European research networks:
time to rethink their rationale and governance?

Brussels, European Economic and Social Committee, 10-11 September 2009
2 Rue Van Maerlant, 1040 Brussels, Room VM1/VM3

FORUM CONCEPT
The aim of this forum is to debate the various issues related to the design, implementation, management and evaluation of EU-funded research networks. The forum is designed to encourage extensive discussion and exchange of views between academics, policy makers, firms and various stakeholders around the effectiveness of the existing pan-European research networks and opportunities for re-thinking their rationale and models of governance.

Speakers representing different sectors, disciplines and backgrounds will present studies and position papers encompassing theoretical and practical implications on the current drivers of change and challenges related to the design and management of research networks, such as the methods to align the interests of different stakeholders, increase the societal impact of scientific research results and enhance cross-fertilization between academia and business, disciplines, industries, organizations and countries.

The forum, organized by Politecnico di Milano unit of PRIME (Policies for Research and Innovation in the Move towards the European Research Area) Network of Excellence, in partnership with the EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory, will support the stakeholders’ involvement into the design and implementation of the next generation of EU research programmes based on networks. Speakers’ contributions are expected to provide valuable inputs for a EESC opinion on the future of European research networks and for reports on the Lisbon Strategy reforms in the field of research and innovation.

FORUM BACKGROUND
European policy for research and innovation has increasingly relied on the use of networks as instruments to cross the boundaries between organizations, sectors and national systems.

Originally, EU-funded networks have mainly targeted the fragmentation of the European research system, the lack of critical mass and the limited societal impact of academic research. Most of the attention was devoted to network creation and execution of specific and disciplinary focused projects, with strategic and thematic priorities defined by politicians. These networks were mainly based on public research organizations and often lacking, at least formally, clearly defined governance models. Examples of these are the Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects, that account for almost 80% of FP6 resources.

New EU initiatives, such as the Joint Technology Initiatives and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, have adopted a more systemic approach, long-term horizon and inter-disciplinary focus, with increasing emphasis being placed on the establishment of adequate governance models for deeper integration among partners. These networks are characterized by a dramatically increased size and heterogeneity (with a stronger involvement of the business sector, venture capitalists and innovation agencies) and by the devolution of priority setting and program implementation from politicians to networks’ stakeholders. These trends make the network governance an even more critical issue, raising new questions for academics and policy makers.

These initiatives today face the risk not to have at their disposal appropriate governance and management...
reference models. Therefore, there clearly is the need to rethink how networks should be designed, governed and provided with the adequate legal structures, incentive and financing systems to support knowledge integration and its conversion into entrepreneurial activities. Experimentation is going on (e.g. through the EIT pilot projects) and will hopefully provide relevant new experiences for managing this kind of networks. However, the debate around these issues requires mutually-reinforcing contributions from policy makers, academics, network managers and various stakeholders involved in networks’ design, management and evaluation.

FORUM THEMES AND FORMAT
The forum is designed to encourage extensive debate around the topics presented by the various speakers, favouring open discussion among representatives from different sectors, disciplines, backgrounds. Special attention will be devoted to studies and experience-based contributions encompassing both theoretical and practical implications. The first day of the forum will consist of three panels aiming at providing a comprehensive overview on the key issues, trends and challenges related to:

1) The design and implementation of research networks;
2) The governance and management of research network;
3) The impact assessment of research networks.

While the second day of the forum will consist of three panels focusing on more operational issues:

4) Supporting entrepreneurship in research networks;
5) Assessing the role of universities in research networks;
6) Knowledge dynamics and integration in research networks.

Each of these six panels will be opened by a PRIME keynote speaker who will give an introductory speech presenting a position paper on the main issues at stake and, then, will act as a chairman, framing the debate on open questions and drivers of change. The other panellists will represent the various network stakeholders and provide their mutually-reinforcing contributions on relevant issues like:

- the methods to align the interests of the different stakeholders, build shared vision and support the effectiveness of the decision-making and governance systems;
- the selection criteria for network membership, the internal and external conditions favouring the emergence of leading members, the drivers of network evolution;
- the mechanisms to foster the internalization of positive network externalities among network members and support cooperation, knowledge integration and cross-fertilization between academia and business, disciplines, industries, organizations and countries;
- the methods to ensure the dissemination and conversion of the research results into entrepreneurial activities, and the criteria for sharing results and intellectual property rights;
- the approach to be adopted in performing joint research activities, in terms of multi-disciplinarity, degree of specialization, physical concentration;
- the techniques and indicators to measure network performances, at both individual and organizational level, consistent with the greater emphasis on integration, autonomy and societal relevance of scientific discoveries and inventions.

