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**Capacity Building and
institutional strengthening of
Science and Research in BiH**
*International benchmarking
of the NCP systems in
Europe*

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The project supports the re-establishment of a vibrant national research, technological development and innovation system, and the further integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) into the European Research Area.

One of the work packages (WP4) focuses on the development of the NCP system in BiH and improving public services to assist researchers and RTD organisations to increase the number of project participations in the FP7, and in COST and EUREKA.

This report covers the results of the Task 2 of the Work Package, which aimed to create a strong basis for local service and quality assurance system development by mapping the existing European practices and approaches.

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Introduction

The objective of this report is to provide insight on how National Contact Point (NCP) systems in Europe work and how they are organised and structured. Based on this benchmarking approach and its conclusions, a comparison with the actual situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was carried out during a workshop in Sarajevo on 25 March 2010 and recommendations to upgrade the domestic NCP system are made.

The report is based on desk research, including Internet research on available sources which are listed at the end of the report, and field research based on a questionnaire (see Appendix A) completed by NCPs from selected countries, as well as more detailed interviews with NCPs from European Member States and Associated Countries. (The list of persons questioned and interviewed is in Appendix B). The report also incorporates the findings of the benchmarking workshop.

The analysed countries are Austria, Belgium, Estonia, France, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden. They represent very different organisational set-ups ranging from highly centralised to highly decentralised structures. Moreover, we have deliberately chosen a couple of NCP-systems from the so called New Member States and one from an additional Western Balkan country in order to allow comparison not only with the best (although this 'classical' benchmarking approach was also aimed at referring to leading countries in terms of science and technology such as Sweden, Austria, France or Belgium), but also with countries whose systems show some structural similarities.

This report is divided into five major parts: the first part explores the fundamentals of NCP systems. It starts with a reflection about the background and rationale of NCP systems, followed by a section on the main functions of NCP systems and a section about the embedding of NCP systems in national ERA (European Research Area) governance structures.

Part two consists of the comparative analysis. The first section under this part summarises our findings concerning the different services and tools applied by NCP systems all over the ERA. Then we benchmark applied quality assurance approaches of NCP systems. Finally, a typology of NCP systems is outlined and discussed.

Part three presents our recommendations for a further development of the NCP system in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the conclusions of the previous parts.

Part four consists of the nine country case studies, describing in more detail the NCP systems of the countries selected for this benchmarking study along a standardised format.

Part five annexes additional useful information to this exercise.

1. NCP fundamentals

1.1 Background and rationale of NCP systems in Europe

National Contact Points (NCPs) play a crucial role in European and international science and research cooperation as providers of information and assistance to public and private research, higher education and business organizations, to researchers and managers all around Europe. NCPs inform and raise awareness about the funding opportunities of the European Framework Programme (FP) for Research and Technological Development (RTD) and they advise and assist potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of grant applications. NCPs also offer advice during the realisation of projects – especially with respect to legal and financial issues.

Information and consultancy infrastructures to facilitate the participation of research organisations and companies in the FPs exist almost since the inception of the first FP in the early 1980s, and, thus, many years before the term National Contact Point (NCP) emerged in official EU terminology. In fact, the official recognition of NCPs by the European Commission (EC) happened in the late 1990s and was partly caused by the pressure of some EU Member States and the EC to improve the services of information and consultancy infrastructures through a better, and in fact more organised and less ad-hoc interaction with European Commission services and the final beneficiaries (i.e. researchers from academia and industry). Since then, NCP systems gained not only recognition but also importance as well. Today, NCPs operate in every country which is either part of the EU or associated to the FP. Information Points with similar structures even exist in many third countries.

The basic economic rationale of an NCP system, however, remained the same since many years when the first national information and consultancy infrastructures have been created: it is the reduction of transaction costs for researchers to participate in the FPs and to increase - through a high participation - a high juste retour, i.e. a pay-back of national contributions allocated into the FPs budget back to the own country. Balancing transaction costs is also understood to reduce immanent failures of the European research system, such as uneven geographical, inter-cultural and cognitive distances within Europe (“centre-periphery-discourse”), including different ways of thinking and acting vis-à-vis the European Research Area (ERA) in general and the FPs in particular.

The relevant transaction costs consist of

- *search costs* (i.e. to help clients to find relevant information – and sometimes partners – through several instruments such as alert services about calls for proposals);
- *information costs* (i.e. to help clients to comprehend relevant information in an easily understandable format, e.g. through summarising main issues such as participation rules on web-pages in national language);
- *advisory costs* (i.e. to help clients to understand in more depth the logic and procedures of the FPs in order to generate research proposals which are better aligned to meet the FP objectives in general and the calls for proposals in particular);
- *legal costs* (i.e. to help clients to know the basic rules and regulations concerning contracting, consortium agreements, financial regulations and procedures and intellectual property rights [IPRs] from the beginning, before they engage themselves in the adventure of collaborative research);

- *communication and travel costs* (i.e. NCPs act as intermediaries on behalf of their clients to communicate issues of more generic nature with EC services which reduces the individual communication and travel efforts of researchers).

All over Europe, NCP systems are considered as a comparatively cost-efficient tool to reduce the transaction costs for the national research communities to participate in FPs. Their advantage compared to other incentive systems, such as top-up funding for successful FP projects, is that NCPs

- reach (potentially) a great number of clients from academia and industry with just a few measures (“one-to-many”-approach),
- are organised in an easily manageable way which is adapted to characteristics of the national system, and thus
- have a reduced administration and financial effort for national governance systems.

Since FPs are following the excellence objective (i.e. the best should be funded) and not the cohesion principle (the most needed should be supported¹), the participation in the FPs generates additional challenges for economically weaker countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The notion of “excellence” became even more enhanced under FP7, which is – not at least – demonstrated through lower success rates than in previous FPs. Although economically weaker countries have to pay lower absolute contributions into the FPs budget (based on GDP-ratios), very often their research and innovation infrastructures are also less functional than in economically more advanced countries, especially in front of the given strong positive correlation between economic performance and R&D advancement. More than this, economically weaker countries quite often have even more aggravated structural deficits within their national research and innovation systems. Thus, it was not surprising, that most of the New Member States of the EU started as net-payers (Lanyi, 2000; Le Masne, 2001), although they could experience the rules of the FP game already in FP4 and FP5, long before they became EU Member States. Research has clearly demonstrated a strong positive correlation between successful FP participation and a good domestic research and innovation system (Schuch, 2005). In other words, countries which do not upgrade their national research and innovation systems run danger to manifest themselves as net-payers in the FPs in a long-time perspective.

Especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country whose contribution to the FP budget is substantially facilitated through a reduced contribution fee and the opportunity to pay the major part of her contribution through IPA funding provided by the EC, is faced with the challenge that as soon as this favourable financial regime ends (not at least in course of EU membership), her national efforts to pay “the bill” will have to increase despite a negative *juste retour*. In order to avoid a situation in which Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a heavy net-payer to the FP, the country has to implement corrective interventions. The organisation of a well-functioning NCP system is one of the easier tasks, both in organisational and financial terms. However, success in FP depends on other essential factors such as national investments in research, national research priorities and structures, etc. These can be significant limiting factors, which cannot be compensated by even the best NCP systems (Reiter et al., 2009). Moreover, estimations about the real effect of proper NCP work do hardly exist due to the difficulty to measure the impact of information provision and advice. Our estimation, based on data provided by FFG and our own experience as former NCPs on one hand and clients of the NCP system on the other, is that a well-functioning NCP system can

¹ which is governing as a thumb-rule the so called structural funds

make up a difference of up to 20%. However, the additional effect of a well-functioning NCP system should not just be measured in terms of more proposal submissions and eventually an increased juste-retour. A good NCP system contributes also to behavioural additionality and to both a responsive and absorptive national ERA governance system. This report will also deal with these issues in more detail.

1.2 Main functions of the NCP system

The main functions of the NCP system are laid down in the “Guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contacts Points (NCP systems) for the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and technological Development (FP7)”. The latest version of this document, which had its origin in a document called “Guiding Principles for Setting up Information and Assistance Network” (from 30 October 1998), is dated from 12/12/2007/European Commission DG RTD A1.

This document stipulates that the basic principles of setting up systems of National Contact Points (NCP systems) are to inform and assist potential participants and contractors in ongoing projects. In fact, however, this postulate is not 100% in line with our findings gained from NCP interviews, since their efforts seem to be higher in pre-project phases (i.e., proposal stimulation, proposal advice and in the proposal submission phase) than support for ongoing projects. The document also says that *“For the new structure and funding scheme of FP7, providing appropriate information and assistance to potential participants is vital for assuring transparency and equal access.”* (Guiding Principles, p. 2).

Reading the document makes clear, that the NCP systems are perceived as very practical and operational establishments whose predominant function is to provide information and advice to those interested to participate in the FP. NCPs are neither established for programmatic nor strategic deliberations and work. The so-called Programme Committees are entrusted from the side of Member States and Associated Countries with the programmatic shaping of the FP at sub-programme level (of course on basis of the EC proposals). At more general strategic level, other bodies (first of all CREST²) are involved in consultations with the EC.

Secondly, the way how NCP systems are organised is not top-down prescribed in detail by the European Commission, but leaves considerable degrees of freedom to the Member States and Associated Countries. It is thus basically up to the Member States and Associated Countries to select the hosting organisation(s) of their own NCP system. The EC, however, requests some minimum compulsory characteristics, such as:

- NCP systems should ensure competence in the different thematic and horizontal priorities of the FP, including a coherent approach and a high level of services to different kinds of actors (SMEs, industry, academics, etc.).
- National governments should be responsible for establishing, financing, nominating, supervising and monitoring NCP systems.
- NCPs have to act as independent organisations(s), being committed to complete impartiality in delivering their services and avoiding any situations which may give rise to a conflict of interests.
- NCPs should be able to act with complete confidentiality as part of their advisory activities towards clients.

² CREST is Scientific and Technical Research Committee, advisory body whose function is to assist the European Commission and the Council of the European Union in performing the tasks incumbent on these Institutions in the sphere of research and technological development

- In order to ensure the coherence of the NCP system, a co-ordination mechanism should be foreseen. For this purpose, a NCP co-ordinator should be nominated. In case of countries with a federal governmental structure, all nomination should be coordinated and forwarded by the federal authorities. For practical management reasons, nominations should be structured following the thematic and horizontal priorities of FP7.

In addition, other characteristics are also recommended, such as NCPs should actively participate in trans-national NCP network activities, have skills in RTD management and financing, show experience and acceptance necessary to reach the research community, have adequate human resources and equipment, be suitable to become part of an international systems for stimulating participation in FP7 and partner search, and are able to co-ordinate the different actors of the NCP system. Moreover, the individual NCPs have to be reachable by phone and/or e-mail during usual working hours and that they have a public website with basic information and services.

The Commission services consider the NCPs as the main structure to provide practical information and assistance to potential FP participants and contractors. Thus, the EC treats NCPs in a preferential way in many aspects, such as

- invitation of NCPs to participate in information and awareness actions;
- invitation of NCPs to thematic conferences which the programme directorates organise;
- provision of timely information on work programmes and roadmaps, upcoming calls, changes in thematic priorities or administrative procedures, statistics of calls and evaluations, relevant information on funded projects etc.;
- provision of leaflets, brochures and other relevant information;
- provision of support for the European wide networking of NCPs as a means of stimulating participation in Community RTD activities and a contribution to the realisation of the ERA;
- provision of training for NCPs;
- and, where appropriate, coverage of additional costs relating to special measures.

In addition, NCPs receive the same information on the outcome of proposal evaluations as the Programme Committee Members (but a little later). For FP7 contacts in third countries (i.e. countries which are neither Member States nor Associated Countries), aggregated evaluation data which are not attributable to individual proposals are provided.

1.3 NCP systems in the national ERA network

Until FP5, European research policy was mainly perceived as the European Framework Programme for RTD. This has changed with FP6 and the announcement of the European Research Area concept on 18 January 2000 by the Commission. The main aim is to contribute to the creation of a more favourable environment for research in Europe. The ERA concept combines 3 ideas:

- The creation of an “internal market” in research (a genuine area of free movement of knowledge, researchers and technology) designed to strengthen cooperation, stimulate competition and optimise the allocation of resources;
- A restructuring of the European research fabric, essentially by improving the coordination of national research activities and policies (which account for most of the research carried out and funded in Europe);

- The development of an European Research policy that looks beyond the funding of research activities, covering all the aspects of other national and European research policy.³

During the last 10 years, these ideas and postulates have been detailed and sharpened through high-level events and initiatives (such as the Ljubljana Process etc.). *“Since a few years, the strategy of the European Research Area is transforming the Framework Programme from a budgetary tool for funding projects and stimulating collaboration to a policy instrument for integration and development. It is leading the way towards the construction of a truly European “research system”, that is organised with greater coherence and complementarity and more efficient in its performance.”*⁴

Evidently, this policy shift affected also national research policies in different aspects. Most obvious, the FP budget continuously rose affecting also the national contributions to the overall budget of the EC. In Austria, for instance, the yearly juste-retour of the FP almost reached the level of the Austrian fund for basic research. In Macedonia, the juste-retour excelled the “free” yearly research budget of the country. But maybe even more important, the FP transformed from a more “external” funding system to a more “internal” one. National research funding mechanisms, for instance, were step-by-step “Europeanised”, not at least through the implementation of the ERA-NET instrument, although on the basis of a variable geometry. A harmonisation of relevant procedures, priorities and even policies beyond the traditional FP implementation took place across EU Member States (e.g. 3% Barcelona target; code of conduct for researchers; open publication strategies etc.). The method of open coordination was successfully employed for such purposes. Finally, also the joint programming approach contributes to an intensified interaction between national and Community research policies.

Bodies and committees serving the implementation of ERA

1. European Council
2. Competitiveness Council
3. CREST (Scientific and Technical Research Committee)
4. High Level Group for Joint Programming
5. SFIC (The Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation)
6. ESFRI (The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures)
7. Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility
8. Knowledge Transfer Group (The CREST Working Group on Knowledge Transfer)

This poses several challenges. In fact, one of the consequences is that Member States are more required to interact with the Commission services, both in procedural and financial terms (e.g. ERA-NETs, joint programming). Another consequence is that the next FP will most probably be more used than before to contribute to a more comprehensive ERA understanding, thus, gradually transforming away from an objective-based funding programme to a more pronounced policy-support instrument.

Member States and Associated Countries who want to influence the direction of this shift, not at least to safeguard national interests, have to be pro-actively involved in the deliberations which are ongoing at different levels.

By definition (see section before), NCPs officially have a role neither in these strategic nor these programmatic negotiation and coordination processes. In reality, however, NCPs in some countries are not always confined to pure operational tasks, but involved in strategic deliberations as well. This is caused by two reasons: firstly, sometimes NCPs fulfil dual functions, especially if they do not work full-time as NCPs.

³ <http://europa.eu>

⁴ Alessandro Damiani, Scientific Attaché of the European Commission in Washington, 2006

They are often civil servants or work close with or in the relevant ministries and are sometimes also responsible for other, more strategic tasks. In fact, many NCPs are at the same time also Programme Committee Members or are involved as experts in the PC meetings.

Secondly, the national ERA governance system is usually limited in size and scope, especially in times of post-crisis budget consolidation requirements, and is pressured to take advantage also of the expertise of professionals who have a thorough understanding of European research matters. Some NCPs qualify for this.

Finally, the more complex the ERA system becomes, the more necessity to coordinate opinions, strategies and resources within each country (as well as between different countries) becomes evident. Thus, domestic NCPs as well as NCP offices in Brussels and representatives in PCs might become more involved in liaising with CREST, and other high-ranked advisory or decision making bodies regarding the further development of the ERA. However, there is no specific rule for embedding of a NCP system into the national ERA network. Many civil servants are often supposed to allocate a certain percentage of their time to their NCP work.

In such a situation, it is difficult to make a differentiating assessment about what is truly NCP-work and what is not. Indications might be, for example, how many NCPs from ministries are parts of decision-making bodies; how many of NCPs are members of PCs or are there any who are either in close cooperation or even delegates in high-level bodies such as CREST, SFIC⁵, ESFRI⁶ etc? NCPs, although predominantly operative in role and tasks, should thus be acknowledged and recognised in the national ERA governance system. Their resources should be used in an optimum way, without endangering their original work and the democratic legitimacy of national decision-making, especially when considering that ministries are involved in around 2/3 of the NCP systems all over Europe and that all country NCP systems are at least partly financed by their national governments.

⁵ SFIC is the Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation, a dedicated configuration of CREST with the objective to facilitate the further development, implementation and monitoring of the international dimension of ERA.

⁶ ESFRI is the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, a multi-disciplinary forum for EU Member States and Associated Countries for discussing and coordinating projects and general developments in the area of Research Infrastructures (RI).

