

SOFTPOWER:

COMPETENCES AND SOFT SKILLS
IN INNOVATION AGENCIES AT THE
BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR
INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU

Conclusions of the 1st discussion event:
the innovators' views

January 25th, 2018



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first discussion event of the 'SoftPower' task force, entitled "National agencies at the break of a new model for innovation support in the EU: the innovators' views", was held on the 25th of January 2018 at the premises of the Representation of the European Commission in Lisbon, Portugal.

The event was organised by ANI – Portugal's National Innovation Agency with the support of the task force members and aimed at collecting views and inputs from the community of innovators in Europe on the role of innovation agencies.



Rational of the event

In an increasingly dynamic and complex environment for boosting innovation in the European Union (EU), national and regional innovation agencies must reflect on the model, roles and responsibilities they ought to assume for providing the most adequate support to their innovation communities. Inputs from a number of stakeholders are valuable for this reflection. TAFTIE's 'SoftPower' task force has decided to start by the innovators' views.

As Europe still lags behind other regions of the world when it comes to breakthrough innovations and scaling-up innovative ideas, a debate has arisen in the EU on how to improve the environment and focus on market-creating innovation, while also simplifying and filling gaps in existing support for innovative start-ups and scale-ups in Europe. The European Commission (EC) is planning to set a new innovation promotion system under the next Framework Programme (FP) for R&I, namely by creating the European Innovation Council (EIC), and Member-States are themselves, through their national and regional innovation agencies, trying to reach their highest potential innovators and experimenting new instruments and support services to help them thrive.

With a view to a more dynamic and vast innovation promotion landscape, able to capture value and explore its potential, European innovators need a continuous and well-articulated innovation promotion and support system that can create a friendly environment based on a clear assignment of roles at European, national and regional levels.

How do innovators see these efforts? According to their view, how should they be articulated for a complementary support to innovation across Europe? To what extent are national and regional innovation agencies providing local support services that are accurately reaching the highest potential of their communities? What kinds of support do innovators feel the need for, either at local, regional, national or European levels?

This report gathers the viewpoints that were collected from innovators during the event on what concerns their needs for advisory and support services from national and regional innovation agencies to enable and accelerate their activities and to provide a fruitful context for them to thrive. The agenda of this event is attached under Annex I and the list of attendants is attached under Annex II.

Questions for debate

1. What new model, roles and responsibilities for national innovation agencies taking into consideration what is foreseen for the next Framework Programme?
2. What type of advisory and support services should national innovation agencies provide to their innovators?
3. What new capacities and soft skills should innovation agencies incorporate in order to provide these new advisory and support services to innovators?
4. What is the added-value of continuity and complementarity between national innovation agencies and the European Commission's activities for innovation support, in view of the design of the EIC's activities structure?

Main Conclusions

Innovators across Europe face different realities and, therefore, have different challenges and needs. Europe is diverse in a number of ways, also from the point of view of local, regional and national innovation capacities. One of the major challenges to the endeavour of fostering the knowledge economy in Europe is precisely this heterogeneity. This is also a challenging issue from the point of view of national innovation agencies – they are located in different regions across Europe, have different structures, missions and activities and face different national regulatory frameworks. This scenario makes it very challenging to promote excellence and have impact across Europe while simultaneously contributing to its convergence.

The major problems Europe faces when valuing knowledge, it so excellently produces, have been highlighted and acknowledged with a push from the European Commission, and innovation agencies are being called to become smarter – by accelerating the learning process on innovation policy – , more inclusive – by diversifying their action to a wider set of entities and working together with other players of their innovation ecosystems – and more dynamic – by leading policy change towards less constraints to innovative activities.

1. Smarter innovation agencies

National and regional innovation agencies are called to assume a role in data and mapping sciences. Since they are generating more and more data about R&I activities across the economy, they hold the potential to use it in new and interesting ways for better understanding the R&I dynamics and improve their support to innovators in their own ecosystems. This means using new tools, new methods and new approaches, such as machine learning, text mining, interactive tools for data visualization, among others.

Existing maps and measures of R&I activities tend to be based on official statistics, but this approach is too slow and leaves out many indicators. Thus, innovation agencies should improve their skills in data and mapping analysis to monitor and measure the impacts and evolution of R&I and industrial policies in real time.

