

TRACK 11: Public-Private Partnerships in Research and Innovation: State of Play and Ways Ahead

Session Proposers:

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Description:

Public-private partnerships in research and innovation (PPPs in R&I) have become a key element in the research and innovation policy mix in many advanced economies, in Europe and elsewhere. The term PPPs in R&I has been used as a broad header for collaborative arrangements between private and public institutions already since the 1980s. Policy instruments to stimulate PPPs in R&I have evolved over time and transformed themselves to meet the changing challenges of our time. Recent years have witnessed a renewed interest in PPPs, not only at the European policy level with large size PPPs in R&I such as the JTIs and the EIT KICs entering the stage during the late 2000s, but also at national level where new policy instruments and new PPP practices – in terms of virtual or ‘physical’ collaborations – have been or are being designed and introduced (see for instance Austria with the COMET programme, Germany with the “Forschungscampus” and the Netherlands with the Topsectors Policy). New modern flexible PPP formats are arising with entry and exit being organized in new ways and intellectual property arrangements are presented in an ‘a la carte’ type of way. Moreover, the coverage of PPPs has been broadened and extended to include also the higher end of the TRL (technology readiness level) scale – or ‘experimental development’ in state aid framework terminology. Typically such PPPs are intended to boost the development of existing and new innovation ecosystems and meant to offer testing and experimenting platforms for SMEs and startups, with the objective to help breed the scaleups of tomorrow. But also in the lowest TRLs - in basic research – we observe new developments, with large PPPs in R&I taking on a key role in the search for solutions to societal challenges, multidisciplinary, high risk endeavours usually requiring high investment.

The aim of the research session is to explore and highlight new directions and arrangements for PPP in R&I, with the choice for track participants to take one of two following distinct different perspectives: i) the policy instrument perspective, ii) the PPP governance perspective (design and functioning of one or more ‘real-world’ PPPs in practice), or iii) the regional perspective. The first – policy instrument - perspective applies to the rise of new policy instruments in PPP in R&I, which are built on or around triple or quadruple helix notions, involve new creative ways of financing and pool and secure resources in a longer term collaboration on a certain theme, topic or challenge. It seeks to explore, analyse and/or compare different policy instruments, with an emphasis on new challenging and/or experimental ways of collaborating in a public-private setting. Possible questions could be: how to incentivize and stimulate PPPs from a policy perspective? Where do PPPs for R&I and societal challenges meet? Whether and how to align European and national PPP in R&I policies? Do we need another generation of PPP instruments in times of deglobalisation, EU skepticism and fragmentation? The second – PPP governance - perspective looks at ways and modes of how PPPs in R&I can be governed and managed in practice (‘real-world’),

focusing on smart partnership arrangements in terms of knowledge production during the course of the PPPs existence, the handling of intellectual property, and its smooth, effective and efficient collaboration. The governance perspective can either take the form of an individual (1 to 3) case studies comparison or take a broader, encompassing form in which different governance types are compared, quantitatively or qualitatively, or a combination of both. Possible questions could be: what form could/should a PPP take (virtual organization, 'physical' institute) vis-à-vis its goals and expected impact? How to retain flexibility and continuity of a PPP in the course of time? To what extent is IP a leading principle in the design of PPPs in R&I? The third perspective puts emphasis on the regional implications of PPPs in R&I, with questions relating to the impact of PPPs in R&I on strengthening regional technological competitiveness, their contribution to strengthening the regional research and innovation profile, and their possible role as R&D service provider for companies in the region. The regional perspective can take the form of a comparative case study or analysis using quantitative indicators.

The approach taken by track participants is in principle free, although a rigorous individual or comparative case study methodology involving appropriate qualitative or quantitative methods/techniques or a combination thereof is preferred. This applies to both the policy perspective (policy / institutional / economic analysis), the governance (innovation management), and the regional perspective. Theoretical underpinnings, such as neo / new institutional economics, transaction cost economics, behavioral economics, policy sciences, regional science, etc., might add to the value of the contributions. Contributors are invited to use performance, structural as well as input and output indicators/variables, depending on the nature and purpose of their particular research at hand.

Expected outcomes (in scientific and policy terms) to be achieved

- An up-to-date overview of and insight in recent approaches and practices towards PPP in R&I, both in terms of policy-making and in the governance of PPPs in R&I
- An increased insight and understanding of which PPP in R&I governance constructs arrangement work best (and which do not) in which domains/sectors, in which institutional context and under which circumstances/conditions
- An increased insight and understanding of which PPP in R&I policy instruments work best (and which do not) at which level (European, national, regional) and under which circumstances/conditions
- An increased insight and understanding of how PPP in R&I approaches impact the regional level (European - national - regional linkages, competitiveness, innovation performance)
- The generation of new ideas and new conceptual approaches to PPPs R&I for:
 - Approaching and solving grand societal challenges
 - Coping with/in a changing world of deglobalisation, fragmentation and populism
 - Addressing European competitiveness and societal needs
- Messages and recommendations to policy-makers, industry, universities and RTOs to improve the design and performance of PPPs in R&I now and in the near future.

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