2. Comparative Analysis

2.1 Services provided and tools applied by the NCP systems

The main NCP services are stipulated in the “Guiding Principles” document⁷. They can be systematised in three main clusters:

1. Information and awareness raising;
2. Advice, assistance and training;
3. Signposting and feedback.

Information and awareness raising subsumes activities of more general nature, very often in one-to-many formats, including

- the circulation of general and specific documentation on FPs, including participation rules and conditions for submitting proposals through postings or eMail-distribution lists;
- organisation of promotional activities with or without Commission services such as info-days, presentations in conferences, establishment of web sites, production and dissemination of newsletters or participation in stands at fairs etc;
- specific promotion activities to reach out for certain target groups such as SMEs or women, mainly through targeted workshops and road shows;
- raising awareness on the fundamental objectives behind the FP and relevant Community interventions in the field of research and innovation through presentations at info-days;
- raising awareness for other programmes such as CIP, Eureka and COST through distribution of promotional material, website hints.

Advice, assistance and training subsumes activities of a more targeted nature, very often in one-to-few or even one-to-one formats including

- detailed explanations on administrative, financial and legal issues through group or individual consultancy sessions;
- advice on how to set up appropriate management and legal structures in projects with large budgets and/or numerous participants or other structural challenges;
- assistance in partner search by using CORDIS, co-operation networks, liaison with other NCP systems, business support network services etc.;
- training seminars for newcomers and specific target groups to increase their participation in the FPs (e.g. SMEs; financial managers);
- organisation of targeted training seminars for other intermediaries and information multipliers (e.g. external relation offices at universities; chambers of commerce etc.);
- proposal checks.

⁷ <ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/fp7-ncp-guiding-principles.pdf>

Signposting and feedback subsumes activities such as

- provision of feedback to the Commission services on any problems and difficulties in implementing and participating in the FP;
- signposting to other research or business support network services those potential participants who require assistance, for example in terms of innovation support or technology transfer, typically dealt with by these networks;
- signposting potential applicants to other programmes or instruments which might be of benefit for them (e.g. CIP; COST, Eureka; national programmes; regional initiatives etc.);
- informing the Commission services about planned NCP activities and events requiring participation of Commission staff.

NCPs, however, provide also **additional services** which are not mentioned in the “Guiding Principles”, such as

- monitoring participation in FPs and provision of participation statistics;
- production of publications (folders, leaflets, success stories);
- Information sessions and training for ministry staffs and other stakeholders;
- delivering eMail based call alerts;
- (assistance in) proposal writing;
- provision of professional vocational education for researchers and research managers about European research funding mechanisms and project implementation;
- mass media communication and PR;
- pro-active networking and communication with EC, other NCPs and other relevant international stakeholders;
- provision of a dedicated library to NCPs and their clients;
- assistance in contract negotiation, the management of projects, project reporting and the drafting of consortium agreements;
- provision of workstations for domestic researchers in the Brussels NCP liaison office;
- encouragement of the participation of national experts in evaluation processes.

In addition, some but not all countries make use of additional tools next to the regular basic instruments (such as info-days, individual consultancy sessions or group mailings):

- Production of regular newsletters;
- Provision of intra-net functions to coordinate among the different NCPs (e.g. France) and sometimes even other FP relevant information and advice infrastructures (including document repositories etc.);
- Establishment of a liaison office in Brussels;
- Provision of project preparation funding and in some cases also provision of top-up funding for selected FP projects.

In order to fulfil these services, the following essential resources and tools have to be compulsory available:

- Qualified (and sufficiently funded) personnel (and office infrastructure) to provide professional information and consultancy services;
- Establishment and continuous maintenance and development of a client database;
- A regularly updated website with a good information architecture and easy accessibility.

2.2 Quality assurance of NCP systems

Quality assurance of NCP services in Europe is neither standardised nor does every NCP system implement such a system. The main approaches towards quality assurance can be summarised as follows:

2.2.1 Performance based contracting

This approach is oriented towards the achievement of pre-defined goals in a rather narrow range of categories. Specific, measurable, applicable, relevant, economic and clearly attributable indicators to measure the quality and performance of NCP services are, however, rather an exception than the rule. This holds especially true for output and impact indicators. Thus, very often indicators which measure inputs and activities in terms of size and scope are applied as proxies to assess the overall performance of the NCP system. Examples for activity oriented indicators are

- number of organised events (and number of attendees);
- number of consultancies (measured in time input);
- number of web hits and average page view duration;
- number of successfully supported partner searches;
- number of clients reached by different instruments (such as size and scope of eMail distribution lists) etc.

On the other hand, the most obvious output indicator, namely the number of FP participations in projects selected for funding is hardly clearly attributable to the services provided by NCPs.

Performance based contracting is quite regularly implemented with NCP host organisations external to a responsible ministry. Performance contracting is not applied within in-house ministry NCP systems. The verification whether or not the pre-defined performance goals have been attained or not is usually done by an official working in the organisation which commissioned the NCP host organisation (regularly a ministry) based on more or less standardised reports provided by the NCP system.

2.2.2 Continuous indicator based monitoring

Often complementary, but not always necessarily depended from performance contracting based quality assurance systems is a continuous indicator based monitoring system to assess the quality and the development of NCP services. Similar to performance based contracting, this approach requires a clear definition of indicators and data collection procedures. The services provided by the NCPs are usually monitored in terms of input or activity indicators, such as

- the number of provided consultancies (differentiated in scope and size, e.g. by measuring the consultancy in minutes or quarters of an hour);
- the number of proposal checks;
- the number of clients contacted via mass-mailings or newsletters.

The monitoring is done in-house by the NCP system herself. More quality oriented indicators subsume questionnaire based feedback from clients. Feedback forms from participants of info-days or training seminars are quite regularly deployed. Feedback on individual consultancies is exceptionally practiced. However, it is evident, that even the best training or advice does not necessarily guarantee a positive impact in terms of a good proposal or a successful application.

The approach of the FFG to measure the impact of its services by comparing the success of Austrian FP proposers who received advice/assistance from NCPs with a control group of those who did not make use of NCP services is an interesting and recommended methodology, which requires clear definition of indicators and data collection procedures in order not to distort the findings and to guarantee an unbiased approach. The results of this approach, which has been implemented 10 years ago, show a significant effect of good NCP services in terms of superior success rates of those researchers who have been consulted compared to those who were not consulted by NCPs.

2.2.3 Benchmarking

Next to the problem to identify right indicators, an uncertainty in terms of benchmarks exists. What is good practice, what does “quality” mean? Are 10 information days per year a sufficiently high number, a much too low number or even an unnecessarily high number and a waste of resources? Therefore, quite many NCP systems do compare their services with each other in order to position the performance of their undertakings. Especially for inexperienced NCP systems, twinning arrangements with advanced NCP systems seem to be favourable in this respect. Nevertheless, given the basic problem of a lack of standardised indicators (and the corresponding effort of professional data collection), these functional comparisons remain mostly rather qualitative in nature. Thus, complementary comparisons over time are usually introduced too. Moreover, participation in EU funded NCP projects usually offer learning experiences to the NCPs through comparison of NCP activities, formal and informal benchmarking, joint workshops and training sessions, etc.

2.2.4 Accreditation

The Italian NCP host organisation APRE is an example for the use of external accreditation. In order to assess the fulfilment of the organisation’s commitment to provide timely and precise services and at the same time to improve the level of quality related to information, assistance and training activities on a continuous basis, a system of periodic review of the internal work procedures has been gradually introduced and developed into a Management Quality System. Today such a system comprises an ensemble of procedural instruments that support various activities and allows an evaluation of the pre-established objectives. The system was first developed in accordance with the UNI-EN-ISO 9002-1994 regulation and thereafter adapted to the UNI-EN-ISO 9001:2000 one. In 2001, APRE obtained the Quality Certification for its services regarding assistance and information. In 2002, the Certification was broadened to include planning and provision of training for the promotion of European scientific and technological research Programmes”⁸.

2.2.5 External evaluation

Another important approach to assure quality of NCP services is to employ external evaluation procedures. Institutional evaluation is an important procedure to overcome the problem that NCP systems usually do not operate in competitive systems (or “markets”). Generally speaking, competition is said to guarantee a continuous strive

⁸ www.apre.it

for improvement and a “survival of the fittest” market belief. In reality, however, NCP systems are monopolistic structures, quite often operating within ministries or close to public administration. In order not to allow NCP systems to develop into less efficient trajectories or even functional deadlocks, some countries evaluate their NCP systems. Such external evaluations differ considerably in size and scope. Some external evaluations are done on a regular basis in a give time span; some are more ad-hoc. Only a few make use of foreign evaluators. External evaluations are usually multi-method based, including questionnaires diffused to NCP clients, interviews with stakeholders, own data recordings based on main indicators, focus group discussions etc.

In general, the use of external evaluations to assess the quality of NCP services seems to correspond to the overall evaluation culture in research, technological development and innovation of a country.

Complementing these five approaches mentioned above, it is evident that quality depends on a number of classical factors, such as

- standardised and relevant human resource development (HRD) activities;
- a working environment which enables exchange of knowledge, interaction and networking with clients, the EC, other stakeholders and NCPs from other organisations and countries;
- a basic readiness for continuous organisational development and improvement with a high external and internal service orientation etc.

To sum up, our recordings, however, have shown that

- clear HRD plans for NCPs are only exceptionally available;
- standardised in-depth and interactive training provided by the EC is lacking;
- NCPs with several professional assignments are rather involved in ad-hoc interactions only;
- despite of good will of many individual NCPs working in ministries, a full-fledged service orientation is usually not realised.

2.3 Typology of NCP systems

Our interviews revealed that NCPs all over Europe seem to have a quite homogeneous perception of their duties and tasks, despite the very different formats of NCP system architectures. In general, the following prototypes of NCP systems could be identified:

- i) inner-ministry NCP system
- ii) NCP system coordinated by a Ministry, but decentralised operations
- iii) public agency based NCP-system
- iv) project-based contracted NCP system with a public organisation
- v) project-based contracted NCP system with a private non-profit organisation
- vi) federal multi-level type NCP-system

It goes without saying that several organisational transitions between these prototypes exist. Moreover, with exception of the inner-ministry NCP system which has a strong centralisation aspect and the federal multi-level type NCP-system which has a strong decentralised structure, all other NCP system prototypes are not necessarily organisationally pre-defined in terms of centralisation/decentralisation.

2.3.1 Inner-ministry NCP system

Under this system's architecture, usually public servants are carrying out the work of a NCP, however, seldom in full-time capacity. Example for such an approach is Slovenia where NCPs are mainly centralised within the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Directorate of Technology.

Abstracted from the very specific example of Slovenia, this prototypical inner-ministry approach has advantages and disadvantages as confirmed by some of our interview partners. The most obvious advantage is seemingly cost-efficiency, since no external information and advisory structures have to be established and maintained, but existing inner-ministerial capacities are upgraded with additional NCP functions. This might also be the main reason, why NCPs in ministries are pre-dominantly working just on part-time basis as NCPs. Moreover, the costs of such inner-ministerial staff can obviously be easier subsumed in general budget appropriations. On the other hand, the absence of a dedicated NCP budget (whose main cost category doubtlessly consists of personnel costs) hinders a transparent full-cost based controlling of the NCP system.

Another evident advantage of the inner-ministry NCP system solution is the proximity of NCPs to the national ERA governance, which is exercised by state authorities (i.e. usually ministries). Many inner-ministerial NCPs are also at the same time Programme Committee Members or work very closely with delegates to important ERA bodies such as CREST. Vivid information flow, however, is not per se guaranteed by the inner-ministry approach, but must also be secured through certain arrangements.

The most obvious disadvantage seems to be the ostensible distance from the final beneficiaries of NCP work and the organisational encapsulation in bureaucratic procedures which do not always provide necessary degrees of freedom for flexible work. The first issue might become even more problematic, the larger the country is.

2.3.2 NCP system coordinated by a Ministry, but decentralised operations

This system's architecture is an example of a multi-level system, which is headed by a central NCP coordinator who is located in the responsible ministry, but supported by a number of NCPs who work in other organisational settings. Examples for this approach are Greece and France. NCP coordination in Greece is done via the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (which is part of a ministry), but the NCP network itself is spread mainly across public entities (such as universities) with regional antennas. In France, the system in which NCPs are located mainly in major public research organisations, universities, agencies and associations, is managed and financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research – Office for European Affairs. The most obvious advantage of this system is its ability to cover vast regional dimensions through assigning different organisations in different regions with NCP tasks. Another advantage is the concentration of the NCP leadership in the ministry, which potentially facilitates the coordination with the national ERA governance, if adequate administrative arrangements are in place.

A sufficient resource endowment of the NCP coordinator, especially indicated by the fact whether s/he is fulltime appointed or only part-time, is an important requirement to guarantee a pro-active flow of information to the other NCPs. Good information exchange and steering of the entire NCP system causes considerable efforts and time-input. If the NCP coordinator is only part-time employed, his or her work is endangered to become rather reactive than pro-active and might be reduced to a more or less retrospective monitoring function based on yearly reporting and occasional participations in national events.

The financial regime under this system's architecture is usually based on the additional funding principle, which subsume conference organisation costs, printing costs or travel costs of NCPs to Brussels or elsewhere (if not paid by the EC). Personnel costs of NCPs are usually not directly paid under the NCP budget regime, but

indirectly through the – mostly – public institutions which employ the NCP. These public institutions, however, are regularly paid through public budget allocations which include the personnel costs of the NPCs too (e.g. general university funds). Thus, a considerable part of the NCP costs are so to say “hidden”.

Other disadvantages of this approach are that sometimes services provided by the different NCPs are not homogeneous (due to the lack of central steering capacity and missing central quality assurance mechanisms) and that – due to the absence of public funding for representative business community organisations – sometimes a rather low level of cooperation with the private sector and especially with SMEs can be detected.

2.3.3 Public agency based NCP-system

This approach is often perceived as a possibility to combine the principle of public responsibility and accountability with more flexibility in terms of service provision than would be possible within inner-ministry procedures. Examples for this NCP system’s architecture are Austria, Sweden and Estonia, but also to some extent Hungary. All four examples are characterised by a preponderant centralised nature. The Austrian NCP system is centrally hosted by the FFG, the Austrian Research promotion Agency, a public non-profit organization owned by two Austrian Ministries (i.e. the Republic of Austria).

VINNOVA in Sweden is a governmental agency under the Ministry of Enterprise, covering also national funding programmes.

The Archimedes Foundation in Estonia was established by the Estonian government in 1997 with the aim to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes in the field of training, education, RTD and innovation. Estonia, however, has not a pure prototypical public agency based system’s architecture, since in Estonia two national NCP coordinators operate, and only one of them is located in Archimedes Foundation, the other one is in the Ministry of Education and Science. Thus, this organisational set-up is a combination of a NCP system coordinated by a Ministry, but with mostly centralised operations within one agency.

In Hungary, the NCP system is centrally organised and mostly embedded into the government’s office responsible for science and technology policy planning and implementation, called the National Office for Research and Technology (NKTH), which has a key role in developing and implementing Hungary’s science, technology and innovation policies, and, thus, fulfils functions which are very much resembling rather those of a ministry than a pure operational agency.

A characteristic for a public agency based NCP system is that its NCP operations are usually limited in time through a special contract or arrangement. This time-limitation can vary considerably between one year long assignments and multiple years assignments (usually for the period of a FP). Such NCP system architecture is usually regularly evaluated through external evaluators and characterised by internal full-fledged reporting and monitoring efforts. The costs of such NCP system architecture are transparently disclosed on full-cost model basis, which might look higher at first sight than in more “hidden” arrangements (see above), but can actually more easily be controlled.

Other advantages of this approach are:

- higher organisational flexibility;
- more focus on the major NCP functions, developing services and closer contacts with the NCP clients;
- better positioning the NCP system into its ‘market’;
- good distribution of information across the NCPs and

- higher opportunity to create critical mass of NCP expertise in developing the services provided, tools applied and participating in projects aiming these actions.

A disadvantage of this system's architecture might be that the establishment of a public agency usually requires a higher organisational effort and a legal act and is not necessarily free of political, non-professional interventions. Moreover, a public agency might tend to become monopolistic (like a ministry) and, eventually sluggish and inefficient in its service delivery. Another difficulty is to find a good division of labour between the more strategic orientation of a ministry (which is usually the patron and donor of the agency) and the more operative orientation of the agency herself. Overlaps, which might occur in dynamically evolving environments such as the European Research Area, can cause conflicts and irritations. An example of the integration of an originally agency-structure into the ministry can be found in The Netherlands, where EG-Liaison merged with SenterNovem and became integrated into the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

2.3.4 Project-based contracted NCP system with a public organisation

This NCP system's architecture shares a lot of characteristics with the public agency based one (see above). The main difference is that based on a clear contract a suitable public organisation is assigned with quasi-agency functions to implement the national NCP system. A difficulty in this respect is the identification of a suitable public organisation, which does not constitute a conflict of interest.

An example for this NCP system's approach is Poland. There the NCP system was established under the roof of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). In order to avoid any conflict of interest due to the obvious potential interest of PAN to get involved in European FP projects too, a separated governance and financial regime for the Polish NCP system was established on contract basis. Another example for this system's architecture, although already different from the prototype structure, is Germany, where the main NCP system has been located under the legal umbrella of the DLR (German Aerospace Center) without, however, any closer organisational integration into the host organisation. The NCPs are consolidated there in the EU Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research hosted by DLR. The work is regulated through a framework contract with yearly adaptation mechanisms (also in financial terms). In addition, a vast network of regional and thematic contact points operate in Germany. Both, the German and the Polish model dispose of a strong NCP centre, accompanied by decentralised regional and thematic focal points.