This also means that national innovation agencies would need to be more experimental and better at capturing the results of that experimentation in order to use them to design better innovation policies. Though enhanced experimentation abilities, they should be able to design new innovation policies through

the launch of experimentation processes of smaller scale (e.g. pilot actions to design and test what works recurring to a "focus group"). They should also be able to gather evidence and make sense of it in order to effectively implement new policies at a larger scale.

2. More inclusive innovation agencies

National and regional innovation agencies should not only look at new support and advisory for their usual "clients" (e.g., entrepreneurs, companies, researchers, ...), but also enlarge/diversify the targeted "clients" categories. They need to identify the new type of constituencies that they can support under the changing paradigm of innovation promotion support in Europe.

Taking into consideration the new focus on breakthrough innovation, these agencies should engage in a comprehensive, long-term dialogue with "users" – i.e. including consumers' groups/associations, hospitals/patients groups, lobbies from different sectors, entities from the social economy, etc. This calls for an anticipation and forecasting capability concerning future products/services/processes which were not created yet but are expected to come from the new "waves" in technology domains. This way, only by understanding the needs directly from users/consumers regarding new market trends can innovation agencies try to push forward innovations in markets that still haven't been exploited.

A more diversified set of "clients" and a deeper understanding of new market trends also mean that national innovation agencies should play more and more the role of ecosystem builders and system thinkers, bridging up the players of their innovation ecosystems and very much supporting their regional and national innovation hubs. This means that innovation agencies should have innovation diplomacy skills, serving as intrusted 3rd parties between researchers and companies (i.e., technology transfer facilitators), companies and investors (i.e., private market facilitators) and between companies (i.e., interest connectors).

As system thinkers, they need to constantly be looking at market needs, effectively identify gaps and tackle challenges by redesigning tools and platforms to overcome them, which requires a high degree in the liberty to adapt their available budgets.

Overall, this means that innovation agencies should better

collaborate/cooperate with other stakeholders to support innovation. Thus, it is expected that they can work effectively with partners from the innovation ecosystem in order to take knowledge of the concerns of others who are responsible also for driving innovation forward, both national and internationally, to tackle cross-cutting innovation challenges and achieving the best common outcomes – encouraging innovative activity to flourish. By building new partnerships, innovation agencies can overcome budget and human resources constraints through working together for similar goals, including to leverage new sources of financing and count on additional and/or complementary skills and capacities.

Since innovation does not sit on national borders, also the international connection and the support to accessing international markets is a role for agencies to assume. They should also be able to effectively work together with their peers by building networks, thus linking their existing local, regional and national innovation ecosystems into a Pan-European one, in order to better capture EU companies' value and growth potential.

3. More dynamic innovation agencies

It is expected that the upcoming strength that Horizon Europe will bring to breakthrough innovation in Europe will take scientific knowledge to the heart of social-economic development. While Science is an area where Europe is strong, with the expected impact relies on transforming existing sectors with high economic and social benefit. However, this also requires major changes in policy response, namely from innovation agencies.

The new policy response will require a closer interaction of national innovation agencies with public policy decision-making bodies. Because they have access to, and a privileged position interacting with the innovation ecosystem, their knowledge on the needs of innovation systems at regulatory level, as well as on the policy making environment and on the obstacles innovators face when trying to put their product/service/process in the market, makes innovation agencies the adequate players of a role in identifying obstacles to innovation or investment that can be of regulatory, strategic or policy making nature. They are the intermediate bodies between companies and innovators, private investors and public policy decision-making bodies. This is of a growing importance for helping to effectively scale-up breakthrough innovations in heavily regulated markets.

Also, more high risk and long-term funding is needed for future innovators since the innovation support cycle will be longer and technological risks are higher. Therefore, national innovation agencies should, apart from the traditional role of grant providers, present their innovators with a portfolio of different coaching, mentoring, brokerage and matchmaking services available at local, regional, national and European levels that best fit the company's specific needs (i.e., state of development). It should be noted that, although innovation agencies could provide these services themselves, they may also act as intrusted 3rd parties between the innovator and more well-equipped and well-prepared organisations for providing these services (e.g., clusters, competence centres, incubators, ...).