This forum will follow under the activities of the EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory and will support stakeholders’ involvement into the design and implementation of the next generation of EU research programmes based on networks. Speakers’ contributions are expected to provide valuable inputs for a EESC opinion on the future of European research networks and for reports on the Lisbon Strategy reforms in the field of research and innovation, such as the “Integrated Report on the implementation and the future of the Lisbon Strategy in the post-2010 period”.

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FORUM AGENDA

10th September 2009 – room VM1 at EESC (Address: 2 Rue Van Maerlant, Brussels)

10.00 – 10.15 Arrival and registration of participants
10.15 – 10.45 Opening of the forum by the organizers
   • Antonello Pezzini, Member of the EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory
   • Massimo G. Colombo, Politecnico di Milano, PRIME

10.45 – 12.30 Panel I: THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RESEARCH NETWORKS
   Chair and introductory speech by Andrea Bonaccorsi, Università di Pisa, PRIME
   • Giovanni Colombo, Member of the Executive Committee of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology Governing Board
   • Theodoros Karapiperis, Head of the Economic and Science Policy Unit, European Parliament
   • Luke Georgiou, University of Manchester, PRIME
   • Mette Mønsted, Copenhagen Business School
   • Luc Soete TBC, Director of UNU-MERIT

12.30 – 13.30 Buffet lunch at EESC

13.30 – 15.00 Panel II: THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH NETWORKS
   Chair and introductory speech by Stephan Kuhlmann, University of Twente, PRIME
   • Matteo Bonifacio, European Commission, DG BEPA, Policy Advisor on research policies
   • Philippe Laredo, ENPC Paris, PRIME Coordinator
   • Matthias Weber, Austrian Institute of Technology, NEMO project coordinator

15.00 – 15.30 Coffee Break

15.30 – 17.00 Panel III: THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH NETWORKS
   Chair and introductory speech by Terttu Luukkonen, Research Institute of the Finnish Economy, PRIME
   • Maria Nedeva, University of Manchester, PRIME
   • Peter Fisch, European Commission, DG RTD
   • Frank Cunningham, European Commission, DG INFSO

17.00 – 18.00 Concluding remarks: KEY ISSUES, TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN THE DESIGN, MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH NETWORKS
   • Manfred Horvat, Vienna University of Technology – Rapporteur of the Expert Group Report on the future of Networks of Excellence
   • Philippe Laredo, ENPC Paris, PRIME Coordinator
11th September 2009 - room VM3 at EESC (Address: 2 Rue Van Maerlant, Brussels)

09.15 – 10.00 Keynote speech: THE ROLE OF POLICY MAKING IN DESIGNING RESEARCH NETWORKS
  - Maria da Graça Carvalho, Member of European Parliament and former Principal Adviser to the Bureau of European Policy Advisers, European Commission

10.00 – 11.15 Panel IV: SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RESEARCH NETWORKS
Chair and introductory speech by Massimo G. Colombo, Politecnico di Milano, PRIME
  - Philippe Mustar, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris, PRIME
  - Reinhilde Veugelers, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
  - Joost van Iersel, Member of the EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory

11.15 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 – 13.00 Panel V: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN RESEARCH NETWORKS
Chair and introductory speech by Andrea Bonaccorsi, Università di Pisa, PRIME
  - Ben Martin, Director of SPRU, University of Sussex, PRIME
  - Paloma Sánchez, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
  - Antoine Schoen, ESIEE Business School, Paris Est University
  - Xavier Verbven, Member of the EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory

13.00 – 14.00 Buffet lunch at EESC

14.00 – 15.15 Panel VI: KNOWLEDGE DYNAMICS AND INTEGRATION IN RESEARCH NETWORKS
Chair and introductory speech by Stephan Kuhlmann, University of Twente, PRIME
  - Petra Ahrweiler, University College of Dublin, NEMO project
  - Jakob Edler, University of Manchester, ERA Dynamics project, PRIME
  - Vincent Mangematin TBC Grenoble Ecole de Management, Nanodistrict project, PRIME
  - Zenonas Rokus Rudzikas, Member of the EESC and European Academies Science Advisory Council

15.15 End of the forum

REGISTRATION AND CONTACTS
Participation to the forum is free of charge. However, for organizational reasons please register by sending an email to Elena Belotti (elena.belotti@polimi.it).

For further information on the forum program please contact Lorenzo Pirelli (lorenzo.pirelli@polimi.it).

We look forward to meeting you at the forum!

Massimo G. Colombo, Politecnico di Milano, PRIME
Antonello Pezzini, EESC Lisbon Strategy Observatory