Also this project-based contracted NCP system approach is based on the full-cost principle. Another advantage is its more competitive character compared to the inner-ministry solution or the public agency solution. It is also easier to terminate a project-based contract with an independent organisation, than to close down an established public agency, even when its services are not efficient or even not demanded anymore.

A disadvantage might be the relative distance of such a NCP system solution to other elements of the national ERA governance, which can only be overcome by pro-active communication and information-exchange arrangements and settings and a clear understanding of competences and division of labour especially on the side of the NCPs. Both the Polish and German NCP system demonstrate, however, that such an approach can bring fruitful results in terms of qualified human resources and expertise and valuable contributions of the NCP system into the national ERA governance.

2.3.5 Project based contracting with private non-profit organisations

The only fundamental difference to the previously described NCP system's architecture is the fact that this approach does not limit itself on public organisations in terms of subcontracting NCP services, but has a wider outreach into the civil society and enables also private, usually not-for-profit organisations to become assigned with NCP functions. Evidently, such an approach is again project-based through dedicated contracting with limited duration, regularly monitored and evaluated and rooted in a full-cost model approach. An example for this NCP system architecture is Italy.

The NCP system in Italy is centralised within APRE – Agency for the Promotion of European Research – which has been nominated by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research as NCP host organisation for FP7 in 2007, under the coordination of the Italian Research Ministry. APRE exists since 1990 as a not for profit association to support – inter alia - the participation of Italian researchers in international research programmes promoted by the European Commission. Next to the strong NCP centre located in the head office of APRE with 30 employees, also 18 helpdesks in almost every Italian region complement the system.

As the example of APRE shows, this prototype can be used to leverage, at least theoretical, also own funds. In the case of APRE, these are mainly membership fees from universities etc. as quid pro quo for information and advice services offered by APRE. But for more specialised services, APRE also charges additional fees. Certainly, an obvious disadvantage of this system is the structurally quite obvious distance between the NCP system and the national ERA governance, since the first is rooted in the private (civil society) sector and the latter in the public sphere. In order to create synergies between these two different modi operandi special formal and informal arrangements have to be deployed. Finally, it should be mentioned, that private providers operate on own risk and are subjected to liability (which might be an advantage for public services not to be concerned with this) and in principle endangered to enter into bankruptcy, an issue, however, which should not be overestimated in practice and which can be controlled to a certain extent.

2.3.6 Federal multi-level type NCP-system

A distinct decentralised NCP system's architecture can be found in Belgium. Here the NCP system is strongly rooted in the federal constitution of the country. Thus, NCP assignments and responsibilities are to be found on different constitutional levels: at community level, regional level and federal level. Thus, the federal NCP system for instance serves only the federal research institutes. In fact, five independent NCP systems operate in Belgium. The French speaking clients are served by FNRS (responsible for higher education institutions) and by UWE (for the business sector). IWT serves the Flemish speaking clients and Brussels, the capital of the country (and also a region) runs its own NCP system (hosted by BEA).

Not surprising, significant differences in terms of service provision can be found in the actual practice. This is also caused by the different donors of NCPS and funding regimes, which vary considerably in size and scope. Also the introduction of a formal quality assurance system is hampered by different responsibilities and competences. The representation of the different constitutional levels might also be complicated from the outsider's point of view, since governments at each level have equal right to nominate NCPs and there is no central authority to approve or block such a decision. Some experts doubt if such a NCP system's architecture would be able to operate in an efficient manner and to functionally survive outside of Belgium, given the obvious proximity to the European Commission services. The advantage of this system is that it guarantees a good outreach to the final beneficiaries due to its decentralised structure and that it is fully respecting the constitutional requirements.

To abstract from the specific Belgium case, in general, such a differentiated system is perceived as very complex and difficult to align (not to speak about coordination and steering). Potentially, it could easily become cost-inefficient due to overlapping and duplicated work when neither a clear division of labour nor a clear assignment of the different system's elements towards separated target groups is implemented through adequate organisational structures.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations for the NCP System in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Based on our findings we tempt to draw the following six main conclusions and recommendations for the NCP system in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

1. The association of Bosnia-Herzegovina to FP7 was not only a technical procedure but also a political symbol for the further integration of the country into European structures in general, and the European Research Area in particular. The association has been substantially facilitated by the European Commission in financial terms. Such a favourable agreement could end with the end of the ongoing FP. Then, Bosnia-Herzegovina could become a net-payer to the common FP budget. In order to minimise this danger, structural reforms to upgrade science and technology in Bosnia-Herzegovina have to be implemented. Among these necessary measures, the establishment of targeted "intermediary organisations" such as a well functioning NCP system seems to be comparatively manageable in terms of organisational procedures and financial efforts. All EU Member States and Associated Countries to the FP have, thus, established so called National Contact Point (NCP) systems to inform and consult their research communities about participation in FP7. Such a NCP structure was also developed in Bosnia-Herzegovina with funding provided through the Austrian development cooperation. It became one of the first NCP systems in the Western Balkan region. Still the operation of the NCP system in BiH is heavily dependent on the financial support from international/foreign sources.

Recommendation n°1

We strongly, recommend to use the external funding provided by Austria in an optimum way to make the operation of NCP system more active and to make effort to ensure national funds for co-funding of the the NCP system. A good NCP system can make a significant difference in terms of participation in the European Framework Programme, although even the best NCP system cannot overcome fundamental structural problems inherent to the RTD system.

2. The basic NCP system's architecture in the EU varies considerably from country to country. We could identify the following prototypes which show different inclinations towards either more centralised or towards more decentralised organisational and geographical structures:
 - i) Inner-ministry NCP system
 - ii) NCP system coordinated by a Ministry, but decentralised operations
 - iii) Public agency based NCP-system
 - iv) Project-based contracted NCP system with a public organisation
 - v) Project-based contracted NCP system with a private non-profit organisation
 - vi) Federal multi-level type NCP-system

Bosnia and Herzegovina has to opt for its own structure and to provide the necessary arrangements and resources for it. Each of the alternative system's architectures

described in this report has advantages and disadvantages. Much depends on the very practical way of implementation.

Recommendation n°2

Given the constitutional fabric of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we recommend to opt for alternative ii) (NCP system coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, but with decentralised operations). Since our findings also have shown that the ideal NCP system is rather outside the ministry, but supervised by it, we recommend securing a strong NCP coordinator's position if a decentralised NCP system coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs will be chosen. This requires a sufficient resource endowment to implement the necessary communication and coordination tasks, both domestically and internationally.

The decentralised NCPs should be integrated on a contractual basis into the overall NCP system. Any conflict of interest with the decentralised host organisations should be avoided through clearly regulated distinct governance and financial procedures (i.e. dedicated budgets and operational autonomy in coordination with the NCP coordinator) based on contracts.

We further recommend implementing a central NCP website with an intra-net function shared by the different NCPs and focal points who operate at different organisational levels throughout the country.

Whichever model is chosen, it should have a clear governance structure, a committed host organisation with a strong service attitude and customer orientation, committed management and staff with a proven working culture, a performance based resource allocation, which is constantly assessed, and a cross-cutting quality assurance system in place to guarantee equal high-level service provision on all levels of the NCP system.

3. Our findings have shown that in many countries like Sweden, Austria, The Netherlands national funding for the central NCP organisation covers almost 100% of efforts; while a few others like Italy are partly funded via contributions by members and competitively acquired resources. NCP systems in Greece or France are publicly supported through their host organisations (e.g. universities). In average, around 20 NCPs are covering the majority of FP sub-programmes (plus occasionally other initiatives) within a NCP system, but in most countries these NCPs are doing other jobs too and are only part-time engaged in NCP work. Many NCPs have additional support personnel at their side. In Bosnia-Herzegovina only 2 contacts (NCP coordinator and INCO NCP who is the same person) could be identified at the end of May 2010 at the relevant CORDIS website (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/get-support_en.html).

Recommendation n°3

We strongly recommend securing a minimum of 90% of funding for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian NCP system in the mid-term perspective (up to 5 years) in order to concentrate on its core tasks and not to get deflected by the necessity to acquire competitive additional funding, which usually consumes disproportionately high resource, time and energy input. Although EU sources can be exceptionally substantial, their funding is not reliable in terms of sustainability. Moreover, since NCP services are generally perceived as public tasks, it is difficult to rely on external membership or training fees. We are aware that the available funds in Bosnia and Herzegovina are scarce, but we recommend to benchmark with other small countries such as Estonia, Slovenia or Macedonia. In Estonia 17 NCPs, operating, in Slovenia 19 and in Macedonia 12 are working.

At least for the main relevant sub-programmes of FP7 a NCP should work at least half-time (i.e. "health", "food, agriculture and fisheries, biotechnology", "ICT", "energy", "environment", "transport", "people programme", "regions of knowledge and research potential", "COST and EUREKA" and one central NCP – preferably directly attached

to the central NCP coordinator – who works on “financial and legal issues”). . Most importantly, NCP nomination should be done only on the basis of professional merits.

NCPs must maintain daily contacts with all focal points at the universities and faculties and other institutions which have capacities for and interest in participating in FP7, COST and EUREKA. NCPs must maintain good cooperation with their counterparts in other countries and maintain regular contacts with the relevant EC officers responsible for the European Framework Programme for RTD as well as with the COST and EUREKA secretariats to be informed in a timely manner and to enable a quick dissemination of relevant information to institutions in BIH. NCPs must maintain cooperation in different thematic fields with the relevant ministries at all levels of government in BIH.

4. Although NCPs are working under different organisational settings, their understanding of what they are supposed to do and deliver seems to be quite homogenous all over Europe. Across all our case studies we could identify a significant propensity towards dissemination of general information and awareness raising as core task of a NCP. The most important tool for this one-to-many exercise is the operation of websites, followed by the organisation of information days and newsletters. The operation of stands in large conferences or fairs and the organisation of road shows were not high-rated in this respect. The second important task of NCPs is the provision of advice, assistance and training, typically in one-to-few or one-to-one formats. Individual consultation, not surprisingly, is thus the most frequently applied mode of work of NCPs. Individual consultations via phone or other electronic means are prevailing, but also face-to-face consultation is frequently exercised. Second in importance in terms of provision of advice and assistance is the accomplishment of training seminars and workshops, followed by the instrument of group consultations. After general information dissemination and awareness raising and provision of advice, assistance and training, NCPs consider policy support and the participation in projects as their third most important tasks. Some, but by far not all NCP systems, are also particularly concerned with SME support measures. The administration and allocation of funds (e.g. premium for successful projects or grants for proposal preparation or other funding schemes to promote FP participation of researchers) is only exercised by a limited number of NCP systems such as Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary, Sweden or Austria. Proposal writing, however, is not considered to be a NCP task at all (but training on proposal writing is sometimes exercised).

Recommendation n°4

In front of these findings we recommend a focus of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian NCP system on the implementation of the following tools:

- Further development of the basically excellent existing website, which has to be regularly updated by the NCPs and which should be extended through a intranet function to ensure coordination among the decentralised NCPs. This intranet function should also have a WIKI function, a document repository and knowledge management support features.
- In order to complement the one-to-many approach of the website, a regular newsletter and an e-alert system should be re-established and deployed when new calls for proposals are launched or for other important news or activities.
- Infodays are usually time-consuming and should, thus, be planned in a timely fashion and organized especially during the period in which EC is announcing calls for proposals. Infodays should be organized with smaller groups of participants and a larger number of thematic infodays should be organized to provide professional assistance to the applicants. .

- Given the increasing complexity of the FP (in terms of contents and procedures) and the accelerated notion of excellence in FP7, it is strongly recommended to provide more individual consultation services than previously. It goes without saying, that, firstly, only well trained personnel with sufficient professional experience can do this. In order to safeguard a sufficient high level of professionalism, quality and expertise, we recommend to organise also training sessions and group consultations with potential FP applicants by calling on external experts (either domestic or from abroad). Evidently, a budget to pay competitive fees has to be secured for this. Secondly, all NCPs have to have clearly regulated and transparent working hours in which they can be reached by telephone or eMail. Each NCP must be provided by his/her employing institution with a functional workstation including PC, broadband internet and mail access, desk, telephone or mobile, printer and necessary consumables. The operating hours of each NCP have to be published on the NCP website.

5. Our study has revealed that internal full-fledged mechanisms to assure the quality of NCP work are rather the exception than the rule, but that different countries employ different approaches to secure the quality of services. Typically a combination of the following approaches is deployed:

- i) Performance based contracting
- ii) Continuous indicator based monitoring
- iii) Benchmarking
- iv) Accreditation
- v) External evaluation

Most common is the delivery of structured reports of the NCPs to their patrons (which are normally the responsible ministries).

Recommendation n°5

We also recommend a combination of quality assurance and evaluation approaches and a responsive reporting system and reporting structure well embedded in a project-cycle management. In terms of reporting structure it should be made clear from the very beginning for which indicators respective data have to be collected, recorded and analysed throughout the entire NCP system. Although usually input indicators are more frequently used, we recommend complementing them with a few output and impact indicators. The model of the Austrian NCP system could be used for this, especially since the Austrian FFG intends to start a joint QA activity for NCP systems. In addition, it should be continued to use feedback questionnaires at promotion events. Moreover, we recommend that each contract with each individual NCP host organisation should be performance-based designed as of its inception. We believe that contracts should have a duration of around 3 years in order to avoid the effort of yearly public procurement and contracting. Nevertheless, it must be contractually secured that the patron (i.e. the donor or client of the NCP system) has the right to terminate a contract before expiration if the performance goals are not achieved. We believe in general, that regular competitive contracting increases competitiveness. The implementation of a twinning-mechanism with an experienced NCP organisation would be favourable to kick-off the first two restart years of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian NCP system. If this is not possible, European projects should be proactively used for benchmarking of the own services and procedures. Accreditation, however, seems to pre-mature given the state of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian NCP system. Finally, we strongly recommend exercising in regular time-lags an external evaluation of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian NCP system, preferably combining domestic and international evaluation expertise. A good timing seems to be between 3 and 5 years.

6. In line with the stepwise realisation of the European Research Area concept, the national ERA governance herself becomes more and more important. This was already visible in FP6 with the strong emergence of the ERA-NETs, which requested substantial national co-funding besides the funds provided by the European Commission, and accelerated in FP7 with the opening of national RTD programmes, the endeavour to harmonise rules, procedures and practices of the EU Member States (and associated countries) in various aspects relevant for research and technological development, the postulation of common objectives, the implementation of the open method of coordination etc. It can be assumed that this trend continues under FP8 with the notion of joint programming and other approaches. Since member states and countries associated to the FP are more and more required to participate in these endeavours and challenged to secure their national interests, national ERA governance moves more into the centre of national RTD policy making. Although the pressure and the requirements to coordinate at European level seems to continuously increase and makes networking efforts at different national and international levels a necessity, the available national resources to tackle this challenge remain rather limited. However, if NCPs are well embedded in the national ERA governance system, they could eventually take-over intelligence services too (in division of labour with the ministry and government). Our findings have shown that the inclusion of NCPs in the national ERA governance system varies considerably from country to country. However, not only the formal organisation of the division of labour and corresponding contractual and procedural agreements between the responsible ministry (or ministries) and the NCP system influences the degree of NCP inclusion in national ERA governance, also numerous informal factors are influential. One of our findings is that in general, NCPs and Programme Committee members are usually closely related to each other in practice in most NCP systems. It is not unusual, that NCPs are also acting PC members and vice versa, especially when the NCPs are located under the umbrella of a ministry. On the other hand, NCPs are only occasionally, and if at all than mostly at individual merits level, engaged in other bodies of ERA governance. Based on our case studies we can conclude that the embedding of NCPs in national ERA governance is usually rather loose and that a need for more coordination and better information flows is evident, but that in a few countries, such as Slovenia (where NCPs are mostly part of the ministry) and Poland (where NCPs are outside the ministerial structures), NCPs do already now substantially support the national ERA governance.

Recommendation n°6

Given the limited size and scope of the S&T system in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the multi-level governance system, which goes in hand with a heavy national coordination effort, we recommend to pool ERA governance capacities and to capitalise the expertise of NCPs in this respect. At least for the duration of FP7 and for the establishment of a good NCP system in Bosnia-Herzegovina we recommend nominating NCPs also as Programme Committee members or at least to include them as experts in the Program Committees. This reduces information and search costs and secures internally an information optimum (which must be complemented by adequate and meaningful information flows to external stakeholders).

We also recommend to integrate the NCP coordinator into the national ERA governance system by entrusting him or her with one national ERA governance position

4. Country case studies

4.1 Austria

Population(million; 2008):	8.3		GERD/GDP (%; 2008):	2.7
Capital:	Vienna			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	39 400		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	6
Membership in the EU:	1995			

4.1.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Austrian NCP system

Number of NCPs:		18 officially assigned NCPs
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):		Approx. 30 including administrative and secretarial staff
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:		0
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):		0
The name of the hosting organisation:		FFG – Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft (Austrian Research Promotion Agency) Division for European and International Programmes (EIP)
	Its legal status:	Public Agency
	Linkages to the government:	Strong (5 Austrian Federal Ministries and the Federal Economic Chamber contract FFG EIP to implement NCP tasks for FP7 and finance the NCP system. A straight-forward governance structure has been set up)
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised (but regional hubs for first-contacts exist)
	organisationally:	Centralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €		Confidential information
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	90%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%

	EU	0%
	Other international	0%
	Other	10%
Services provided	Free of charge	Almost all services
	For fee	FFG Programme for highly specialised activities Academy for Consultants and some highly specialised activities

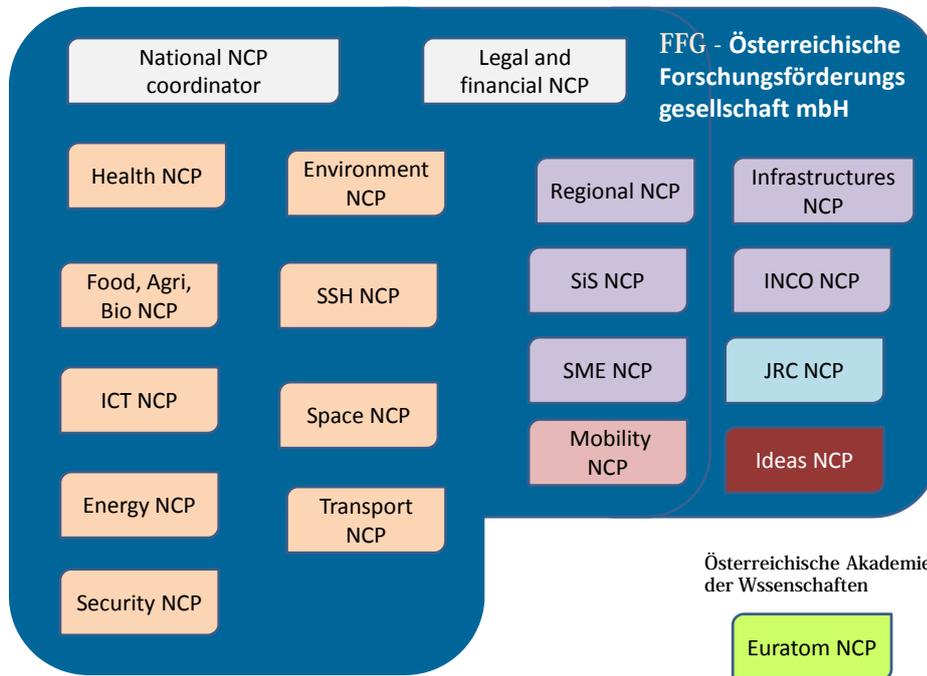
4.1.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Austrian NCP system is centralised and located at the FFG, the Austrian Research Promotion Agency, which is also the national funding agency for applied research in Austria.

FFG in general provides services for Austrian enterprises, research institutions and researchers – from the management of public funding programmes to consulting services in all phases of technology development and innovation, from support for integration into European research programmes and networks to the promotion of Austria's interests at the European and the international level.

FFG is a public agency based on own law, and established by the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (bmvit) and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) on basis of a decision made by the federal government. As a provider of funding services, however, the FFG also works for other national and international institutions. All NCPs (there are NCPs for all priorities except for nuclear research and training) are located at the EIP department (Division for European and International Programmes), part of the overall FFG structure as shown below.

The structure of the NCP system is shown in the following figure:



Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html and <http://www.ffg.at/content.php?cid=36>

The task of the FFG's EIP is to strengthen Austria's participation in programmes, initiatives and actions of European and international research and technology cooperation, especially in the EU Framework Programme.

In general, the centralised system is assessed as being very positive, providing better possibilities to steer the NCP activities towards strategic goals, to avoid conflicts of interest and to provide professional services in all domains easily accessible for customers. The NCPs and the host agency FFG are involved in many strategic activities and work in the general Austrian national interests. An argument is that NCPs located at a national agency are not tempted to spread information only to particular actors as compared to a location at a university who has her own interests in the domain and would participate herself in the programme. On the other hand, the agency has higher operative capacity and higher efficiency as compared if the NCP would be located at ministry level. In the past years, the services of the NCPs have been further professionalised, and are now broadly accepted throughout the Austrian science system.

In selecting and hiring NCPs, the thematic scientific and technological knowledge comes first. It is stated that language skills are the kind of "basics" that shouldn't even have to be considered - fluent English is of outmost importance and has been ranked second. An aspect that could be either rated as management skills or sales skills is the competence to understand researchers, to quickly assess a project idea or proposal and to be able to communicate with the researcher with a high competence for mediation and translation between the FP world and the science world. A quick understanding of problems and a clear communication of solutions and results is an important skill. Previous experience with the FP has not been rated very high but NCPs have to understand the system, including the national science system, available research funding, and to know their potential client base.

The full costs of the system implemented in Austria could not be provided due to confidentiality reasons.

4.1.3 NCP services and tools applied

The Austrian NCP system is currently moving away from broad information dissemination towards a more targeted approach focussing on “key players” and “high potentials”. Newcomers to the programme shall be pooled and trained *en bloc* in order to free resources of NCPs to do thorough proposal checks and focus on potential coordinators.

FFG provides the following services to the interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	1
Proposal writing	5 (never)
Special SME unit in operation	1
Participation in projects	3 (regularly)
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.): in the case of FFG/EIP in the role of experts	2 (often)
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	1

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates the one-to-many consultations are still considered as a very important tool as well as the one-to-few or one-to-one training and advising activities. The so-called “FFG Academy” covers several of these aspects. The direct consulting by NCPs includes mainly the thematic assessment of the research project idea (relevance check), some support in finding suitable project partners and identifying an optimum composition of the project consortium, individual assistance during project proposal preparation phase and the final project proposal check. This relates also to a proposal preparation funding (“*Anbahnungsfinanzierung*”) provided for costs incurred during project preparation, which is administered by FFG on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (size of the fund: approx. 2 million euro, available funding per project up to a maximum of 15,000 euro for project coordinators). In order to receive the funding, both an initial relevance check and a final proposal check are compulsory.

The tools used by the Austrian NCPs are the following:

Information days	2 (often)
Training seminars, workshops	1 (very often)
Newsletter	1
Websites	1
Stands in large conferences, fairs	3 (regularly, but average)
Road shows	2 (often)
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	1
Group consultation	2
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	1

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

Furthermore, the deployment of several other tools has been mentioned by the Austrian NCP coordinator:

- partner search tools
- publications
- key player approach
- networking within Austria
- honouring of successful Austrian coordinators (with the “Austrian Champions in European Research” Award)

One of the key elements of the new approach in FP7 was the development of a national FP7 support and assistance structure, consisting of National Contact Points, Regional Contact Points and Institutional Contact Points. This national network operates on the basis of clearly defined roles and regular exchange.

In order to provide policy support, the NCPs are involved in many discussion processes and provide input to aspects such as Joint Programming, analytical comparison of national and EU programmes, participation in other events organised on topics of international research cooperation.

As regards the participation of NCPs in projects, FFG/EIP now applies a selective and strategic approach (which has not been the case some years ago). Involvement in projects is subject to approval and considered as an investment. Participation has to have a benefit also for the Austrian community (i.e. prioritisation of projects with most competitive regions, e.g. United States of America, or high potentials, e.g. Russia) and must fall under the core competences of the NCPs.

Assessing the Austrian system as being quite saturated with general information on what the Framework Programme is and general coverage with broad dissemination tools (newsletters) being very high, the key player approach is the central strategy at the moment. The learning curve of newcomers is supported in one-to-many and one-to-few activities with clear schedules; the “high potentials” receive services where the NCP can give a clear added value. Therefore, information is tailored to the specific needs of the target groups as much as possible.

4.1.4 Quality assurance

Austria is one of the few countries in which a quality assurance system is implemented (another example given are for instance the Netherlands). The contract concluded between Austrian Ministries, Economic Chamber and FFG to perform the NCP services already states clear indicators for the work to be performed and success criteria. FFG has established an internal process management system and guidelines to implement its activities. In yearly reports to the contractors, the attainment of the NCPs goals is presented.

One of the indicators is the “effectiveness of consultancy”. FFG measures the success rates of proposals consulted through the NCP and compares it to the overall success rate. In order to carry out this analysis at the level of proposals (not institutions), a specific data gathering system has been implemented. The conclusion in FP7 so far is, that the proposals consulted by the FFG are more successful by a factor of 2 (i.e. a general success rate of 15% is being pushed to 30% on average, in certain themes it is even higher, e.g. in Transport at currently 60%). Another indicator is how many of those consulted have actually submitted a proposal and FFG together with its partners in Austria aims to reach 90% of those coordinators that actually submit a proposal and approx. 60% of the partners involved in submitted proposals. In this regard it is also important to implement a data management system that provides the necessary details about consultations and allows regular monitoring.

Furthermore, the satisfaction of customers is regularly recorded. There are also regular surveys about the usability of the website, satisfaction at events, etc. Major evaluations have been subcontracted externally; the evaluation of events is done internally.

Quality Assurance is also an issue in the context of the overall national Austrian FP7 support and assistance structure (i.e. including regional focal points etc).

FFG/EIP monitors also the number of consultations and events, but those are not the core indicators for the assessment of the services. The output indicators are more important. On the other hand, FFG/EIP has been very careful not to define indicators that are actually beyond its influence (e.g. to have more successful coordinators than the previous year). The NCPs can neither influence that the scientists would actually follow their advice, nor that they actually submit the proposals and that they are positively evaluated.

The NCP system has already been evaluated in FP6. As stated above, regular data monitoring is implemented and the annual reports are sent to the ministries for acceptance. Furthermore, a recent evaluation has been contracted to independent external evaluators (Technopolis et al.), including external experts and a peer review process with other NCP systems. This evaluation is currently performed with results being available in October 2010.

Major activities are covered in the FFG process management system, which informs about decision making, regular meetings, etc. (FFG implements regular weekly meetings, four yearly NCP meetings, internal trainings, etc.)

Upon initiative of the Austrian coordinating NCP, quality assurance is currently discussed also within the network of coordinating NCPs - many countries have already expressed their interest to invest in this activity.

4.1.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

As mentioned above, the NCP is well embedded in the general RTDI funding system in Austria, as NCPs are all located at FFG which is the national funding institution for applied research in Austria. Other divisions of FFG cover structural as well as thematic programmes of national funding. The services as regards international cooperation include information and support also for several ERA-NETs, some bilateral intergovernmental cooperation schemes, European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives, EUREKA and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). FFG is not the COST contact point, but this fact has been bewailed during the interview.

NCPs are informed directly about the results of high-level groups of ERA governance, the Competitiveness Council, CREST and CREST working groups, the high-level group for joint programming and the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility. Direct systematic channels are not implemented towards SFIC and ESFRI. Some of the NCPs regularly participate also in high-level groups and coordination bodies of national and international ERA governance. A general national working group coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research is implemented, as well as specific working groups for important topics such as ERA-NETs or Joint Programming.

In Austria, there is an agreement that most NCPs are also delegated experts for the programme committees (except in the Ideas programme) and regularly attend the meetings in Brussels together with the PC delegates who are usually officials from one of the ministries.

4.1.6 Lessons learned

The Austrian NCP coordinator considers the Austrian set up as a good practice case, but admits that the contractual situation is favourable compared to other NCP systems and that the size of a country sets important boundary conditions. The recommendations for the set up of NCP structures are clearly towards a geographically and organisationally centralised system, closely interconnected with public administration.

In any case, framework conditions are highly important factors to be considered.

As the national contributions to the Framework Programme are considerable, there is a strong argument to set up a highly effective NCP network with the objective to enhance the national participation. Participation in the Framework Programme has to be seen as a strategic long-term investment. The impact on the national system can be considerable.

Discussing several recommendations by the Austrian NCP coordinator, a study prepared for the project INCO-NET EECA has been mentioned and partially shared.⁹ Based on this study and the interview, the following recommendations can be highlighted:

- The FP7 support system shall have a clear common vision, defined objectives, activities and structures comprising the national, regional and institutional dimension. The strategy shall be developed together with all relevant stakeholders, identifying objectives, activities, performance goals and indicators.

⁹ D4.6a – Analytical Report for Strengthening EECA NCPs/NIPs – Russia. Deliverable Lead: FFG. Submitted: 11.12.2009. Project Number: 212226.

- An appropriate contractual framework shall be developed for NCP host organisations, enabling sustainability of the system and services offered (coordinated timing of contracts, management by objectives, common reporting and monitoring standards, etc.).
- Clear guidelines shall be developed laying down organisational rules excluding potential conflicts of interest.
- Sufficient funding shall be provided to the system, clearly related to the objectives and activities defined. NCPs shall have organisational and financial autonomy and responsibility to serve the entire BiH research community, especially if they are hosted by a RTD organisation interested in participating in FP7.
- Networks of FP7 contact points (officially recognised) at regional and institutional level shall be developed and coordinated by the NCPs.
- Structured mechanisms for coordination and learning of the system shall be foreseen. Regular meetings shall be established. A platform to share experiences and best practice shall be established.
- An effective, pro-active national coordination shall be set up, empowered to provide strategic guidance and coordination, facilitating dialogue, without interfering into the daily business of NCPs.
- An effective and efficient governance structure shall be developed, e.g. through a Steering Committee with a limited number of high-level representatives who discuss the overall strategic guidance related to the position of NCPs in the research and innovation system (but is not involved in any micro-management).
- NCPs shall have a job-profile as full-time professionals, avoiding add-on NCP jobs in conflict with other work or research commitments. Regional and institutional contact points shall also have adequate job profiles and shall be formally recognised.
- NCPs shall cooperate to organise joint events on horizontal issues (e.g. project administration and reporting, legal and financial questions, etc.) as well as joint visibility events and publications.
- A common web-portal is important, maintained by all NCPs with regular updates. One data management system for the NCP system shall also be implemented.
- The target groups for the NCPs shall be well analysed and categorised in order to define NCP performance goals and indicators to reach the target groups in terms of quality and quantity.
- Standard NCP service packages shall be developed in order to provide high-quality services towards the research community (examples given: information for high-potential coordinators, including consultancy, proposal check, financial incentives such as preparatory funding instruments; for high-potential partners: information, consultancy and effective partner searching; etc.)
- A set of typical FAQs (e.g. on legal and financial issues) shall be developed.
- Structures that facilitate systematic networking at European level shall be set up, NCPs shall be integrated in NCP projects of their own competence area; NCPs shall be able to attend NCP meetings and special networking events with respect to partner search and exchange of good practices shall be enabled.

4.2 Belgium

Population(million; 2008):	10.7		GERD/GDP (%; 2007):	1.9%
Capital:	Brussels			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	32,200		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	8
Membership in the EU:	2004			

Source: EUROSTAT, 7 March, 2010

4.2.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Belgian NCP system

Number of NCPs:		31 persons covering 87 NCP positions ¹⁰
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:		About half of them
Number of NCP systems in the country:		5
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised (mostly in Brussels)
	organisationally:	Decentralised
Services provided	Free of charge	Each service

4.2.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Belgian NCP (mega) system is unique in the sense of its complexity and its multi-level organisational solution. In practice it consists of five independent NCP systems following the constitutional framework of the country.

The country constitutionally consists of

- **the federal state**, which is in charge of foreign affairs, national defence, justice, finance, social security, partly public health, environment and internal affairs policies. Federal research institutes are in the forefront of science, technology and innovation policy of the federal level. The federal state runs an NCP system (hosted by STIS).
- **the communities** are responsible for culture and education, so research carried out at higher education institutes are in the scope of these actors. There are three communities: the French, the German and the Flemish speaking one in the countries, but only the French (hosted by FNRS) and the Flemish (hosted by IWT) communities have their own NCP system, the German community is too small to have it.
- **The regions**, which are responsible for economic, energy, transport, environment policies and civil engineering works. Industrial and technological (engineering) research and innovation are in their focus on science, technology and innovation policy. The Walloon region has its own NCP system (hosted by UWE) and the city of Brussels, the capital of the country (also a region) also runs its own NCP system (hosted by BEA).

¹⁰ http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7NCP&PASSVAR%3A%20TITLE=FP7+NCP&QM_CCY_D=BE&USR_SORT=EN_ORG_A+CHAR+ASC&DOC=81&QUERY=01277220bf99:62ba:7d957b1d

The NCP systems in Belgium fully follow the competencies of the given level. Thematic areas covered by NCPs are selected based on the demand of the clients in the given administrative unit. For example the federal NCP system serves only the federal research institutes. The French-speaking clients are served by two organisations: the higher education institutes by FNRS, the companies by UWE.

All the NCP systems in Belgium are centrally organised around one single host organisation. The Walloon community is the exception, where two organisations host NCPs, but actually they operate two separate NCP systems, one for the academic community (mostly higher education institutes) and the other one for enterprises. Only few NCPs are employees of other organisations. NCPs typically cover more than one thematic area; some of them are responsible for 4-6 areas.

The NCP systems are mostly financed by the relevant public services. The role of EU-sources differs significantly based on the financial conditions of the given host organisation. For example while the share of EU-sources in the total budget of the NCP system at federal level is marginal, in the case of the Brussels NCP system it is an important element of the annual operational budget.

4.2.3 NCP services and tools applied

In lacking time and resources the representatives of most Belgian NCP systems have not been interviewed, so this report cannot give a comprehensive and full coverage on their services and tools applied. Generally, however, it can be said that all the Belgian NCP systems provide a wide range of services to their clients, but there are significant differences among them in the actual practice.

In the following data refers to the interview with the representative of the federal NCP system, which cannot be considered as a typical one in Belgium, just as one case.

The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	1
Proposal writing	3 (regularly, but average)
Special SME unit in operation	5 (never)
Participation in projects	2 (often)
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.)	3
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	5

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

The SME-related activities are marginal since the federal NCP system, following their competencies at this constitutional level, has no client from this stakeholder group. But other NCP systems are specialised to serve SMEs and other business entities in Belgium (see BEA, UWE and IWT).

While the proposal writing is a service provided not daily, but regularly at federal level, the NCP systems in the Walloon and Flemish regions more frequently provide this service.

There is no separate funding mechanism available at federal level for supporting the preparation of applications, but the regions are active in facilitating Belgian participation in FP7 projects by providing grants to those writing proposals.

The tools used by the Belgian NCPs are the following:

Information days	3 (regularly, but average)
Training seminars, workshops	2 (often)
Newsletter	2
Websites	1 (very often)
Stands in large conferences, fairs	5 (never)
Road shows	5
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	1
Group consultation	1
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	1

= very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

These facts just indicate the activities of the federal NCP system, other systems in Belgium probably have totally different daily practices.

4.2.4 Quality assurance

There is no formal quality assurance system applied by the Belgian NCP systems.

They monitor regularly the results of their clients in FP7 calls, considering these numbers as the key performance measure for the efficiency of the NCPs.

Statistics on the use of the websites, the helpdesk, participants in information days and other events are collected and used for evaluating the work of NCPs.

4.2.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

The system of nominating Programme Committee (PC) members also follows the constitutional framework of the country. Depending on the distribution of competencies among the federal and community/regional levels the official country PC member is decided, but permanent PC experts are selected based on the proposal of other interested actors in the constitutional system in each theme.

NCPs in Belgium are not appointed as PC members, and they are not officially announced experts of the PC (since they are not considered as expert of the given research area, this is not the main criteria in their selection procedure).

Governments at each level have equal rights to nominate PC members, experts to the PCs and NCPs, and there is no central authority to approve this decision or block it.

There are coordination forums in each thematic programme, consisting of all the PC members and the NCPs in Belgium. The Federal Science Policy Office is responsible for organising these meetings and providing secretarial support for the operation of them, in close cooperation with the delegate(s) appointed for the specific thematic area.

There are no official mechanisms for the involvement of NCPs into the national ERA governance. In the case of each and every ERA-body (like the Competitiveness Council or CREST or ESFRI), national consultation meetings are regularly organised by the federal government. Otherwise it is up to the position and the organisational culture of the NCP hosting organisation how to distribute information related to the ERA.

4.2.6 Lessons learned

The Belgian mega NCP system consists of 5 independent NCP systems, covering all levels of governance and ethnic communities. It is unique and can hardly serve as model for other European countries. The proximity of the relevant EU services and the very low travel costs are unique locational factors for applying such a multi-dimensional system.

It needs huge efforts to coordinate and harmonise activities and services across the NCPs working on the same thematic areas.

4.3 Estonia

Population(million; 2009):	1.3	GERD/GDP (%; 2007):	1.11
Capital:	Tallinn		
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	12,000	Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	12
Membership in the EU:	2004		

Source: EUROSTAT, 7 March, 2010

4.3.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Estonian NCP system

Number of NCPs:	17	
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):	8 3 NCPs are full time The rest spend up to 56% of their total work as NCP	
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:	1	
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):	4,5 ¹¹	
The name of the hosting organisation:	Archimedes Foundation	
	Its legal status:	Private, non-profit
	Linkages to the government:	Strong (founded by the Ministry of Education & Research)
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised
	organisationally:	Centralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €	500 000	
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	60%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%
	EU	40% (pan-European)

¹¹ Support staff for NCP network – PR person, assistants, editor, accountant

		NCP projects and policy-related INCO projects)
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
Services provided	Free of charge	All
	For fee	None

The structure of the NCP system

The Estonian NCP system is centrally organised and mostly embedded into one organisation, the Archimedes Foundation.

The *Archimedes Foundation* was established by the Estonian government in 1997 with the aim to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes and projects in the field of training, education, research, technological development and innovation.

At the time when it was founded, the Estonian government favoured to set up such organisations with similar legal status to make public services more efficient. Apart from Archimedes Foundation two other important institutes were also created at that time in the field of science, technology and innovation: the Estonian Science Foundation and the Enterprise Estonia.

Archimedes Foundation acts in three main areas: research and development (R&D), education, and youth. In the area of R&D, among others, it

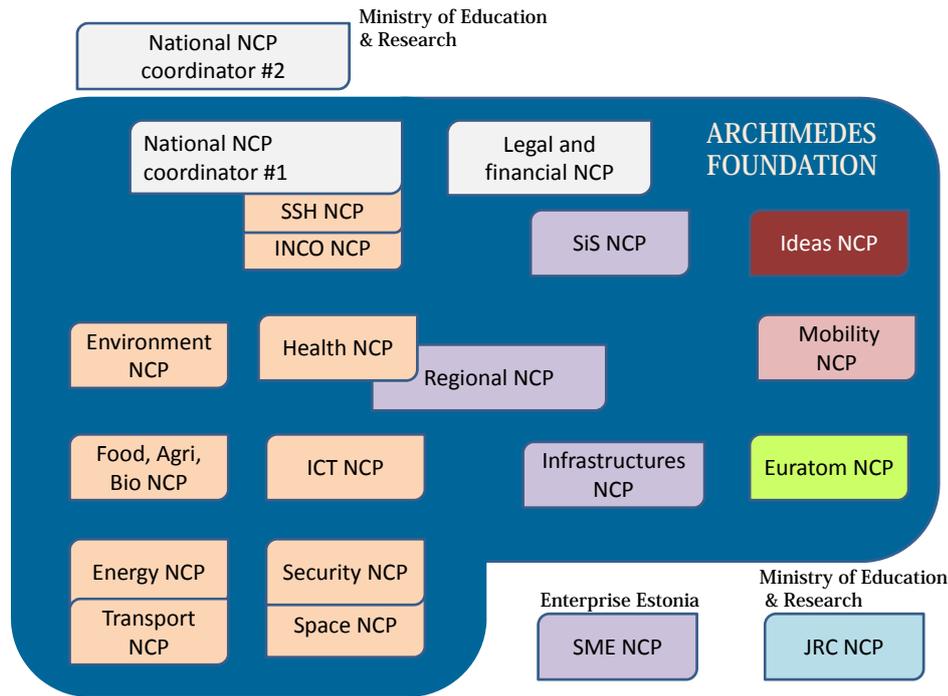
- runs the NCP system and the national COST secretariat, and is coordinator of EURAXESS network in Estonia,
- provides secretarial services to the Estonian Research Council,
- conducts research evaluations,
- operates the helpdesk for the Estonian Research Information System,
- organizes scientific research popularisation events in Estonia (contests, prizes, calls, etc.),
- functions as one of the implementing agencies to use the Structural Fund on R&D in Estonia.

Archimedes Foundation signed a contract with the Ministry of Education and Research which creates a strong legal framework to run the NCP businesses by setting both duties and commitments on one side, and rights on the other for both sides. This framework results in long term stable conditions for running the NCP system.

The NCPs are given a nomination letter by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Typically one NCP covers one thematic programme. The energy and transport, and the security and space programmes are managed by one NCP in each case. The NCP dealing with the regional issues is appointed as Health NCP as well. But the SME programme is also covered by an NCP working in *Enterprise Estonia*. Two NCPs act as national coordinator (one from the Foundation, the other one from the Ministry of Education and Research). The national NCP coordinator at the Archimedes Foundation also deals with two other programmes, INCO and SSH. To have more than one NCP for the same function is well justified by the missions of the organisations outside the Foundation in the given task and NCP area.

The structure of the NCP system is shown by the following figure:



Source: <http://www.archimedes.ee> and interview

All the NCPs are either employees of Archimedes Foundation (12 out of 17) or contracted by the Foundation (in 2 cases). One of the national NCP coordinators, the JRC NCP and the one of the SME NCPs are working for other organisations: the first at the Ministry of Education and Research, while the last at Enterprise Estonia.

In selecting the NCPs the technical competency (experience in the given thematic area either by having research and/or educational background, or working experience in the field) and the management skills are considered most seriously. The foreign language competence is obligatory, while the previous experiences in relation to FP-related activities and sales skills are taken into consideration less.

4.3.2 NCP services and tools applied

The Estonian NCP system provides a wide range of services to the interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	1
Proposal writing	4 (rarely)
Special SME unit in operation	1
Participation in projects	1
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.)	1
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	1

1 = very often; 2 = often; 3 = regularly, but average; 4 = rarely; 5 = never

As the table indicates, the Estonian NCP system provides a wide range of services as its daily activities. Only the proposal writing is not provided frequently.

Significant part of the funding sources for the NCP activities come from the EU through participation in many FP projects. The financial reason behind this intensive participation in European projects is just the second in the list of motivations. The main aim is to have a strong and continuous learning-by-doing training process, getting experiences from the first hand practice of project implementation and to include this knowledge into the services provided.

Two funding schemes, both closely related to the promotion and facilitation of the participation of Estonian teams in FP7 are managed by the NCP system:

- The „Promotion of FP Participation“ scheme awards financially those Estonian research teams which have successfully passed the threshold on FP calls, no matter if they are selected for funding. Only the Estonian groups acting as coordinator, work package or task leader are supported. The available financial source for 2010 is about € 400 thousand and its allocation is based on a very simple, bureaucracy-free process (based on the submission of the official EC evaluation sheet and the application, which gives evidence on the role of the Estonian partner in the proposal). If the applicant satisfies the criteria, the funding is automatic. The management of these schemes requires only 0.2 mandays from the Foundation.
- The „VAT scheme“ covers fully the VAT not covered by EU funding for eligible organisations through a very simple application and contracting process.

The tools used by the Estonian NCPs are the following:

Information days	1 (very often)
Training seminars, workshops	1
Newsletter	1
Websites	1
Stands in large conferences, fairs	2 (often)
Road shows	4 (rarely)
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	2
Group consultation	3 (regularly, average)
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	2

= very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

Most of the standard tools NCPs in Europe apply in delivering their services are in daily operation in Estonia. Less frequently used tools are group consultations and stands at fairs and conferences.

4.3.3 Quality assurance

There is no formal quality assurance system applied by the Estonian NCP system, but it follows the approach as detailed by the “*Guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points*”.

Main tools used to measure performance are:

- Success rate compared to the EU average (Estonia has been very successful in this sense so far);
- Evaluation of events (the usual questionnaire-based evaluation feedback format is applied)

The performance of Archimedes Foundation in running the NCP system is subject to permanent assessment on an annual basis. The Foundation is committed to report on its activities done and results achieved in a given year, using a template and providing both quantitative and qualitative assessments. The ministry, based on its evaluation decides on the next year contract.

The system has never been evaluated by independent expert(s).

4.3.4 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

Twelve NCPs out of 17 are at the same time the Estonian delegates to the relevant Programme Committees (PC) as well. The rest are also announced in the PCs as experts. This solution automatically assures the strong coordination between the NCP activities and the PC work. Thus, there is no need to have any coordination mechanism between these two functions.

Since the national COST and NCP coordinator is the same person in Archimedes Foundation, the two systems are well integrated too.

EUREKA is managed by the Enterprise Estonia, but through the daily cooperation between the two organisations, in particular the joint NCP activities in the SME programme, a good environment for the harmonisation of national efforts in the two initiatives is being created.

The national ERA system is managed by different ministries. Delegates to the various ERA bodies, like CREST, ESFRI, the Competitiveness Council, or the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility, are appointed by ministers. The Estonian government has set up inter-ministerial working groups in order to coordinate and harmonise the efforts to prepare the Estonian position to meetings. These working groups serve as forum for those having expertise in the given subject. In some working groups the Archimedes Foundation has a membership; for the meetings of other WGs it is invited on a case by case basis.

4.3.5 Lessons learned

Based on the experiences in the past 10 years the interviewee highlighted that in a small country, like Estonia, the centralised NCP system is the most successful solution. This system may optimise the use of financial sources and can result in the best distribution of responsibilities and workload. All the NCP activities optimally should be put into a non-governmental organisation, which is under a strong control of the relevant ministry. This solution

- gives flexibility in operation and
- freedom in participating to international collaborations,
- allows the service attitude in the working culture of the organisation to become dominant,
- while the government may keep its fingers on all the critical political and financial considerations, and last but not least, and
- the government may decide to intervene if necessary.

4.4 France

Population(million; 2008):	64.3		GERD/GDP (%; 2006):	2.2 %
Capital:	Paris			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	32,800		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	10
Membership in the EU:	Founding member			

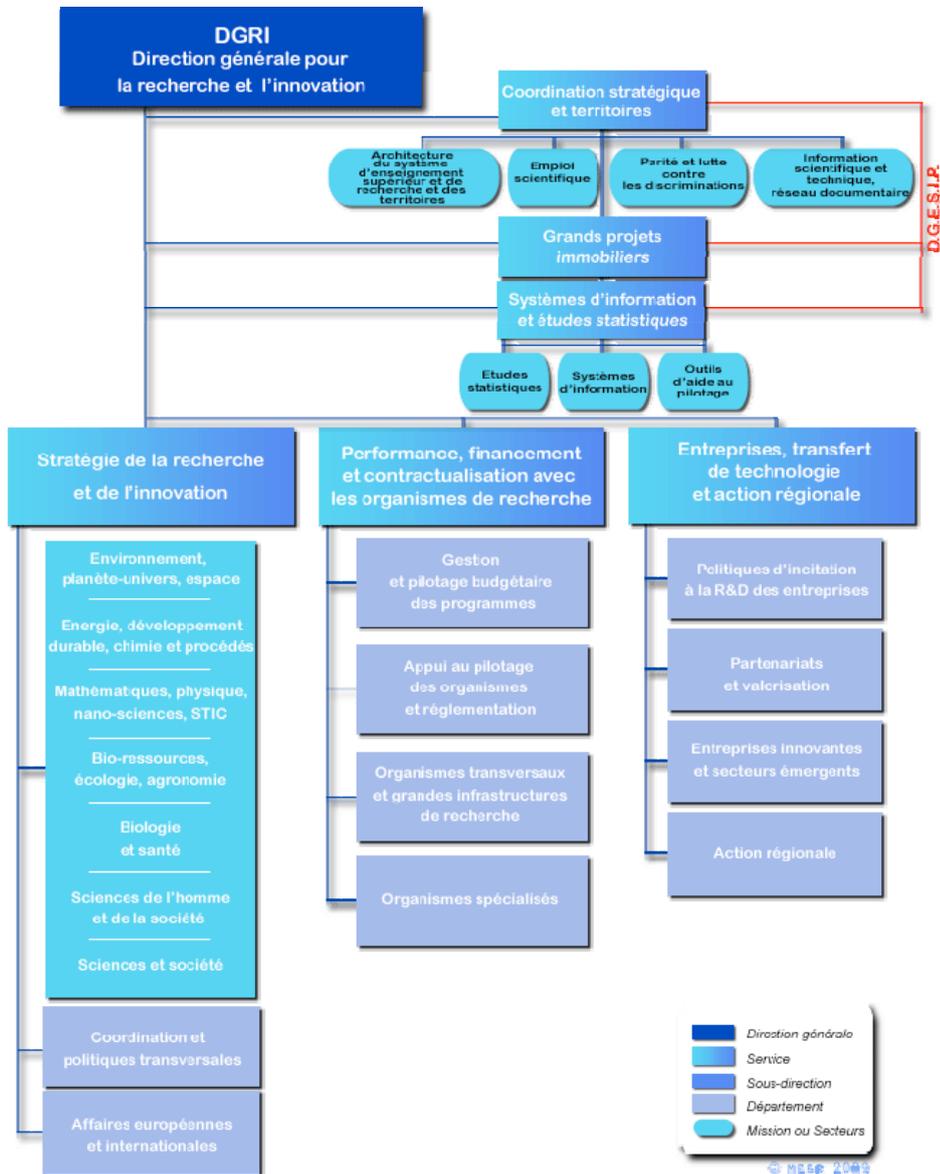
4.4.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the French NCP system

Number of NCPs:		Around 130 persons – Only 83 different persons appear in the CORDIS database
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):		30-50 (difficult to estimate; it is assumed that an NCP dedicates approx. 25% of his/her working time to the NCP position)
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:		Approx. 80%
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):		0
The name of the hosting organisation:		NCPs belong to 62 institutions (Research institutes, Universities, Agencies, Associations).
	Its legal status:	Different; according to the respective NCP host organisation ranging from governmental to agencies, universities etc.
	Linkages to the government:	Medium; coordination with the government and control / supervision by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Decentralised
	organisationally:	Decentralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €		300,000 (for additional costs, not for salaries since they are usually covered through other budgets provided through public sources; e.g. general university funds)
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	10%

	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	90% Salaries are supported by host organisations (major research institutions, universities, agencies and associations)
	EU	0%
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
Services provided	Free of charge	All
	For fee	None

4.4.2 The structure of the NCP system

The French NCP system is organised in a decentralised way with the main coordination of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research (MESR). Within the ministry, the **Department for European and International Affairs** hosts the NCP coordinator (see organigram of the ministry below).



Source: <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid24148/direction-generale-pour-la-recherche-et-l-innovation-d.g.r.i.html> and interview

Information about the structure of the French NCP system is provided at <http://www.eurosfair.pr.fr/7pc/pcn.php> and its sub-websites: For each theme, a consortium of institutions is responsible to carry out the NCP activities, with one main responsible person to coordinate the activities and several alternative contact points

(in the regions and / or for specific sub-topics or activities). In summer 2006, Expressions of Interests (EoI) have been collected¹² for the NCP nominations and consortia had to be formed, usually including some of the 25 major public research organisations as well as universities and agencies and some private institutions. This means that all NCPs are organised as consortia bringing together the main stakeholders of a domain. This approach is supposed to limit the potential conflicts of interest.

As an example: in the field of «health», the institute INSERM (Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale) coordinates the consortium with the members CNRS-INSB, Institut Pasteur, Institut de la Recherche pour le Développement IRD, Université de la Méditerranée, Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris, Association Nationale de la Recherche et de la Technologie, and OSEO. In some consortia activities such as website management or statistics are dispersed. At http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/health/consortium_membres.php the specific activities and competences are outlined for the health topic: These show for example that IRD is specifically targeting the cooperation with third countries, especially in the South or OESO is targeting SMEs (OSEO being the former Agency for Innovation, now combined with a bank for funding innovation activities; OSEO hosts also the Enterprise Europe Network and the NCP for SME).

One of the reasons to choose this dispersed system was to reduce costs. The set up of the NCP system did not require a huge investment from the MESR as only additional costs are covered (mainly travel costs) and no salaries. Although of course, at the end again the MESR covers the salaries of employees at universities and public research institutions. The full costs of the system have not yet been fully calculated, only estimations exist. In the interview, an estimation of the total budget between 2.0 and 2.5 mio € per year was given, when the salaries become included. The “visible” contribution, however, is only 300,000 euro.

In selecting the NCPs, knowledge of the FP (how it works in Brussels, already having good contacts and networks) and technical-scientific competency (experience in the given thematic area either by having research and/or educational background, or working experience in the field) are both of high priority in France. Not all NCPs have a scientific background, they are rather considered as research managers, but it is acknowledged that there could be difficulties to understand the scientific world and to be accepted by the researchers without thematic expertise.

4.4.3 NCP services and tools applied

The French NCP system provides a wide range of services to the interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	2 (often)
Proposal writing	5 (never)
Special SME unit in operation	yes (covered by OSEO)
Participation in projects	2 (only in specific projects for NCPs)

¹² See <http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/news/consulter.php?id=231> for information on the call.

Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.): in the case of FFG/EIP in the role of experts	4 (rarely)
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	4

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates, in France, the one-to-many consultations are considered as the most important and most frequently provided service of the NCPs. Although NCPs are involved in national thematic groups, their activities related to policy support are estimated as rather low.

The tools used by the French NCPs are the following:

Information days	1 (very often)
Training seminars, workshops	1
Newsletter	3 (regularly, average)
Websites	1
Stands in large conferences, fairs	4 (rarely)
Road shows	4
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	3
Group consultation	4
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	2 (often)

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

A key instrument in the management, information exchange and dissemination activities of the NCPs is the website www.eurosfaire.prd.fr. It is not only used to spread information to clients, but also to manage the network. The website is one of the major sources of information for the NCP coordinator on the activities implemented by the NCPs and the NCP consortium members. The site is managed by the Ministry and provided by one of the public institutes. It has been developed within the host institute at almost no additional cost (free of charge software has been used). Each French NCP has its own website and is participating in the common tool. Info-days and training workshops are a very frequent activity and furthermore, e-mails and phone-consultations are often used. Several French NCPs have a newsletter (e.g. ERC, Transport, SiS, SSH, Energy, Environment), but not all of them.

4.4.4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance is admitted to be a weakness of the French system. There is no formal quality system applied and there are no means to fully check and follow the activities, except the website which allows some regular monitoring (frequency and quality of information published and updated, presentations of info-days uploaded, etc.). In general, the system works on a trust basis.

The system has not yet been evaluated, but an evaluation connected to the mid-term of FP7 is planned.

All the NCPs are committed to report on their activities annually, following a template. In these activity statements, several sections are foreseen, but NCPs are not required to complete all sections, e.g. This reporting template contains the following main categories:

- information and awareness raising towards potential participants – e.g. reporting on information days, newsletters, documents published, other activities (such as promotional activities in connection with the EC or the MESR);
- organisation of trainings and assistance in project implementation – e.g. reporting on trainings organised, assistance to project coordinators, etc.;
- cooperation with MESR and PCMs – e.g. GTN participation¹³, contribution to work programmes, analysis of call results, proposals to improve French participation;
- re-publishing of EC information – e.g. promotion of initiatives on researcher's mobility;
- other activities – e.g. participation in EU projects, strategic cooperation towards specific regions, relationships with other stakeholders such as technology platforms, competence centres, cooperation with other programmes such as COST, EUREKA, engagement in partner search activities etc. NCPs provide a maximum of 10 pages per year. Financial reporting covers only funds received from MESR and does not include funds which NCPs received from their host institutions. Each NCP is required by this form to accurately justify its expenditure. The funds are awarded for one academic year (September to July).

General training is not provided to the NCPs. Last year, only one training on “*Publishing on the web*” was provided. Three regular annual meetings are organised for the NCP system (two for the coordinators of the respective NCP consortia, one with all members). During these meetings, specific information is shared, presented through invited speakers, e.g. on the involvement of SMEs.

4.4.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

In 2010, a reorganisation was implemented which included clearer descriptions of activities of all stakeholders, highlighting that the ministry is responsible for the strategic activities only, they are to be implemented by institutes and agencies.

In so-called “national thematic groups” (GTN) all stakeholders of a domain come together to coordinate their activities. It allows top-down debriefing activities e.g. on the analysis of French participation in specific calls, description of strengths and weaknesses as well as bottom-up generation of ideas, for example topics to be fed into new work programmes, etc.

NCPs have typically a close relationship with the PC Members, who are usually from the MESR or other ministries relevant to a given FP7 specific (thematic) programme (e.g. on health). The NCPs are involved in the formulation of an official position, e.g. towards the simplification of the Framework Programme. But in France, such official positions at the end are always sent through the Prime Minister's Office who prepares the synthesis from positions, e.g. from the MESR but also from the Ministry for Industry, etc.

NCPs are informed directly about the activities of the Competitiveness Council, but in general not about other high-level ERA groups (CREST, SFIC, ESFRI, etc.). In order to improve coordination activities a national group on European Affairs was set up by MESR in March 2010.

NCPs are not involved in COST promotion and bilateral intergovernmental cooperation. The SME NCP is, as already mentioned, involved in EUREKA and the Enterprise Europe Network.

¹³ GTN are national thematic groups, described in more detail below.

4.4.6 Lessons learned

The regional dimension is a particular challenge of the French system. Although being a system with many actors centralised in and around Paris (or the so-called “Ile de France”), regional stakeholders play a significant role too. The regions have financial means and often different political interests opposed to the national government; thus, a wide range of specialists on European affairs and numerous specific websites on FP7 are available in some regions. The coordination of the national and regional levels is therefore a major challenge, especially given the size of the country. The local level is especially important for SMEs and therefore the importance to involve regional innovation agencies and to improve communication channels through the representatives of the MESR in the regions is one of the goals. A solution to the challenge to improve communication with the regional contact points has not yet been found in France, but the network of OSEO is being exploited well.

Some recommendations derived from the interview are:

- As many stakeholders of the system should be involved not only people working in the ministry. A clear strategy needs to be developed (e.g. increase participation, increase quality of participation), which has to be followed through targeted measures exploiting synergies with different stakeholders.
- There is no «best system»; a system should be chosen that is «managable» and no system should be copied.
- A system embedded into public administration is advised.
- A centralised coordination is important, providing common tools to spread information. Through the involvement of major research institutions decentralised information can be provided in the regions. In this way also those people are involved who have hands-on expertise.
- A thorough analysis of the problems and challenges needs to be made. It has to become clear that, for instance an average of 317 days to conclude an FP7 contract might be not acceptable for SMEs, etc.
- Receiving direct information from the EC is very important; therefore visits to Brussels and other possibilities to get information already in advance should be well exploited.
- Information exchange with other NCP systems is a good possibility to learn and to finetune the NCP work.

4.5 Hungary

Population(million; 2008):	10.0		GERD/GDP (%; 2008):	1.0
Capital:	Budapest			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	10,500		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	22
Membership in the EU:	2004			

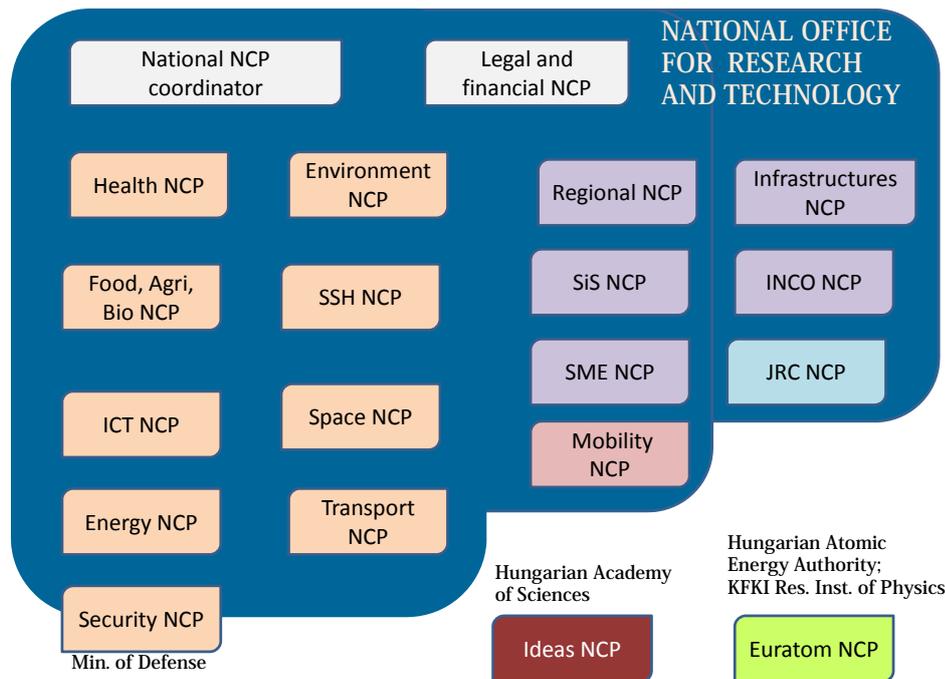
4.5.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Hungarian NCP system

Number of NCPs:		24
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):		6 in total consisting of 1 NCP: full-time 23 NCPs: part-time (20% of their total work as an average)
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:		23
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):		0
The name of the hosting organisation:		National Office for Research and Technology
	Its legal status:	Government office
	Linkages to the government:	Very strong (part of the government)
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised
	organisationally:	Centralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €		200,000
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	95%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%
	EU	5% (pan-European NCP projects)
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
Services provided	Free of charge	All
	For fee	None

4.5.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Hungarian NCP system is centrally organised and mostly embedded into the government's office responsible for science and technology policy planning and implementation, called National Office for Research and Technology (NKTH, <http://www.nkth.gov.hu/english>).

The structure of the NCP system is shown by the following figure:



Source: <http://www.nkth.gov.hu> and interview

The *National Office for Research and Technology (NKTH)* has a key role in developing and implementing Hungary's science, technology and innovation policies. It is a public institute, part of the government. Its president is appointed by the Prime Minister and the organisation is supervised by the Minister of economic development. NKTH supports financially and by institutional means the creation, dissemination and exploitation of new knowledge and technology. It is responsible for the use of the Research and Technology Innovation Fund. NKTH is also responsible to advise the government on STI-policy-related matters, it manages bilateral intergovernmental science and technology agreements, and Hungary's participation in major international organisations in the area of S&T (like the EU, OECD, NATO, CERN, EUREKA, COST, etc.).

At least one NCP is working on each of the FP7 thematic programmes. In three cases more than one NCP has been appointed: the legal & financial NCP (the area is very broad and the competences to cover the work cannot be easily found in a single person), security NCP (one person from NKTH, and another one from the relevant ministry – defence), and EURATOM NCP (one person from the relevant government agency – Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority, and another one from the relevant research institute).

21 out of the 24 NCPs work at NKTH, the rest in different other public organisations. The main reason to hire these three persons out of NKTH is their special competence needed to manage the NCP work, which are not available in NKTH.

In selecting the NCPs, the technical competency (experience in the given thematic area either by having research and/or educational background, or working experience in the field) and previous experience in framework programme related activities (service provision to researchers, project participation, etc.) and in management of other EU programmes are considered most seriously. The foreign language competence is compulsory, management and sales skills are taken into consideration less.

4.5.3 NCP services and tools applied

The Hungarian NCP system provides a wide range of services to the interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee, is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	2 (often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	2
Proposal writing	4 (rarely)
Special SME unit in operation	2
Participation in projects	2
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.)	2 (regularly)
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	1 (very often)

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates, the one-to-few consultations are considered as the most important and most frequently provided service of the NCPs. Not surprisingly, the policy support is a regular activity of the NCPs.

Two funding schemes, both closely related to the promotion and facilitation of the participation of Hungarian research teams in FP7, are managed by the NCP system:

- The „*Consortium building*“ funding scheme provides support to Hungarian research teams in the phases of application preparation and contracting with the EC. Its annual budget is about € 220,000 (2010) and its allocation is based on open calls. The decision on funding is based on the evaluation results achieved in FP7 (passing the quality and budgetary thresholds would result in automatic funding).
- The „*Bonus programme*“ provides grants to public research organisations and SMEs, as an additional source of financing to their project participation in FP projects. Its annual budget is about € 740,000 (2010). It is allocated through an open grant system: the Hungarian partners in FP7 R&D projects are entitled to get funding if the EU contribution does not reach the maximum level.

The tools used by the Hungarian NCPs are the following:

Information days	2 (often)
Training seminars, workshops	4 (rarely)
Newsletter	4
Websites	3 (regularly, average)
Stands in large conferences, fairs	4
Road shows	4
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	2
Group consultation	2
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	2

= very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

The tools used more frequently in the daily experiences of the NCPs are closer to the traditional activities of government services (information days, small-group or individual consultations).

In the practice, however, both the applied tools and services provided are very much determined by the fact how deeply the given NCP is (can be) involved into FP-related activities. The only NCP working full time has a totally different practice (much closer to the clients, having regular newsletters, daily meetings with the major stakeholders, etc.), the applied tools and services are much more customer- and demand-driven.

4.5.4 Quality assurance

There is no formal quality assurance system applied by the Hungarian NCP system.

The system has been evaluated by independent expert(s) once, in 2004.

All the NCPs are committed to report on their activities annually, following a template. The reports are assessed internally by the responsible leaders in NKTH.

The NCP system monitors regularly the results of Hungarian research teams in FP7 calls.

4.5.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

NKTH is managing also other international S&T activities of the Hungarian government. Several NCPs, including the national coordinator are involved into EUREKA and COST businesses as well. In this sense the FP/EUREKA/COST activities of the NCP system can be considered as a well-integrated one. Some NCPs, among their other tasks, are responsible for managing the implementation of bilateral inter-governmental S&T agreements too.

All the Programme Committee (PC) members in FP7 are appointed by the president of NKTH, and most of them are employees of the office. There is a relatively large overlapping between the PC and NCP system. NCPs are appointed as PCs in nine Programme Committees (out of 19), and in three additional Programme Committees the NCPs are announced as experts.

There is no formal mechanism for coordinating their activities, but when it is necessary they have working meetings (based on the workflow of the PCs and other ERA bodies it is necessary every 2-3 months). Once a year, NKTH holds a joint meeting of the all PC members and the NCPs to evaluate the previous year's performance and to discuss the tasks to be done in the coming year.

The national ERA representation is also centralised and NKTH is in the core of this system. In most of the ERA bodies employees of NKTH are members. The national

NCP coordinator, for example, is the member in the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility. The PC member in the Research Infrastructure programme is the Hungarian ESFRI delegate as well.

There is no formal mechanism or coordination body which guarantees the distribution of information from up to down and vice versa, and mostly those NCPs are better informed about issues related to the ERA activities who are physically closer to the relevant Hungarian delegates (working in the same unit in NKTH where the delegate is the boss, etc.).