Moreover, in order to effectively help companies to grow and scale, innovation agencies should assume a role in financing service providers, delivering a combined set of funding instruments, both public and private, that fit the specific needs of each company, considering its state of development. This requires enhancing their contact with the investors community and having a deeper understanding of the existing financial instruments and investment trends. They should also provide training to investors and companies, namely on project proposals and assessments, in order to improve and harmonise the understanding of both parties.

Moreover, innovation agencies should support communication and "Brussels jargon" translation, as well as giving more visibility and outreach to their innovators/innovations. On the one hand, due to their position in the innovation ecosystem, national innovation agencies should make "Brussels jargon" simpler for innovators and help them understand the availability of EU funds and programmes. On the other hand, they should praise, advertise and market the best innovators/innovations across all Europe, providing enough visibility to attract investors and also facilitate cross-technology funding.

For playing all the identified roles, innovation agencies should themselves innovate and evolve, in order to respond to the new demands of the European innovation support policy in which they are an active player. Policies at EU level have a strong direct impact on the way national and regional authorities structure and assign missions to their innovation agencies, including on the human resources they need (i.e., the competences and skills they need to have in-house). They also have an impact on the position of these agencies

in their innovation ecosystems, the partnerships they need to establish and the support instruments they ought to offer. Thus, innovation agencies need to be very adaptive to be able to evolve, experiment, meet new needs and respond to new challenges in the innovation ecosystem.

Taking into consideration what is foreseen for Horizon Europe, national innovation agencies should work together with little coordination from the EC, through join-programmes. The EC intends to support this through the Co-Fund Mechanism, with a top-up approach and centralised evaluation.

The aim is also that the EIC targets specifically the scaling-up of individual innovations into market, making use of blended finance – a flexible mix of financial instruments – and long-term equity ensured by the EC. National and regional innovation agencies could focus more on early-stage and incremental support (e.g. as in the SME Instrument – Phase 1), including through the Co-Fund Mechanism. The EC has finalised an agreement in December 2017 for a better harmonization among EC rules for different types of funds, namely Structural Funds and the possibility to use them in the scope of the EIC, to leverage national counterparts of the Co-Fund Mechanism.

NATIONAL AGENCIES AT THE BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU: THE INNOVATORS' VIEWS

25 JANUARY 2018 | LISBON - PORTUGAL

This event is organised in the scope of TAFTIE's 'SoftPower' Task Force – *Competences and soft skills in innovation agencies at the break of a new model for innovation support in the EU*¹. In an increasingly dynamic and complex environment for boosting innovation in the EU, innovation agencies must reflect on the model, roles and responsibilities they ought to assume for providing the most adequate support to their innovation communities. Inputs from a number of stakeholders are valuable for this reflection, starting with the innovators' views.

RATIONAL

As Europe still lags behind other regions of the world when it comes to breakthrough innovations and scaling-up innovative ideas, a debate has arisen in the Union on how to improve the environment and focus on market-creating innovation, while also simplifying and filling gaps in existing support for innovative start-ups and scale-ups in Europe. The European Commission is planning to set a new innovation promotion system under the next Framework Programme for R&I, namely by creating the European Innovation Council (EIC), and Member States are themselves, through their innovation agencies, trying to reach their highest potential innovators and experimenting new instruments and support services to help them thrive.

With a view to a more dynamic and vast innovation promotion landscape, able to capture value and explore its potential, European innovators need a continuous and well-articulated innovation promotion and support system that can create a friendly environment based on a clear assignment of roles at European, national and regional levels.

How do innovators see these efforts? According to their view, how should they be articulated for a complementary support to innovation across Europe? To what extent are innovation agencies providing local support services that are accurately reaching the highest potential of their communities? What kinds of support do innovators feel the need for, either at local, regional, national or European levels?

By the end of this one-day discussion event, a preliminary report should be drafted, collecting the viewpoints of innovators on their needs for advisory and support services from innovation agencies to enable and accelerate their activities and to provide a fruitful context in which they take place.

