
Arbeitskreis 2: „An international comparison of research, technology and innovation policy (RTI) - strategies“

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In the past few years, debates about RTI-strategies have gained international importance. In most OECD countries, national RTI-relevant “policies” and specific “science and innovation strategies” have become indispensable. The target of this working group was to discuss national RTI-strategies and their implementation in the respective political context. Moreover, it was intended to compare similarities and differences in principles, functions and objectives of the respective national strategies in order to draw conclusions for other countries. The European dimension and the major developments starting with the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives as well as the European Research Area were summarised and its impact at national level was discussed with particular focus on the recent internationalisation strategy. Furthermore, the structures and stakeholders of RTI-governance in their respective national expressions have been discussed. Several common functions, objectives and principles of national strategies for research, technology and innovation have been identified:

Functions of RTI-Strategies

Specific functions of national RTI-strategies have become evident during the workshop: Strategies are deemed as guiding frameworks for national policies that are oriented towards macro-objectives focusing on societal and economic challenges. The main task of RTI-strategies is to create preconditions for a broad-based innovation policy promoting and ensuring international competitiveness for every specific innovation environment as well as the creation and introduction of innovations in society and the economy. They focus especially on national programming, i.e. implementing the macro-objectives into priorities and programs, and operation, i.e. effective realisation of research and innovation in a specific political context. Besides the long-term meta-goals, sub-objectives have to be defined and revised on a regular basis to account for changes in the framework conditions.

Objectives of RTI-Strategies

In terms of objectives of RTI-strategies it has been of great interest that these seem to be rather similar in different countries, although obviously there might be vast differences in the details. Summing up the presentations it can be stressed that all strategic activities are centred around people: Highly skilled people are at the heart of a dynamic knowledge-based society. Third level education has been a central issue of strategic priorities and will be even more so in the future. Sustainable social and economic progress is a second common objective of the different national RTI-strategies. Correspondingly, instruments and fiscal incentives for science and research in the public as well as in the business sector have been developed in all the countries represented in the workshop. Increasing national attractiveness and competitiveness is as important as a further improvement of conditions for research: several countries have ongoing university reforms; the strengthening of competitiveness especially in the context of research funding is a common issue, etc. Last but not least, the strengthening of cooperation between science and industry is an important task in most national innovation systems.

Conclusions and implications for Austria

Different models of policy design and delivery coexist among European member states which are based upon different history and culture. While there is a convergence in research themes and key technologies (ICT, Nano, Biotech, etc.), there are different national reactions to these challenges. Human resources and education are among the key priorities among the reviewed countries and have stimulated substantial reform in Denmark, Finland and Ireland. The speed of reforms and the thorough implementation of reforms have been remarkable in these countries. From an Austrian perspective it was astonishing to see how fast comparable countries change their structures and adapt to the increasingly competitive international environment. Austria certainly has to find a way to strengthen the culture of implementation to remain on the fast track.