4.5.6 Lessons learned

Based on the experiences in the past 10 years, NKTH plans to revise its concept to manage the NCP activities. According to the present thinking the changes would push the system into the following direction:

- Full-time NCPs should be applied in most of the thematic areas.
- The system should be organised both geographically and organisationally in a centralised manner – the centralised solution, according to the Hungarian experiences, would serve better the horizontal coordination, the cooperation among the NCPs and synergy-impacts, and from operational and financial point of view it would also be much more efficient (IT services, financial and legal services, etc.).
- A non-public solution would be better than embedding the system in one of the government offices, agencies, ministries (but the NCP system should be kept under the control of the relevant government office, mostly by the one funding the activities).
- Factors which should be taken seriously when the new system is established:
 - Political support to the NCPs and the organisation running the NCP system;
 - Longer term commitment to financing the NCP activities;
 - A transparent way of selecting the hosting organisation and an annual evaluation of the performance and contract renewal based on the outcome of this assessment;
 - The local (national) framework conditions (like administrative culture, government structure, legal and financial opportunities, existing government services, priority areas in relation to the FP7, etc.) should be seriously assessed before making the final decisions.

4.6 Macedonia

Population(million; 2008):	2.6		GERD/GDP (%; 2007):	0.18
Capital:	Skopje			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	9,000		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2008):	Not listed
Membership in the EU:	candidate status (associated to FP7)			

4.6.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Macedonian NCP system

Number of NCPs:		12
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):		3.8 consisting of 0 NCP: full-time 12 NCPs: part-time (30% of their total work as an average)
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:		11
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):		0
The name of the hosting organisation:		Ministry of Education and Science
	Its legal status:	Government office
	Linkages to the government:	Very strong (part of the government)
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised
	organisationally:	Decentralised with a strong role of the Ministry
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €		no earmarked budget; only personnel cost of NCPs in MoES;
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	95%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%
	EU	5% (pan-European projects)
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
	Services provided	Free of charge
	For fee	None

4.6.2 The structure of the NCP system

The main functions of the Macedonian NCP system are embedded into the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES, <http://www.mon.gov.mk/>).

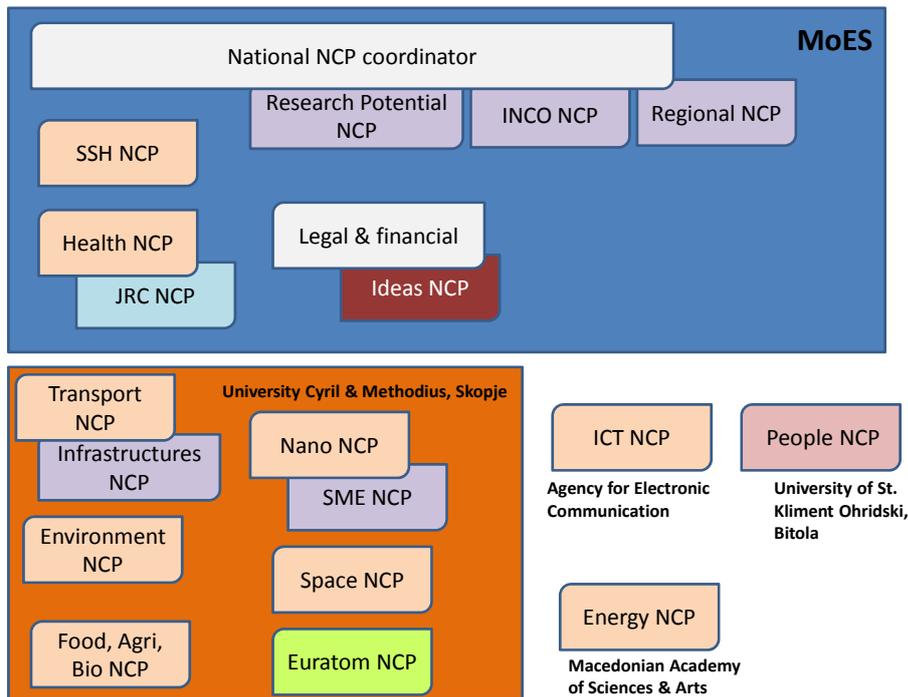
The MoES is responsible for science and technology policy formulation and implementation. The NCP-system is established within the government. It consists of four persons; none of them works full-time as NCP. The NCP coordinator, who works 60% to 70% of her time as NCP, has the right to suggest additional NCPs in other organisations and subsume them on individual basis under her supervisory umbrella. Their nomination has to be approved by the Minister. For the time being (March 2010), 5 NCPs (incl. the NCP coordinator) are working in the MoES and receive payment for their services. Nine other NCPs have been appointed in other public organisations outside the Ministry (see Figure below). None of them receives payment for their NCP-efforts. Only one NCP is not located in the country's capital. In practical terms, NCP delivery falls under the authority and responsibility of the NCP coordinator. No other departments of the Ministry do interfere nor show particular interest. The NCPs are not involved in STI policy formulation.

The NCP is not assigned with the promotion of other uni-, bi- or multilateral programmes (neither COST nor EUREKA, although it is planned that COST-activity should be managed in the future by the NCPs as well).

There are no funds available to support the acquisition of new FP projects or to co-finance projects selected for funding by the EC. Both, promotion and participation in FP projects are rather isolated from other S&T policy arenas.

In selecting the NCPs, managerial competency (including appropriate "sales" skills) is regarded as most important qualification. NCPs have to be able to systematically organise events, to provide advice and do communication services on different levels. Second most important is previous experience in Framework Programme related activities (service provision to researchers, project participation, etc.), followed by thematic scientific and technological expertise in the assigned field. The language is regarded as compulsory.

The structure of the NCP system is shown in the following figure:



Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html

4.6.3 NCP services and tools applied

The Macedonian NCP system provides a wide range of services to the interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	1
Proposal writing	4 (rarely)
Special SME unit in operation	3 (rather average)
Participation in projects	1 (NCP system is engaged in 7 projects)
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.): in the case of FFG/EIP in the role of experts	3
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	5 (never)

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates, both the one-to-few consultations and the one-to-many promotion activities are considered as the most important and most frequently provided services of the NCPs. In this respect, advice in financial matters is one of the most demanded areas. Due to the relative isolation of the NCP agenda from other governmental S&T agendas, policy support is a rather second-ranked activity of the NCPs. Sometimes NCPs do participate in Programme Committees, but they are

considerably more present in NCP networks than in PCs or other political fora, not at least because of the strong involvement in dedicated coordination and support projects, which are an essential backbone for the Macedonian NCP system to get access to international experience and complementary activities. It has to be noted, however, that the level of service provision depends on the overall political engagement of Macedonian S&T policy in European matters. At the mid of last decade, considerable more efforts were undertaken than now.

The tools used by the Macedonian NCPs are the following:

Information days	3 (rather average)
Training seminars, workshops	2 (often)
Newsletter	5 (never)
Websites	5 (not any more)
Stands in large conferences, fairs	5
Road shows	4 (rarely)
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	1
Group consultation	2
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	1

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

Individual consultation mechanisms based on personal contacts are most common in Macedonia. For more public oriented means (e.g. participation in fairs with stands etc) resources are lacking. There is no newsletter and since a couple of months no resources have been dedicated to update the website. In order to combat this situation, the NCPs are very strongly liaising with other non-governmental stakeholders to push forward FP promotion. They organise rather often training seminars and workshops with successful project coordinators and participants. Very often the initiative stems from the community, who invites NCPs to these events. Good relations exist also with the Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Information Technology and the EC delegation, which also provides premises, logistics and even catering. Due to these relations, smaller information days (in the sense of dedicated workshops and targeted seminars) are still prevailing. Road shows are implemented in the context of SME outreach together with local authorities throughout the country.

4.6.4 Quality assurance

There is no formal quality assurance system applied by the Macedonian NCP system, but rather a trial and error approach. This resulted in a few embarrassing experiences, which caused an intervention from the NCP coordinator to settle the situation.

The system has never been evaluated by independent expert(s), but it was generally assessed within the WBC-INCO.NET project under which all NCP systems in the Western Balkan Countries were benchmarked. While the benchmarking results were taken as input for the further advancement of the NCP systems in other countries, in Macedonia the uptake remained subcritical.

The quality assurance mechanisms applied in Austria and Germany are considered to be good practices. Considerable assistance on how to organise information dissemination and consultancy came from Slovenia and also from Serbia during the first years of operation of the Macedonian NCP system.

All the NCPs are committed to report on their activities annually, following a template. The reports are assessed internally by the responsible NCP coordinator.

Although the NCP system aims to monitor regularly the results of Macedonian research teams in FP7 calls, it strongly depends on data provided by the EC or

international partners. A regularly updated full-fledged monitoring system (database) is not in operation.

4.6.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

The Macedonian NCP system is not embedded in the national RTDI funding system. Recently, a new National Research Council (NRC) became operative to deal with national RTDI funding, but by now no communication channels between the NRC and NCPs have been established. The NRC should also become responsible for CREST and ESFRI and represent Macedonia in these committees. Thus, some coordination can be expected for the future.

The overlap between programme committee (PC) members in FP7 and NCPs in Macedonia is close to 100%. Thus, information is highly concentrated but – in terms of policy-making – seldom used because the NCP system largely operates outside the perception of the Minister and its cabinet. Not surprisingly, NCPs do not participate in high-level groups or coordination bodies of the national ERA governance with the exception of one NCP engaged in the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility.

In general, it seems that a national ERA governance system as such is not in place in Macedonia. There is no formal mechanism for coordinating ERA governance activities at national level, and NCPs are not regularly involved in the few working meetings. There is no formal mechanism or coordination body which guarantees the distribution of information from up to down and vice versa, and consequently there are no information flows to the NCP system concerning the Competitiveness Council, CREST, CREST working groups, the High Level Group for Joint Programming, SFIC etc. Occasionally and only on demand, information transfer about ESFRI to the NCP system occurs.

4.6.6 Lessons learned

Based on the recent experiences of the NCPs some elements of the potential improvement of the system can be highlighted:

- There is strong necessity to increase the ERA agenda at the national political level and to establish a national ERA coordination mechanism; by now NCPs seem much more familiar and competent with regards to the European Framework Programme than anybody else in the national policy-making and policy-delivery system.
- The work of the NCPs (especially when they are working within the ministry) depends strongly on the political support to the NCPs by the minister in charge, causing ups and downs which are not healthy to keep stable operations of the NCP system.
- A non-public solution for the NCP system would be better than embedding the system into one of the government offices (but the NCP system should be kept under the supervision of the relevant ministry).
- NCPs at personal level should be appointed on basis of professional merits and not because of political influence.
- NCPs outside the ministry should receive appreciation for their efforts, not at least to safeguard their commitment.

4.7 Poland

Population(million; 2008):	38.5		GERD/GDP (%; 2006):	0.56
Capital:	Warsaw			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	17,800		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	23
Membership in the EU:	2004			

4.7.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Polish NCP system

Number of NCPs:	Up to 20 persons are officially nominated NCPs.	
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):	50 persons are working in the central NCP office. Most of them full-time.	
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:	0	
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):	30 persons are assisting the officially nominated NCPs in the central NCP office in Warsaw.	
The name of the hosting organisation:	Polish Academy of Science (Institute of Fundamental Technological Research)	
	Its legal status:	Public research organisation based on own law
	Linkages to the government:	medium
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	The Polish contact point system is hybrid. The NCP is centralised in Warsaw in the IPPT PAN, but the system is complemented by a country-wide network including 10 Regional Consortia of Contact Points, 21 Thematic Contact Points and many Local Contact Points located in different research establishments operating in the field of research and technological innovation. Up to 200 persons work under this structure.
	organisationally:	Centralised in Warsaw at IPPT PAN, but around 40 additional organisations are engaged as regional or thematic focal points

		throughout the country.
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €		In KPK (= national contact point) the yearly budget is € 1m (50 persons); the regional and thematic contact points have a total yearly budget of around €0.5m
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	90%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%
	EU	0%
	Other international	0%
	Other	10%
Services provided	Free of charge	All
	For fee	None

4.7.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Polish NCP system is organised in a way to take into account the geographical size and wide thematic range Poland is active in as one of the EU's largest countries. The entire contact point system is headed by the NCP (abbr: KPK) located in Warsaw. It is complemented by a network of 10 Regional Consortia of Contact Points, 21 Thematic Contact Points and many Local Contact Points located in different research establishments operating in the field of research and technological innovation. In total around 200 persons are engaged in the system. KPK together with the network members provides various services guiding the Polish R&D sector through different EU programmes and instruments connected to the European Research Area (<http://www.kpk.gov.pl/en/kpk/index.html>).

The Polish National Contact Point for Research Programmes of the European Union (KPK) operates under the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research (IPPT PAN), which is one of the biggest scientific establishments of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

KPK was appointed in 1999 by KBN as a result of a national contest in connection with Poland's participation in the 5th Research Framework Programme of the European Union. Since then, KPK's main goal is to promote the EU R&D programmes throughout Poland in various research and industrial areas through training, consultancy and coaching, facilitating partner search, encouraging project consortia creation and promoting international co-operation. The contract is concluded for 7 years (according to the duration of the FP) and eventually renewed. The NCPs as well as the thematic and regional contact points are paid by the ministry. The local NCPs, however, are not directly paid by the ministry. They are located at different institutions, e.g. universities, and perform their services under contracts with these local institutions.

It is important to note, that KPK resulted from a PHARE project, which was dedicated to advice the establishment of a national information and advice infrastructure for Poland and to build respective capacities. The consortium contracted under this PHARE project was headed by the Austrian Bureau for International Research and Technology Cooperation (BIT), which then became part of the Austrian Research

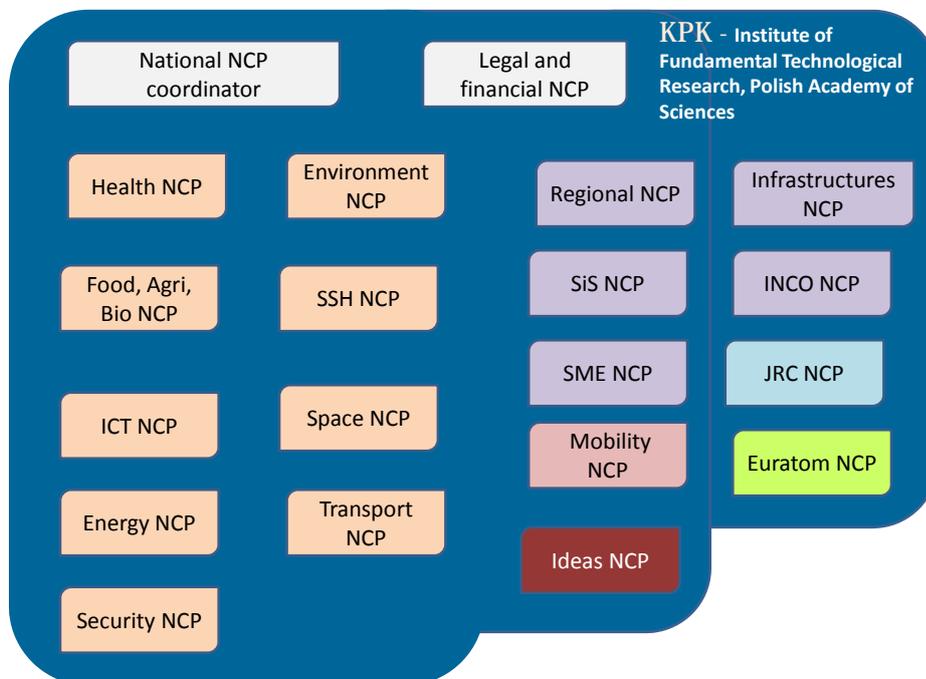
Promotion Agency (FFG). Poland was one of the few countries which used its “pre-accession-funds” for such an undertaking.

The NCP system is outsourced by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, which does not play a strong role in its governance and operations. There is only one person responsible within the ministry who basically checks finances and technical reports. In this respect, the embedding of the NCP system in Polish S&T policy-making and policy-delivery is rather light from an institutional point of view. However, the NCPs can – sometimes on personal basis – play an active role in shaping S&T policy due to their competence and experience in European and international R&D agendas. The Polish Technology Platform, for instance, was mainly initiated by the NCP system and not the government. The NCP system has also initiated the establishment of the Polish Joint Technology Research Network, it strongly supported the creation of technology clusters in Poland, provides advice to the deputy prime minister on S&T issues, it is involved in the programming of structural funds and will become instrumental in the forthcoming Polish EU council presidency as well. To sum up, the Polish NCP system is not only a service provider in a targeted NCP-understanding, but acts additionally as think tank vis-à-vis the government, proposing and piloting activities sometimes in a two steps forward, one-step back mode as regards the calibration with the government.

The Polish NCP system is a full-fledged system, which has one NCP for all sub-programmes of FP7 as well as for EURATOM, CIP and the risk sharing finance facility. However, the promotion and management of COST, EUREKA and JTI does not fall under the responsibility of the NCP system.

The director of the NCP system has three deputy directors (two for specific programmes and one for finances and innovation). In addition there is one person for public relations, one for the Polish Technology Platform and a general senior NCP consultant.

The structure of the NCP system is shown in the following figure::



Source: www.kpk.gov.pl/en/kpk

All NCPs are also involved as experts in the Programme Committees of FP7. They use the office premises of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Brussels regularly.

In selecting the NCPs, managerial competency, previous experience in FP and foreign language skills are considered to be of utmost importance. 50% to 60% of the NCPs do have thematic scientific and technological expertise too. Sales skills are not regarded important.