¹ <http://www.taftie.org/content/task-force-softpower>

NATIONAL AGENCIES AT THE BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU: THE INNOVATORS' VIEWS

25 JANUARY 2018 | LISBON - PORTUGAL

AGENDA

Official language of the event: English

08H30-09H00 REGISTRATION

09H00-09H30 WELCOME ADDRESS

José Carlos Caldeira | *President, ANI – Portuguese National Innovation Agency*

Catarina Dantas Machado | *European Semester Officer, Representation of the European Commission in Portugal*

09H30-10H00 KEY NOTE SPEECH 1: “HOW INNOVATION AGENCIES WORK – LESSONS LEARNED”

Alex Glennie | *Principal Researcher - International Innovation, NESTA*

10H00-10H20 COFFEE BREAK

10H20-11H20 DISCUSSION PANEL I: “SUPPORT TO INNOVATORS: FROM IDEAS TO INNOVATION”

Moderator: **David Golding** | *Head, European and Global Engagement, Innovate UK; Coordinator, Enterprise Europe Network, England, Northern Ireland and Wales*

- **Leena Sarvaranta** | *Vice President, EU Affairs, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland*
- **Nili Shalev** | *Director General, ISERD - The Israel-EU R&D Directorate, Israel Innovation Authority*
- **Daniel Murta** | *Co-founder, EntoGreen, Portugal*
- **Thomas Spector** | *Project Manager, British Gut Project / Glycanage, Croatia*

11H20-11H45 OPEN DEBATE

11H45-12H15 KEY NOTE SPEECH 2: “VENIAM INC. – A KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER SUCCESS STORY”

João Barros | *Founder and CEO, Veniam Inc., Portugal*

12H15-13H30 LUNCH BREAK

13H30-14H45 DISCUSSION PANEL II: “SUPPORT TO INNOVATORS: SCALING-UP INNOVATIONS INTO MARKET”

Moderator: **Christian Frey** | *Head of business and innovation, FFG - Austrian Research Promotion Agency*

- **Fabio Pianesi** | *Head of External Collaboration, EIT Digital*
- **Jan Bambas** | *Senior adviser – Energy, Research & Innovation, Industrial Affairs, Business Europe*
- **Nikolaus Dürk** | *CEO, X-Net, Austria*
- **Zeynep Sarilar** | *Spokesperson, EUREKA Intercluster Committee & ITEA Chairwoman*
- **Joaquim Menezes** | *Board, European Factories of the Future Research Association*
- **Oscar Chabrera** | *Co-founder & EU Manager, ViLynx, Spain*

14H45-15H10 OPEN DEBATE

15H10-15H30 COFFEE BREAK

NATIONAL AGENCIES AT THE BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU: THE INNOVATORS' VIEWS

25 JANUARY 2018 | LISBON - PORTUGAL

15H30-17H15 DISCUSSION PANEL III: "VIEWS FOR COMPLEMENTARITY ON INNOVATION SUPPORT AT NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVELS"

Moderator: **Gonçalo Lobo Xavier** | *Portuguese National Delegate of Innovation on SMEs and Risk Finance for the Horizon 2020 programme, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*

- **Carlos Zorrinho** | *Member of the European Parliament, ITRE – Industry, Research and Energy Committee*
- **Carlos Oliveira** | *President, InvestBraga and Startup Braga; High-Level Group of Innovators, European Commission*
- **Stéphane Ouaki** | *Head of Unit, SMEs, financial instruments and state aid, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission*
- **Marek Przeor** | *Head of Sector, Smart Growth, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission*
- **Matti Hiltunen** | *Finnish High Level EUREKA Representative, Counsellor (Research and Innovation) at Business Finland/Embassy of Finland in Brussels*
- **Nadja Dokter** | *Head of Strategy Section, EIT – European Institute of Innovation and Technology*
- **Lola Merveille** | *Permanent Representative to the EU Institutions, Bpifrance*
- **James Phipps** | *Principal Researcher, Innovation Growth Lab*

17H15-17H30 OPEN DEBATE

17H30-18H00 CLOSING REMARKS

Moderator: **Isabel Caetano** | *Member of Board, ANI – Portuguese National Innovation Agency*

- **David Golding** | *Head, European and Global Engagement, Innovate UK; Coordinator, Enterprise Europe Network, England, Northern Ireland and Wales*
- **Christian Frey** | *Head of business and innovation, FFG - Austrian Research Promotion Agency*
- **Gonçalo Lobo Xavier** | *Portuguese National Delegate of Innovation on SMEs and Risk Finance for the Horizon 2020 programme, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*

