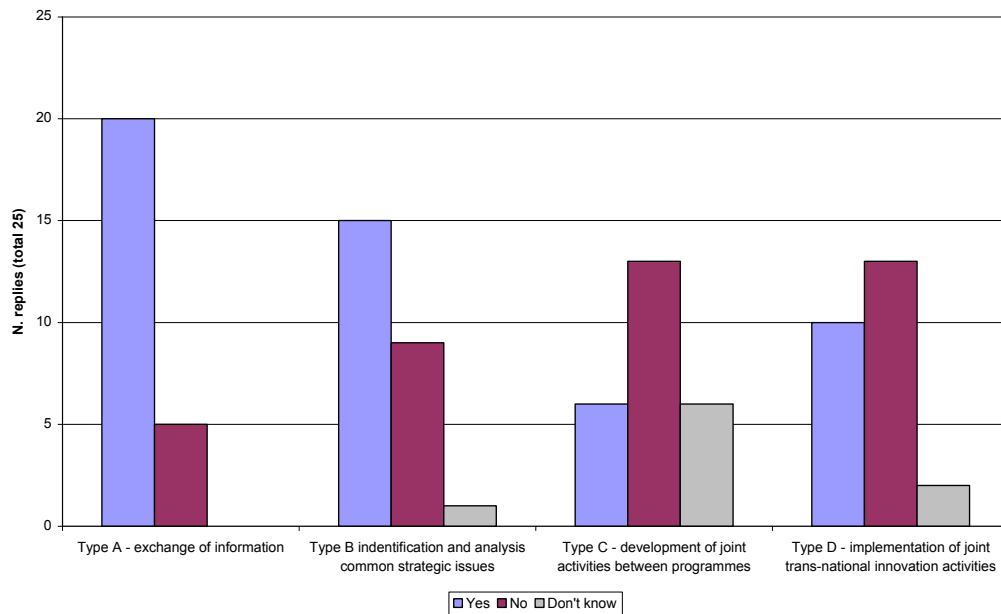


Figure 1: Current collaboration activities between innovation agencies in Europe as reported by national Trend Chart correspondents.⁷

Although collaboration is fairly common, we do not know whether international collaboration is a common and recurring feature in the activities of innovation agencies, or if such collaboration happens only sporadically.

We gain a clearer understanding of this by looking a bit more closely into the information provided in the questionnaires. We will summarise some important parts of this information in the following sections, pointing out what kind of organisations are involved in such collaboration, and, thereafter what the specific content of such collaborations appear to be.

⁷ The correspondents were asked to answer the following question for each type (A,B,C,D): “Are there any collaborative initiatives between innovation agencies in your county with one or more agencies in other countries (this does not include university-university collaborations, researchers exchange programmes, European regional networks such as INTERREG, IRC, TRIPS, and so on).

3.2 Which organisations are involved in collaborations?

Looking at the responses, it is quite clear that the agencies listed as national innovation agencies do not make up a homogeneous group. Countries are diverse, their innovation systems are varied, and they are not equal in terms of science, technology and innovation capabilities.

There are huge differences with respect to how large and resource rich countries are. It should come as no surprise that Lichtenstein, Luxembourg and Cyprus have limited institutional systems for innovation policy. Several other countries, such as Romania, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, the Slovak Republic and Estonia appear to be in the process of developing such institutions. In these cases, national innovation agencies may be lacking, or their functions may be taken care of by sections of larger institutions are acting as such agencies.

In several of the larger countries, the innovation agency function is differentiated and there are a number of diverse public institutions endowed with the mission to promote innovation, commercialization of technology and science, regional and business development. In Italy and Germany for instance, the function is distributed among several agencies for regional development, as well as among some national agencies. On the other hand, some countries have strong ministries that incorporate the innovation agency function. This appears to be the case in countries such as the UK, the Netherlands and Spain.

However, there are also several countries with simpler institutional structures, which do have separate public organisations dedicated to the promotion of innovation, thus playing the innovation agency role. This appears to be the case in countries such as Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Slovakia, Poland, Estonia and Switzerland.

In some of these countries the role of the innovation agency is being developed into a more commercially oriented service providing institution, funded wholly or partially by public sources. This is for instance the case with the AWS in Austria.

In some countries the innovation promotion function is handled by institutions that are mainly oriented towards the promotion of science. In some smaller countries, such as Sweden and Norway, there is an overlap of innovation policy responsibilities between research council(s) and the innovation agency.

4 Description and analysis of current collaboration schemes

The simple counting of what kinds of collaborations are found in different countries does conceal a somewhat more complex underlying reality. For instance, it appears from the answers to the questionnaire that the collaboration forms A-D are not always as easy to separate as one might believe. Similar collaboration efforts are at times placed under diverse headings. An example of this is the TAFTIE arrangement, which have been placed under categories A, B and C by different correspondents.

In the following, we will use the ERA-NET typology of collaboration, and in addition take into consideration what character the collaboration arrangements have, in particular in terms of content, number of partners, and nature of links.

4.1 Policy learning through ad-hoc meetings and other arrangements

As pointed out, the most common type of trans-national collaboration among innovation agencies is focusing on the sharing of information. An important part of such collaborations appear to have their basis in situations where policy makers search specific information about what they see as more advanced countries, in order to learn from them. We see a number of examples of this in the data, and it is interesting to note that Finland clearly has a status as a country from which other countries facing development challenges can learn important lessons.

Based on the authors' interaction with European policy makers and innovation policy agencies and ministries, we have reason to believe that trans-national ad hoc meetings and study travels are much more common than the material gathered by the Trend Chart correspondents might imply. This is probably partly caused by the fact that some correspondents have chosen not to include such interaction, and partly because the ad hoc nature of these meetings means that no one has access to the whole picture. Such meetings are held on the political level and by civil servants in ministries and agencies.

In some cases embassy science advisers or technology attaches may serve as intelligence gatherers and local contact points.

Examples:

Estonia and the Netherlands report information exchange visits, where the objective is to learn from the experience of others. Hence recently Minister Van Gennip of the Ministry of Economic Affairs visited TEKES in Finland to learn from the Finnish experience. Such visits may be facilitated by ministries, innovation and research agencies or attaches at the relevant embassies.

Together with the government of the Netherlands Poland has established a pre-accession programme in order to strengthen government policy and institutional cohesion for enhancing the innovation capabilities of Polish companies. Poland has also established bilateral cooperation with the Finnish ministry responsible for enterprises development, and new bilateral contacts have been recently established with Innovation Norway, the Norwegian innovation policy agency.

There seems to be no systematic exchange and/or official co-operation between the Slovak National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (NADSME) and innovation agencies in other EU member countries. There is, however, information exchange in informal meetings and with Czech partners in particular.

In the Nordic countries, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and innovation agencies in Finland (TEKES) and Sweden (VINNOVA) have regular meetings aimed at programme management benchmarking and exchange of good practice.

There has been collaboration between policy makers from the BMWA and BMBF ministries in Germany with policy makers from France on a possible introduction of an indirect financial promotion measure for young, R&D intensive firms. The French government introduced such a measure in its innovation Plan for 2004. In a similar

way Norwegian policy makers visited countries like the Netherlands and Canada before implementing its SkatteFUNN R&D tax incentive.

4.2 Information sharing and policy learning through projects and programmes

The most common forms of innovation agency collaboration are through specific programmes and projects. These encompass both information sharing and joint comparative analysis (collaboration types A and B). In such efforts, innovation agencies often finance research efforts undertaken by consultants or research institutes, and the resulting reports enter into the policy learning and policy making processes.

The dividing lines between policy think tanks, research groups, and executive policy agencies are not always easy to draw, and in many cases research and development projects involve a significant element of policy learning.

It is clear that a number of projects financed by the EU Commission constitute important arenas for cross country collaboration between policy agencies and their allies. There are numerous cases like this in the material.

Examples:

The Nordic countries report on collaborations on policy related projects financed by the Nordic Innovation Centre⁸, an organisation under the Nordic Council of Ministers. One project, Good Practices in Nordic Innovation Policies, GoodNIP, has given an overview over Nordic innovation policy trends, rationalities and instruments and provided concrete advice on policy learning.⁹ A second project, called Foreign Takeovers in the Nordic Countries, FOTON,¹⁰ has analysed how foreign takeovers of firms in the Nordic countries affect local innovation capabilities, and how this issue is approached by policy makers. These projects represent a mix between inter-agency collaboration and commissioned research. Among the participants, Icelandic RANNIS, Finland's VTT and Sweden's VINNOVA and ITPS are all analytically oriented government agencies, while NIFU STEP in Norway and the Technological University of Denmark are research institutions

Latvia's Trend Chart correspondent reports on participation in the EU 5th Framework programme project "Strategies for the promotion of knowledge-based business in Latvia" (2002-2004) (RIS).¹¹ The project was aimed at developing a regional innovation strategy in Latvia in order to increase the number of knowledge-based SMEs and improving their competitiveness. Partners were the Latvian Investment and Development Agency, the Latvian Technological Centre, the Development Council of the Riga Region, the City of Stockholm and the German State of Rheinland-Pfalz.

⁸ www.nordicinnovation.net

⁹ www.step.no/goodnip

¹⁰ www.step.no/foton

¹¹ trendchart.cordis.lu/tc_article.cfm?ID=609&NEWSID=8

4.3 Business development and regional development through projects and programmes

Some targeted development efforts must be considered more practically oriented development projects than policy learning collaborations as such, and they are definitely much more than simple information sharing exercises. Still, these efforts will normally lead to policy learning.

As in the information sharing efforts, the need to catch up with leading countries may be a strong motive, and such efforts may be based on a mutually recognized asymmetry, where one partner has more resources and competence than the other partner(s).

In other cases, the characteristic feature is that the partners involved are neighbours, or part of the same region. Collaborations may be of Type B (joint analysis) or D (joint R&D or business development efforts). As we will see however, most of the type B efforts will be in the form of projects, which we will discuss further in a separate chapter below.

Examples:

In Poland, the Mining & Matching initiative¹² aims to establish international cooperation between Poland and the US as well as increasing the transfer of new technologies. The programme is prepared by the Warsaw-based Fire Foundation and is to facilitate the entry of Polish products, promotion of Polish inventions on the American market and procurement of modern projects from the USA.

ZENON¹³ is a joint programme of scientific and technological cooperation between Cyprus and France included in the Framework Programme of RPF for the period 2003-2005. It is designed for research and technology organisations or institutes and enterprises that wish to implement joint research projects or to develop permanent networks of cooperation between research and technology organisations of the two countries.

In the Nordic countries NORDITE 2005-2010¹⁴ is a technology programme open to Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish research organisations, initiated by TEKES, the Research Council of Norway and Vinnova.

Ireland reports on the establishment of a Cross-Border Business and Innovation Centre (BIC),¹⁵ a new initiative located in Derry and Letterkenny, which is intended to enhance economic development in the Irish North-West region. BIC provides a regional structure of support to innovative SMEs and entrepreneurs. It will facilitate the development of company-to-company cross-border trade, joint ventures, cross-border clusters and joint delivery of innovation focused programmes.

¹² <http://www.innowacje.org.pl/>

¹³ http://trendchart.cordis.lu/tc_policy_information_fiche.cfm?id=441

¹⁴ <http://www.tekes.fi/english/programmes/nordite/nordite.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.westbic.ie/news-cross-border-business-innovation-centre-officially-launched.html>

4.4 Collaboration in permanent networks

In some cases of cross-border collaboration with innovation agency involvement, more partners are involved, and forms of collaboration emerge that may be stable over considerable periods of time. ERA-NET is in itself both a network and a network creating mechanism. Some more details on ERA-NET are provided below, and several country correspondents have chosen to report on such cases of collaboration.

Another very specific network with relevance here is the Association for Technology Implementation in Europe, TAFTIE, in which innovation agencies from all over Europe are partners. Some more information on TAFTIE is also provided below, as a large number of correspondents reported on the participation in this organization.

Examples:

Sweden reports on taking part in the European RTD Evaluation Network – a network of innovation policy actors from EU-member states and associated countries.¹⁶ The network has 29 members from 28 countries. Examples of member organizations are: VINNOVA (SE), The Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI (GE), Tekes (FI), The Research Council of Norway, and Technology Economics, Statistics and Evaluation DTI (UK). The Network, which was established in 1997, aims at enhancing co-operation between the national RTD¹⁷ evaluation units/agencies or agencies concerned with evaluation and the relevant Commission Services. The Network is a forum of discussion and analysis of good practice in evaluation methodology, use of indicators and measurement of impact of research results. Attention is focused, mainly, on publicly funded RTD, but experience and know-how from industry is discussed.

There are also quite a few policy learning initiatives targeting specific regions. The Baltic region may serve as an example:

BASTIC, the Baltic Association of Science/Technology Parks and Innovation Centres,¹⁸ was founded in 1996. The main goal is to bring together the corresponding institutions in the Baltic Sea States, to exchange information, to develop joint activities e.g., the annual conference “Baltic Dynamics”.

This is not the only approach to Baltic innovation policy cooperation. The University of Rostock and its partners of the Gruenderflair Network recently invited participants to the first conference of the Baltic Forum for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.¹⁹

The Baltic Development Forum²⁰ along with a number of its public and private partners is inviting key stakeholders from business, politics, research and innovation agencies in the Baltic Sea region with the aim of enabling better coordination of existing policy initiatives in the so-called Baltic Sea Initiative 2010. The goal is to define joint ambitions for the region, and of formulating a strategy and an action agenda for strengthening the region’s competitiveness and innovative potential.

¹⁶ http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/monitoring/rtd_evalnet.htm

¹⁷ RTD: research, technology and development.

¹⁸ <http://www.innovation.lv/bastic/>

¹⁹ www.gruenderflair.de/balticforum05

²⁰ www.bdforum.org/sideindhold.asp

Moreover, the Nordic Council of Ministers has recently established the Northern Dimension Working Group on Innovation, where policy makers from the Nordic and Baltic countries (including Germany, Poland and Russia) are to discuss innovation policy strategies and measures. Both ministries and agencies are involved. This initiative is part of a larger plan for Nordic innovation policy cooperation.²¹

MAP-TN²² is a pan-European network of research management professionals sponsored by the STRATA programme of the European Commission. MAP stands for Multi-Actors and Multi-Measures Programmes, which are RTDI funding programmes with a focus on science-industry cooperation. The network brings together MAP administrators and experts from complementary organisations from 10 countries to exchange experience and knowledge. One activity was an in-depth study about management procedures of "mature" MAPs. The outputs from MAP-TN are intended to help guide RTDI officials in the Commission and in the member states when thinking about the development and management of MAPs. This should contribute to the emergence of common standards and good practice.

It should be noted that the STRATA in general aims to promote dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and other societal actors on general science, technology and innovation (STI) policy issues of European relevance. This activity supports the establishment of networks and expert groups to improve the European STI policy development process at regional, national and international level, as well as interactions with other policy fields. Accompanying measures to support the achievement of these objectives are part of the STRATA toolkit, too.

The Trend Chart correspondents have also reported on other joint trans-national innovation activities. Hungary is for instance planning activities with German and Russian counterparts. The Netherlands reports a Dutch-Flemish research programme in the field of speech technology.

Permanent organisations for policy learning and cooperation

TAFTIE²³ is the association of 17 national and regional technology and innovation programme management organisations from 16 European countries. TAFTIE's membership is made up of organisations which have responsibility for their country's national innovation programmes. The association allows the national organisations to learn best practice from an analysis of how other member organisations run their affairs. It also enables them to co-operate at a European level. TAFTIE's members support companies, especially SMEs, and research organisations with advice and financial assistance to help them translate technology into business success.

The OECD has also working groups involved in innovation policy learning and development, most notably the TIP group under the Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy (CSTP).²⁴ The TIP-group (Working Group on Innovation and Technology Policy) is made up of government officials responsible for science, technology and innovation and meets twice a year. The mandate of the TIP is to conduct analytical research on the links between innovation and growth, including

²¹ www.nordicinnovation.net/_img/the_book_of_innovation_-_short_version.pdf

²² www.map-network.net

²³ www.taftie.org/

²⁴ www.oecd.org/document/35/0,2340,en_2649_33703_1895587_1_1_1_1,00.html

productivity and job creation, and to evaluate national science and technology support systems in order to facilitate benchmarking and the identification of best practice policies. Admittedly a majority of CSTP and TIP delegates come from ministries, but innovation and research agency representatives also take part.

It should be noted that the OECD is currently undertaking a special study on monitoring and implementing horizontal innovation policy, where the objective is to develop national capabilities in strategic management of a coherent innovation policy. This involves some key government ministries as well as national agencies responsible for funding projects and managing innovation oriented programmes and initiatives.²⁵

Finally there are non-governmental organizations that contribute to the development of innovation policies and inter-agency collaboration. The mission of INSME, the International Network for SMEs,²⁶ is -- for instance -- to stimulate transnational cooperation and public and private partnership in the field of innovation and technology transfer to SMEs. The focus is on policy makers, intermediaries and relevant research organizations.

4.5 ERA-NET

The European Research Area (ERA) has as its core message the need to overcome the traditional fragmentation of research efforts in the EU. The Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6) introduced a specific programme called "Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area" from which a new initiative – the ERA-NET scheme – is financed

The ERA-NET scheme focuses on the coordination and cooperation of national and regional programmes and aims at national and regional programme makers and managers. These are, in most countries, either working in the ministries or working in national funding agencies, which implement programmes on behalf of their governments.

Important objectives are to identify and analyse common strategic issues, to develop joint activities between national or regional programmes and to implement joint transnational research activities.

The Trend Chart correspondents reported on innovation agency participation in the following and other ERA-NET projects:

MATERA (the ERA-NET material project) is to create a cooperation platform for national and regional policy makers and managers involved in the field of materials science and engineering in Europe.

eTranet²⁷ is a consortium of national Government's agencies that is to increase the impact of national innovation and research policies in the field of ICT for traditional

²⁵ www.oecd-monit.net/tiki-index.php

²⁶ www.insme.org/page.asp

²⁷ www.etranel.net/

manufacturing industries. The consortium for promotion of research and co-operation in this area comprises 13 countries.

MNT ERA-NET is a network of European micro- and nanotechnology support programmes. The goal is the enhancement of the competitiveness of the European industry through co-ordination and co-operation of European support measures for such technologies. At the moment some 16 countries with 21 programmes participate in this ERA-NET.

In the ERA-NET project EraSME²⁸ 17 partners from 15 countries facilitate trans-national partnerships and promote joint actions. EraSME will network national and regional programmes promoting co-operation between SMEs and research organisations. The benefits of EraSME will consist of exchanging best practice between the participating programmes and organisations in key aspects of programme design and management, in order to raise programme efficiency and effectiveness.

NORFACE is a partnership between seven national research councils to increase co-operation in research and research policy in Europe. The seven partners involved are the research councils for the social sciences from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Over the five project years, the partners will engage in a range of initiatives designed to deliver new levels of co-operative research policy and practice. One of these activities is the NORFACE seminar series competition. While NORFACE receives core funding from the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme, under the ERA-NET scheme, the research activities in general and the seminar series competition in specific is funded by the partners.²⁹

5 Conclusions

The survey done for this workshop is not extensive enough to draw any final conclusion regarding the scope of current European innovation policy cooperation. Based on this survey, the studies mentioned above and the insight developed by the Trend Chart research team, it is, however, possible to make some tentative analysis.

Some important lessons are:

There seems to be extensive ad hoc policy learning activities in Europe, especially on a bilateral basis and in particular in the form of delegation visiting and studying policy measures and agencies in countries of interest. Hence the Germans go to France and the Norwegians to Britain to learn about tax incentives, and the Estonians go to Finland to learn about how to organise innovation policy activities.

Such visits serves as important sources of information and inspiration, but does not necessarily lay the foundation for more permanent cooperation. The ad hoc nature of such visits may mean that the learning gained from them is not integrated in the rest of the national innovation policy apparatus, meaning that what is learned by one ministry or agency department may stay in that department.

²⁸ www.era-sme.net/public/copy_of_index_html/document_view

²⁹ www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/researchfunding/NORFACE_Specification.asp

The most important arenas for continuous policy learning and cooperation in Europe are permanent organisations and working groups, in particular within the EU and OECD framework. These arenas serve several functions:

1. They serve as contact points for policy makers. They get to know persons that can be contacted for further information, collaboration and studies.
2. They give policy makers insight into other cultures and policy solutions. As one TIP delegate put it: “I learn more in the coffee breaks than during the meeting itself”.³⁰
3. They serve as clearing houses for innovation policy research and analysis. The secretariats in these organisations try to present research in a way that is more accessible to policy makers with a desperate lack of time. Moreover, policy makers may interact with researchers in analysts in these forums, so that both parties learn more about innovation, policy measures and policy development.
4. They give input to European and international innovation policy strategies and instrument development.

However, only a limited number of policy makers can take part in these forums, and their ability to transfer this learning to their colleagues back home is dependent on efficient inter-department or inter-agency co-operation, and – above all – the necessary time and resources. There may in particular be a gap between ministries on the one hand and innovation agencies on the other.

There are regional attempts at inter-agency collaboration across national borders, but not many of them. This may be caused by the lack of a tradition for such co-operation. Other factors may be that the sharing of resources in innovation and R&D programmes and measures is difficult due to national objectives (i.e. money allotted to a national agency is to be used for national purposes, making it hard for “foreigners to take part) or that much of the effort is channelled through the European Union. However, increasing globalisation and free trade has made policy maker more conscious of the need for trans-national cooperation, especially in regional areas that show clear trans-national industrial co-operation (like the Øresund-cooperation in the Malmö/Copenhagen area, the Tyrol networks in the Alpine region etc.).

The most important arena for inter-agency (as opposed to inter-ministerial) cooperation is clearly the ERA-NET. This network is truly a policy innovation and may contribute greatly to the development of not only a common European research policy, but also trans-national policy instruments. It is too early to make any conclusions regarding the failure or success of this initiative.

³⁰ Comment made to one of the authors of this paper.