

Programme coordination to boost innovation

“ *Fostering the interaction between the different actors in the innovation domain is one of the main challenges for Europe* ”

Many EU regions and Member States have set up centres designed to enhance co-operation between private enterprises, academia and other organisations involved in promoting innovation.

Until now there has been little formal interaction between these ‘competence research centres’. Now COMPERA is setting out to increase understanding between the programmes initiating and supporting these structures. It aims to design future transnational initiatives, and to prepare an institutional framework to provide for sustainable co-operation. The ERA-NET also hopes to inspire the creation of competence research centre programmes in countries and regions which do not have them.

Increasing awareness of the need to promote innovation has led many EU Member States and the regions within them to set up national and regional competence research centres, designed to stimulate co-operation in research and technological development between companies, academia and other organisations.

Competence research centres aim to provide an environment where academics, industry and the public sector can pool interdisciplinary knowledge, carry out pre-competitive and competitive research, and stimulate strategies toward overcoming the gap between research and practical application. While they have a shared objective, there is much variation in approach and funding. A few countries have a specific support programme allowing for a bottom-up approach with no thematic priorities, such as the competence research centre programmes of Estonia and Sweden, the K-Plus programme (Austria), the Co-operative Research Programme (Hungary), and the Flanders Programme for Competence Research Centres (Belgium). Others favour a thematic approach, stimulating the development of centres in a particular sector, e.g. cars, food, or ICT. Some COMPERA consortium member organisations with existing general measures to encourage industry-academic collaboration in RTD are now launching specific programmes to

support competence centres; including Norway and the Regional Government of Valencia (Spain).

Distilling knowledge

COMPERA links 17 partner programmes from 12 European countries, with a total annual budget of €180m. The project therefore represents investment of a sufficient size to have major and lasting effects on the coordination of competence research centre programmes in Europe.

It will set up a structure for sustainable collaboration between these national and regional research programmes, building on the experience gained in one FP5 thematic area (Multi Actors and Multi Measures Programmes, MAP). MAP studied programmes addressed to whole systems of innovation, such as science-industry co-operation, gathering information and recommending good practices, and some of MAP’s key players went on to form the COMPERA consortium.

Programme managers will exchange information on a wide range of aspects of their own programme development and implementation, identifying weaknesses and features which could strengthen the efficiency of the existing programmes. Studies will be made of the possibilities for clustering between the centres funded by the



Coordination Action COMPERA



Full title:

National and Regional Programmes and Initiatives dedicated to the creation and support of Competence Research Centres

Research field:

Research, development and innovation

Co-ordinator:

Belgium: Institute for Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders (IWT)

Partners:

- Austria: Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)
- Belgium: Ministry of the Walloon Region, Directorate-General for Technologies, Research and Energy (DGTRE)
- Estonia: Enterprise Estonia (EAS)
- Germany: VDI Technology Centre (VDI TZ)
- Hungary: Agency for Research Fund Management and Research Exploitation (KPI)
- Norway: Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- Romania: National University Research Council - Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding (NURC - UEFISCSU)
- Slovenia: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MHEST)
- Spain: Basque Agency for the Promotion of International Research, Development and Innovation (Eurobulegoa); Industry, Trade and Tourism department of the Basque Government (ITT); and the Regional Ministry for Enterprise, University and Science of the Regional Government of Valencia (CEUC)
- Sweden: Swedish Agency for Innovation systems (VINNOVA)
- The Netherlands: Technology Foundation (STW)
- UK: Invest Northern Ireland (InvestNI)

Further information:

Mr Bernard De Potter, Frank Monteny
Institute for Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders
Bischoffsheimlaan 25
BE-1000 Brussels
Fax: +32 2 223 1181
e-mail: bdp@iwt.be; fm@iwt.be
website: www.iwt.be

Duration:

42 months

EC funding:

€2 699 921

Project reference:

CA 517844

“ I am convinced that, through the establishment of a sustainable interaction, COMPERA will allow for a more efficient mobilisation of know-how, financial means and human capital in this strategically important area ”

participating programmes, and also of the implications of varying intellectual property provisions. At the end of this phase, all participants will share a common understanding of the different programme approaches, and a common language for the project.

Lasting collaboration

After analysis of existing knowledge and identification of possible transnational activities, several will be tested on a pilot scale, then monitored and evaluated. One possible approach is to open competence research centre programmes to participation from foreign companies or research institutions, or to promote the exchange of staff and trainees. COMPERA also aims to start other joint transnational initiatives, like joint or aligned monitoring and evaluation, and the creation of common scientific boards

for centres in the same thematic area. This could include the development of a harmonised or a common administrative structure for joint research initiatives. The final work package will build the most promising ideas into an action plan for the first three years.

To ensure continued collaboration between national and regional competence research centre programmes once COMPERA has been completed, the project will pay particular attention to developing a framework for the long term and to encouraging new centres to be set up in countries currently without them. Thus, the ERA-NET's contribution to the European Research Area will be the lasting coordination between the national and regional agencies concerned with bridging the gap between academia and industry; enhancing Europe's competitiveness.