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Factors for Success: Preconditions for the Functioning of the Open Method of Coordination in R&D Policy





Overview

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1. Development of the OMC in European R&D policy

There have been five OMC cycles since its introduction at the Lisbon Council (2000):

- **First OMC Cycle (2000-2003):** Benchmarking member states' performance in terms of: human resources, R&D investments, impact of R&D on competitiveness and employment, productivity in science and technology, promotion of an R&D culture.
- **Second OMC Cycle (2003-2004):** Focussing on the 3% Action Plan; Open coordination within CREST
- **Third OMC Cycle (2005-2006):** Methodological re-orientation: priority topics and peer review
- **Fourth OMC Cycle (2006-2007):** The same goal, but new topics: Internationalization of R&D, R&D in services
- **Fifth OMC Cycle (2007-2008):** The same goal and some new topics: Universities, Industry-led competence centres.



2. A History of Setbacks? – Deficiencies of Coordination (I)

A “Genealogy” of Coordination in Research Policy

1965: Establishment of a Council committee for the coordination of national research policies

1973: Creation of CREST, an advisory committee for the Community institutions that participates in the definition of objectives for EU research policy and gives advice on the coordination of national R&D policies

1994: Communication of the Commission “Research and Technological Development: Achieving Coordination through Cooperation”

2000: The European Research Area: Introduction of the OMC and coordination of national research programmes

2008: The Ljubljana-Process: Making use of an “enhanced OMC” for the implementation of a long-term ERA vision



2. A History of Setbacks? – Deficiencies of Coordination (II)

Evaluations of the previous performance of the OMC:

- ***“Kok-Report” (2004):*** “The open method of coordination has fallen far short of expectations. If Member States do not enter the spirit of mutual benchmarking, little or nothing happens.”
- ***Presidency Conclusions, Conference “Improving Research Policies in Europe through the Open Method of Coordination” (2006):*** “Areas of activities [...] should be selected on the basis of actual commitment by the member states“;
- ***CREST-Report on Coordination of International S&T policies (2008):*** „Cooperation and Coordination needs to be built on national interests and to prove clear benefits for all parties involved.“



3. Basic Premises for R&D policies in the European MLG-System

- (1) *The Intra-Community competition among member states and regions: OMC on internationalisation of R&D revealed that many member states develop strategies aimed at increasing the absorptive capacity and attractiveness of their national research and innovation systems and therefore engaged in bilateral agreements in order to gain access to strategic markets.***
- (2) *The structural diversity of member states' research and innovation systems: the degree of autonomy of public research organizations, the industrial structure, and the governance capacities of regional actors differ significantly across member states.***
- (3) *The increasing divergence in technological and innovative capabilities: within the EU-27 the European Research Area falls apart in at least three groups of member states: a group of leading countries, a group of catching-up countries, and a group of countries that is "losing momentum" (European Innovation Progress Report, 2006)***



4. Consequences for the Open Method of Coordination

- (1) *Member states act under two different logics (March and Olsen 1998):* under the logic of consequentiality, member states seek to keep or increase their competitive advantage vis-à-vis other member states and third countries. Under the logic of appropriateness, member states coordinate and cooperate at the European level, if commonly agreed measures do not intervene into the Intra-Community competition.
- (2) *Diversity is the key challenge:* the question, however, is what degree of diversity causes fragmentation of the ERA, what degree is desirable in order to have competition for the best solutions (i.e. as a precondition for policy learning).
- (3) *Limited scope for “one-fits-all”-solutions:* Coherence is difficult to achieve if one wants to support scientific excellence and R&D capacity building at the same time (take for example the European Research Council: Scientists from research institutes in Israel submitted more proposals for an ERC advanced grant than scientists in 22 EU member states did).



5. Conclusions: How to define an OMC that meets expectations

(1) Accepting Variable Geometry

(2) Providing a platform for coordination for regions and stakeholders

(3) Implementing an explicit bottom-up approach

(4) Defining a commonly agreed European added value