20H00 SOCIAL DINNER

Zambeze Restaurant (Calçada Marquês de Tancos, Edifício EMEL, Mercado Chão do Loureiro, 1100-340 Lisbon)

NATIONAL AGENCIES AT THE BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU: THE INNOVATORS' VIEWS

25 JANUARY 2018 | LISBON - PORTUGAL

List of participants

Name	Institution
Agnes Divinyi	National Research, Development and Innovation Office of Hungary
Alex Glennie	NESTA
Alexandra Alvarez	IAPMEI - Portuguese Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation
Alexandre Marques	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
Ana Mafalda Dourado Santos	GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
André Pereira	ISCTE-IUL
António Santos	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Ari Grönroos	Business Finland
Bart Candaale	Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Carlos Oliveira	InvestBraga Startup Braga High-Level Group of Innovators
Carlos Zorrinho	European Parliament
Catarina Dantas Machado	Representation of the European Commission in Portugal
Christian Frey	FFG - Austrian Research Promotion Agency
Cristina Gouveia	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
Daniel Murta	EntoGreen
Daniël Verlé	Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship
David Golding	Innovate UK
Eva Bendlova	TA CR - Technology Agency of the Czech Republic
Evelyn Smith	Enterprise Ireland (Liaison office, Brussels)
Fabio Pianesi	EIT Digital
Gonçalo Lobo Xavier	EESC - European Economic and Social Committee
Helder Lopes	Portuguese Ministry of Economy
Isabel Caetano	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Ivona Jerkovic	Hamag Bicro
Jaime Quesado	Espap - Government Shared Services Entity
James Phipps	IGL - Innovation Growth Lab
Jan Bambas	BusinessEurope
Joana Saraiva	Portuguese Ministry of Economy
Joanne Goede	Prisma & Associates
João Barros	Veniam Inc.
João Mil-Homens	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
Joaquim Menezes	European Factories of the Future Research Association
Jorge Liz	EUREKA Secretariat
José Carlos Caldeira	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency

NATIONAL AGENCIES AT THE BREAK OF A NEW MODEL FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT IN THE EU: THE INNOVATORS' VIEWS

25 JANUARY 2018 | LISBON - PORTUGAL

Juan Antonio Tebar	CDTI - Centre for the Development of Industrial Technology
Katiuska Cruz	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Leena Sarvaranta	VTT - Technical Research Centre of Finland
Lola Merveille	Bpifrance
Luís Ferreira	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Luiz Lopes	Portuguese Ministry of Economy
Marco Fernandes	PME Investimentos
Marcos Lopes	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Marek Przeor	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
Maria Miguel Ferreira	Startup Portugal
Marion Karrasch-Bott	Project Management Juelich
Marita Paasi	Business Finland
Marta Candeias	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
Matti Hiltunen	Business Finland
Maxine Adam	Innovate UK
Nadja Dokter	EIT – European Institute of Innovation and Technology
Natalija Sandic	Innovation Fund of the Republic of Serbia
Nicolas Sabatier	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
Nikolaus Dürk	X-Net
Nili Shalev	ISERD - The Israel-Europe R&D Directorate for the European Research Area
Nuno Lúcio	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Oscar Chabrera	ViLynx
Pål Hungnes	Innovation Norway
Paulo Madeira	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Pedro Cilínio	IAPMEI - Portuguese Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation
Ricardo Migueis	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Rita Silva	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Rosalina Soares	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Sandrine Laurent	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
Sofia Andresen-Topa	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
Sofia Azevedo	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency GPPQ - FP Promotion Office
Sónia Meireles	ANI - Portuguese National Innovation Agency
Stéphane Ouaki	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission
Thomas Spector	British Gut Project / Glycanage
Tiago Santos Pereira	FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology
Vanda Narciso	IAPMEI - Portuguese Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation
Younis Hijazi	Luxinnovation
Zeynep Sarilar	EUREKA Intercluster Committee ITEA

The 'Soft Power' Taskforce was jointly carried out by the following TAFTIE member agencies:



In partnership with:

