

IKINET

International Knowledge and Innovation Networks  
for European Integration, Cohesion and Enlargement

Ruhr Research Institute for Innovation and Regional Policy (RUFIS e.V.)

# *Competence Centres and Networks: European Governance Perspectives*

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# Agenda

## *Competence Centres and Networks*

1. Challenge of international knowledge pipelines
2. Characteristics of competence centres and networks
3. Chances and limitations in Europe
4. European poles of competitiveness?
5. Consequences for multilateral governance

# Challenge

*Common pressures on European knowledge systems*

## New ways of organizing knowledge production

- Integrative technologies (medium + high tech)
- Modular sourcing (*knowledge* value chains)
- Internationalization of knowledge pipelines (*formalization* of communication)

## Consequence:

- Interaction and cooperation on knowledge as key competencies
  - But how to overcome lacks of mutual understanding and trust?

# Response

## *National cluster policies in Europe*

- Centres of Expertise in Finland
- Competence centres and networks in Austria
- Poles of competitiveness in France
- Regional cluster policies in Germany
- .....
- **Specific priorities**
  - Strategic focus
  - Roles of intermediaries
  - Integration of private funding
- **... but important commonalities**

# Competence centres and networks

## *Characteristics*

- Form follows **function**
  - Linkages instead of organizations and actors
  - Knowledge as entry criteria
  - Support of strategic processes via joint projects
  - Public private partnership approach
  - Openness towards international partners
- Platform instead of formal boundaries
  - Inter-disciplinarity of partners
  - Diversification of target markets
  - From projects to long-term structures

# Competence centres and networks

## *Chances*

- Improvement of cognitive linkages
  - Bundling of ideas and experiences
  - Knowledge clubs with joint goods and rules
- Overcoming resource scarcity of SMEs
  - Size of formal R&D investments
  - Long-term strategic development
  - National and international contacts
- Emergence of trust in mutual advantages
  - Joint targets as basis for membership access
  - Long-term personal embeddedness

# Competence centres and networks

## *Limitations*

- Entry barriers for conventional SMEs
  - Necessary level of formal R&D and knowledge
  - Access to formal qualifications and international contacts
- Necessary competence basis
  - Integration of lagging areas
  - Suitability of competence codes and availability of private funding
- Power asymmetries in clusters
  - Strategic advantages of multinational OEM
    - Exploitation of spillovers or exclusiveness
- Interregional and international linkages
  - Suitable gatekeepers
  - Competitors or partners?

# The European Perspective

## *A European Model?*

- Advantages on the European level
  - Economies of scale and scope
    - Bundling of competencies
    - Assertion on global markets
    - Focusing of funding
  - Standardization and facilitation of interregional cooperation
    - Joint frameworks
    - Joint contact platforms
    - Cooperation beyond use of joint infrastructures
- But still need for nationally and regionally specific approaches
  - Actual structure and rules of networks
  - Generation of gatekeepers
  - Development of internal competencies



# Future role of EU funding?

## *Multilateral governance structures*

- On the regional level
  - Fostering linkages between actors
  - Identification of missing links in networks
  - Support of strategic processes
- On the national level
  - Funding of private-public network structures
  - Adjustment of public R&D infrastructures
  - Creation of systemic linkages
- On the European level
  - Initial funding of interregional structures via strategic projects
  - Strengthening of gatekeepers within technology platforms
  - Strategic use of standards and regulation

Thank you for your attention!

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