



Executive Summary – Results COMPERA Survey

The objective of the COMPERA ERA-NET project is the creation of a sustainable network of programme administrations that fund Competence Research Centres (CRCs). CRCs are centres that aim to bridge the gap between technological and economic innovation by providing a collective environment for academics and industry, and a critical mass. Their activities are multiple: pooling of knowledge, creation of new knowledge by performing different types of research, training and dissemination of knowledge. COMPERA will inform the strategic decision-making process of programme owners and managers at pan-European level in the context of CRCs.

The first step in the COMPERA project (i.e. Work Package I: SHARE) was to ensure a common understanding between the partners through a structured exchange of information about the participating organisations, their programmes for CRCs and the existing CRCs in their country/region. For this purpose, two questionnaires were prepared: one for programme managers and one for the individual CRCs. An analysis of these questionnaires was presented and validated at the WPI workshop, which also included a brainstorming exercise on possible joint activities to be further selected and developed in the subsequent WPs. This report presents the results of the first analysis of the questionnaires and the conclusions of the workshop.

With one exception, the partner organisations in COMPERA are all governmental organisations. The responses in the questionnaires showed that most of them have engaged in some kind of international cooperation, either as long term relationships to international organisations, or as bilateral cooperation with an entity in another country.

The findings of the questionnaire reveal that programmes for CRCs usually have a top-down design based on strategic studies and political charts aimed at improving academia-industry technology transfer to increase competitiveness. Although the main drivers for the development of the programmes are industry related, industry is usually not formally involved in the actual design of the programme. Rather, the design of the programme is done mainly by academia and research councils, and the approval of the programme is in most cases the responsibility of government/governmental organisations.

The report also provides an analysis of the various aspects of these CRC programme management procedures, such as project proposal selection procedures, eligibility, project monitoring and evaluation and the programme evaluation itself. It was apparent that a large majority of the programmes use fixed cut-off date(s) for the applications and that most programmes have a single stage evaluation process using, mainly, national external evaluators. Consistent with the used definition of CRCs, most agencies fund various activities in their projects: different types of research (from basic to innovation), technology transfer, training and research infrastructure. Universities are accepted as eligible project partners in all but one programme, and most programmes also fund research institutes, non-profit organisations and industry. The size and minimum requirements of the project consortium seems to differ significantly between the various programmes represented in COMPERA. A consortium agreement between the project partners is required within all programmes.

Most COMPERA partners evaluate their programmes and all evaluate the ensuing projects (the CRCs). The main reasons for these evaluations, at both programme and project level, are: the effective and adequate use of funding, improved management and transparency. Although

the main drivers for setting up the programme are industry related, the most important criteria in the evaluations are scientific.

Future calls are planned 7 programmes represented in COMPERA, and 2 programmes plan for a follow-up of the current programme. Within COMPERA a wealth of knowledge and experiences on programme management for CRCs is brought together and this can be of particular use in the design of these new calls and programmes. One key objective of COMPERA, therefore is to make this individual knowledge available to the network. A first step has been made by the collection of the regional/national lessons learned in programme design, management and evaluation. The findings are presented in Chapter 5.

The CRCs are the products of the programmes represented in COMPERA and cooperation between the programmes will have direct consequences for such centres. An in-depth knowledge of the 264 existing CRCs embodied under the COMPERA banner is therefore essential for future joint activities. An analysis of the questionnaires for individual CRCs is presented in Chapter 6. Although the 264 CRCs differ markedly, general conclusions can be drawn:

- cooperation between science and industry is the main objective for all CRCs
- the majority of the research is applied (32 %)
- main target groups are SMEs and large companies, as well as universities and institutes
- main partners are universities, SMEs and large companies
- most are placed in specific locations
- most, 80 % have listed specified facilities in the questionnaire - mainly laboratories, human resources and knowledge. Equipment can, in most cases, be used by external parties
- half of the CRCs are permanent institutions. Excepting the Austrian CRCs, the other CRCs can be prolonged.

International cooperation between programmes is a key item of every ERA-NET. A first inventory of currently existing international cooperation in the represented programmes and the embodied CRCs was therefore an element of the questionnaires. It was concluded that a majority of the programmes for CRC (7 out of 12) are open for international partners and another 3 programmes plan to open up. The exact conditions and possibilities for the participation of international participants in the programmes was not investigated further in this questionnaire and needs to be clarified in the subsequent WPs. In addition, many CRCs already engage in some kind of international cooperation, ranging from participation in international research projects to official foreign partners in the CRCs. Some centres even have an offices/laboratory in other countries. Further investigation of these existing international cooperations is necessary to obtain more in-depth knowledge on the best practices, opportunities and barriers.

An analysis of these questionnaires was presented and validated by the partners in the WPI workshop, held on 22 February 2006 in Bilbao (Spain). During the workshop the needs and expectations of the partners towards COMPERA were further explored. It was concluded that these needs and expectations could be met at the level of:

- sharing experiences and identification of best practices
- identification of the CRC landscape
- increased internationalisation, enhanced PR and improved visibility of CRCs in the international arena through cooperation between programmes and specific measures at programme level.

In addition, the brainstorming session of the workshop identified several ideas for joint activities, that will be used as input for Work Package II (PREPARE).

The report is concluded with a concise overview of the scientific and innovation systems in every partner's region/country in terms of RTD-spending, existing funding operations, agents, other innovation measures and instruments. The summary reflects the RTD-landscape in which each partner operates.