4.7.3 NCP services and tools applied

The Polish NCP system uses the whole portfolio of services with high intensity. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	1 (very often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	1
Proposal writing	2 (often teaching how to write a proposal)
Special SME unit in operation	1
Participation in projects	4 (not anymore, but previously very often)
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.): in the case of FFG/EIP in the role of experts	1
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	5 (never)

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates, both the one-to-few consultations and the one-to-many promotion activities are frequently provided services of the Polish NCPs. In addition they are frequently involved in policy support, not at least because of the fact that they act as experts in Programme Committees of FP7. But they also advise on issues related to cluster policies, joint technology networks etc. NCPs do not write proposals for third parties, but teach how to write good proposals. They have this experience not at least from their previous involvement in a large number of NCP projects and other structural coordination and support projects. Recently, this involvement has been drastically downsized due to the changing call orientation of the FP, which severely limited the scope of project participation of NCP organisations.

The tools used by the Polish NCPs are the following:

Information days	1 (very often)
Training seminars, workshops	1
Newsletter	1
Websites	1
Stands in large conferences, fairs	3 (regularly, but average)
Road shows	2 (often together with regional contact points)
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	1
Group consultation	1
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	1

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

The three main instrumental pillars of the Polish NCP are

awareness raising and general information provision through newsletters and websites;

thematic information provision and general advice through infodays, training seminars, workshops and group consultations;

specific advice and support through individual face-to-face consultancy and consultation via phone or other electronic means.

A strong consultancy orientation is towards 500 Polish companies, with whom special agreements have been concluded. With the changing orientation of the FPs towards more selective funding and a higher awareness on excellence, a trend away from more general one-to-many services towards one-to-few or even one-to-one services can be observed. Key accounts are increasingly identified and serviced. In general, the FP becomes less attractive for a large number of Polish researchers. This is aggravated by a shift of interest towards structural funds too.

4.7.4 Quality assurance

Quality of the Polish NCP system is assured through several means.

Firstly, the NCP system is monitored by a monitoring council which meets four times per year. It consists of representatives of the major stakeholders (e.g. from higher education, non-university research organisations and industry). This council supervises and monitors the NCP operations and provides advice.

Secondly, the NCPs have to report to the ministry at a half-yearly basis. These reports include also statistics which are stipulated in the contract between the ministry and the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Thirdly, each two years the NCPs are evaluated by the ministry which also outsources evaluation services to external domestic and international evaluators. Since the NCP system is based on a competitive tendering procedure, each time when a new contract is awarded, the potential contractors have to present their concept papers and organisation and method planning, which are subjected to evaluation (all seven years a new tender procedure is launched corresponding to the duration of each Framework Programme).

Fourthly, peer reviewing and benchmarking with other NCP systems is considered to be important for quality assurance. When the Polish NCP system was established there

was a twinning scheme with the Austrian NCP system in place. Through the involvement in NCP related projects exchange of views, processes and practices with other NCP systems took place, which helped to position, benchmark and upgrade the own system. These days, the Polish NCP system herself became a success story which has been used to upgrade NCP systems for instance in Lithuania or Ukraine. It also provided expertise to established NCP system, like the Austrian one.

The quality assurance mechanisms (especially external evaluation approaches) applied by TEKES and VINNOVA are considered to be good practices.

4.7.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

The Polish NCP system is not embedded in the national RTDI funding system. It is hosted by the Polish Academy of Sciences, but attention is directed to secure operational independency from it, not at least to demonstrate that there is no conflict of interest in terms of privileging this large public research organisation. Thus, the NCP system has its own budget and reports directly to the donor, which is the ministry.

Since NCPs are involved as experts in Programme Committee meetings, information regarding FP7 is highly concentrated. Moreover, some Polish NCPs participate in high-level groups or coordination bodies of the national ERA governance. They are participating in strategic fora, advice the minister and are involved in the preparation of the Polish EU Council presidency. There are informal components in the system, because S&T policy lacks a national research and innovation strategy which steers the governance processes. There is for instance no formal mechanism or coordination body which guarantees the distribution of information from up to down and vice versa, and consequently the information flows, e.g. from the Competitiveness Council of the EU, from CREST, the High Level Group for Joint Programming, ESFI and the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility towards the NCPs are rather limited or ad hoc. There are no information flows regarding SFIC.

4.7.6 Lessons learned

- Poland is a successful example for using pre-accession funds to establish and upgrade its NCP system. A subsequent twinning phase with an established foreign NCP was supportive for establishing rules, regulations, processes, operations and routines. It was strongly advised to invest in stable international cooperation relations and trainings.
- Due to the high involvement in European RTDI affairs in practice (and not only on paper), e.g. through frequent meetings in Brussels, partnering and exchange in many other fora, NCPs are well informed and knowledgeable about European RTDI policies, practices and trends and can act as think tanks, which can potentially be capitalised also to influence the national RTDI system. Thus, NCPs can take over an active role in transferring European practices to the national level (e.g. technology platforms, clusters etc.).
- Despite the size and variety of Poland, the NCP system herself is rather centralised with a sufficient resource endowment and a comprehensive thematic scope. This strength is considered important in order to steer the cooperation with the many thematic, regional and local FP information and advice infrastructures throughout the country in line with the slogan that the „tail should not wag the dog“. As mentioned above, in order to address the needs of Poland, regional, thematic and local contact points complement the work of the national contact points.
- It was strongly recommended to let the NCP system work independently, especially outside a ministry, with a dedicated own budget based on responsibility, transparency and accountability. The NCP should never be suggestive of depending from a distinct research organisation (e.g. Academy of Sciences). Conflict of interest must be avoided.

4.8 Slovenia

Population (million; 2008):	2.0	GERD/GDP (%; 2008):	1.66
Capital:	Ljubljana		
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	18,367	Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2009):	14
Membership in the EU:	2004		

Source: EUROSTAT, 7 March, 2010

4.8.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Slovenian NCP system

Number of NCPs:	19 in 22 NCP positions	
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):	3 No full-time NCPs (as an average, 10-15% of working time is used for NCP activities)	
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:	21 (The Regional NCP is the only non-public servant)	
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):	0	
The name of the hosting organisation:	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology	
	Its legal status:	Public authority
	Linkages to the government:	Very strong (part of the government)
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised
	organisationally:	Decentralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €	no special budget for NCP	
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	90%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	0%
	EU	10% (pan-European NCP projects)
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
Services provided	Free of charge	All
	For fee	None

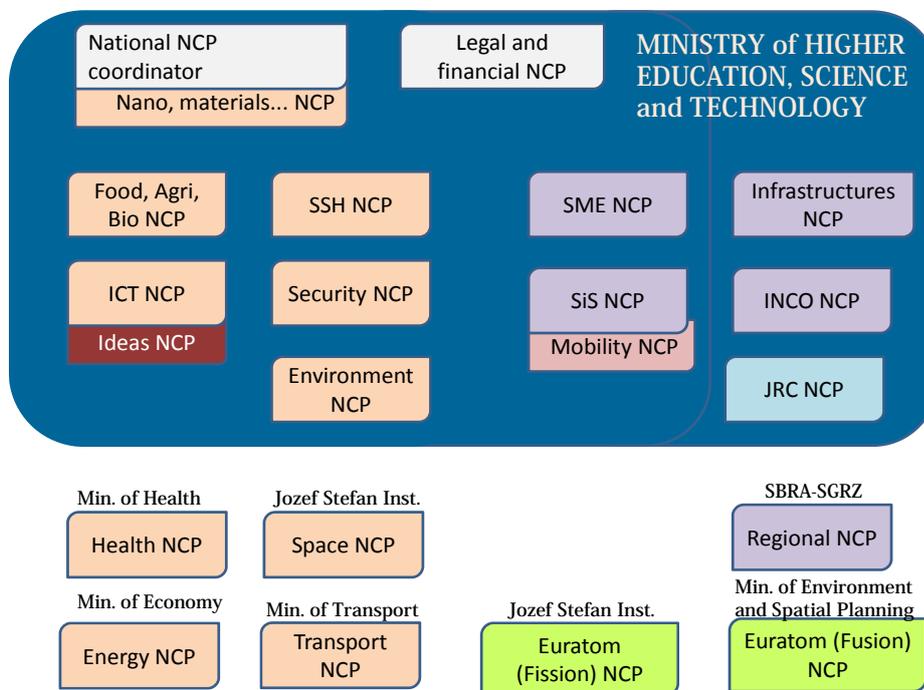
4.8.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Slovenian NCP system is centrally organised in terms of geographical location, and more or less decentralised in organisational terms.

The *Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology* performs tasks in the field of higher education, research, technology development and metrology. The ministry also co-ordinates government activities related to the evolution of the information society.

In the area of STI, the ministry is responsible for policy formulation and implementation. It manages bilateral and multilateral scientific and technological co-operation, represents the country in international meetings and organisations, and is responsible for the coordination, harmonisation of all activities of Slovenia in the committees of the European Commission regarding research, technological development and innovation. It is actively involved in 7th EU Framework Programme. It also covers the activities of Slovenia in the R&D field of South Eastern Europe.

The structure of the NCP system is shown by the following figure:



Source: <http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/>

At least one NCP is working on each of the FP7 thematic programmes while in three cases more than one thematic programme is covered by a single person.

12 out of the 19 NCPs (in 15 NCP positions) work in the same organisation, in the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, while the remaining 7 NCPs are employed in different public organisations, mostly in the relevant ministries responsible for the thematic area the NCP is dealing with. Two NCPs work at the Jozef Stefan Institute, the largest single Slovenian public research entity. The Regional NCP is working permanently in Brussels at the SBRA (Slovenian Business and Research Association), a non-profit international organisation which aims at connecting business and research communities in Slovenia with the EU institutions and other public and private bodies at the EU level.

To summarize, in addition to the main hosting organisation (the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology) six other organisations are involved through participation of their employees in the NCP activities of the country.

This decentralised structure of the NCP system was introduced at the beginning of FP7. Previously, all NCPs were employed by the same ministry. The main reason behind this change was practical: insufficient human resources both in capacity and competency available in the ministry to cover each and every thematic area of the new FP.

In selecting NCPs, the technical competence (experience in the given thematic area either by conducting research and/or by educational background, working experience in the field) is the most important selection criteria, while previous experience in Framework Programme related activities (service provision to researchers, project participation, etc.) and management skills are also taken into consideration when the minister decides on the appointment. The foreign language skill is compulsory. Sales skills are not taken into consideration.

4.8.3 NCP services and tools applied

The Slovenian NCP system provides some standard services to interested potential participants of FP projects. The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is as follows:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	2 (often)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	4 (rarely)
Proposal writing	5 (never)
Special SME unit in operation	5
Participation in projects	2
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.)	1 (very often)
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	2

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As the table indicates, the Slovenian NCP system is very close to policy setting, since most of the NCPs (may) use the broad knowledge learned and information collected as NCPs in their daily work. Standard information dissemination and awareness building events, and involvement in public funds allocation are considered as frequently provided service. All the rest is provided only occasionally or never.

The Slovenian NCP system does not manage any special public funding scheme to promote the participation of Slovenian researchers in FP7. The NCPs, in their daily work at the ministries are involved in the preparation (drafting) and implementation of fund allocation process.

The tools used by the Slovenian NCPs are the following:

Information days	3 (regularly, average)
Training seminars, workshops	4 (rarely)
Newsletter	5 (never)
Websites	1 (very often)
Stands in large conferences, fairs	4
Road shows	5
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	2 (often)

Group consultation	4
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	2

= very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

The tools applied usually by the ministry staff, like webpage, face-to-face and one-on-one consultations via telephone or internet are used most frequently. Trainings and newsletter are never or rarely applied.

Both the servicing practice and the tools applied by the NCP system suggest that the Slovenian NCP system is more dissemination than service oriented. This is probably determined by the fact that in the majority of cases (ministry) employees cover NCP tasks, and only a small part of their daily work can be used for their NCP role.

4.8.4 Quality assurance

There is no formal quality assurance system applied by the Slovenian NCP system.

The system has never been subject of neither internal nor external evaluation.

The NCP system regularly monitors the results of Slovenian research teams in FP7 calls, considering these numbers as a key performance indicator for measuring the efficiency of the NCPs.

4.8.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

The host organisation, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology is also managing other international S&T activities of the Slovenian government. Some NCPs are involved in COST, while EUREKA is managed by another unit in the same ministry, with less formal linkages with the NCPs.

All Programme Committee (PC) members in FP7 are appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, and many of them are NCPs as well. Other NCPs participate as experts in corresponding programme committee. This solution improves the coordination and synergy of the PC and NCP activities considerably. It also highlights that the main expectation regarding the NCP system in Slovenia is to have a strong representation of the country in the various EU bodies and decision making processes, and less to provide daily services to researchers and other clients.

The national ERA representation is centralised and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology is in the core of this system. Employees of the ministry are members in most of the ERA bodies. There is, however, no formal mechanism or coordination body to provide for the top-down and bottom-up distribution of information, and mostly those NCPs who work physically closer to the relevant Slovenian delegates are better informed about issues related to the ERA activities.

4.8.6 Lessons learned

Based on the experiences in the past decade the ideal NCP system for a small country like Slovenia would be the following:

- A centralised system both geographically and organisationally (according to the interviewee the previous system, with all the NCPs working at the same ministry was much more effective): put all the NCPs working in a single organisation;
- Full-time NCPs should be appointed in most of the thematic areas, preferably in a non-profit organisation;
- Main services provided by the system would be: information dissemination, consultation and assisting proposal writing.;
- Stable funding for the NCP activities needs to be provided;
- Strong links between NCPs and PC members have proved to be successful.

4.9 Sweden

Population(million; 2008):	8.3		GERD/GDP (%; 2007):	3.6
Capital:	Stockholm			
GDP/capita (€; 2008):	36,800		Rank in the European Innovation Summary index among EU27 (2008):	1
Membership in the EU:	1995			

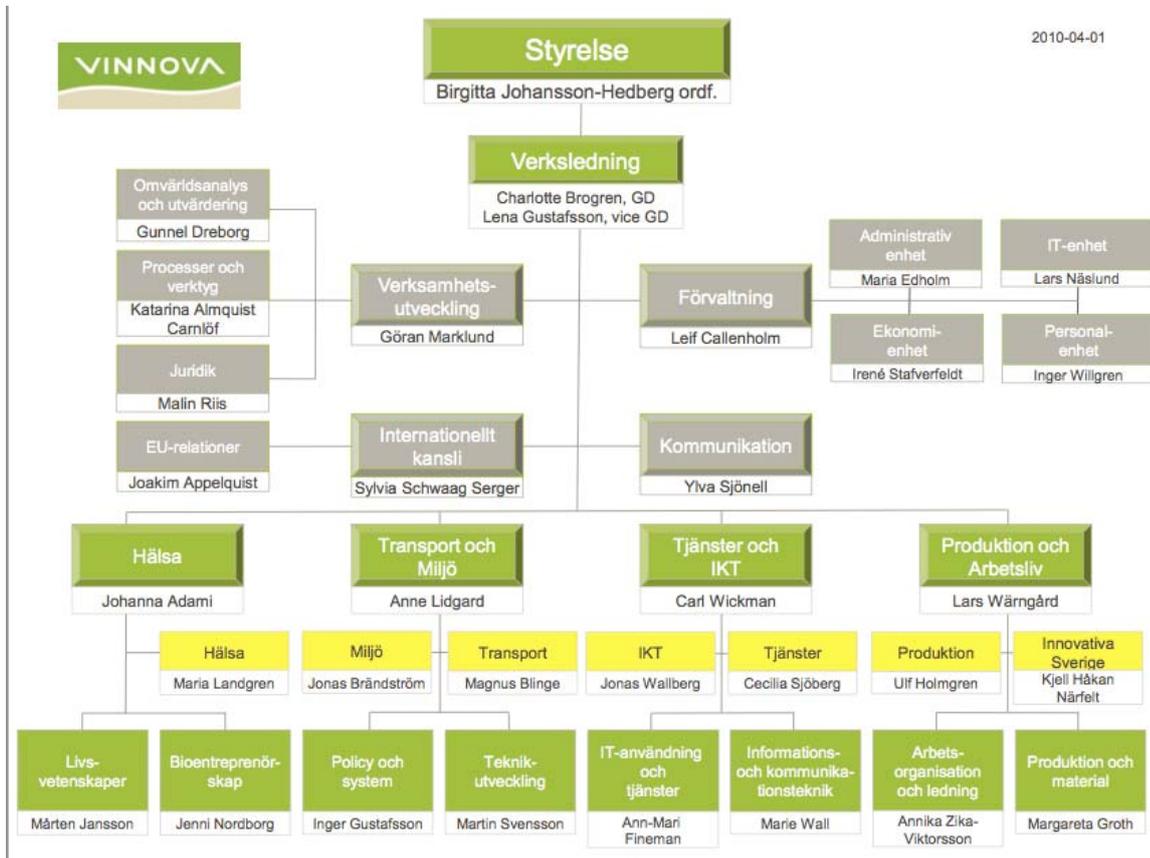
Source: EUROSTAT, 7 March, 2010

4.9.1 Facts and figures – short introduction to the Swedish NCP system

Number of NCPs:	25 officially assigned NCPs	
Number of NCPs (full time equivalent):	Approx. 15-20 FTEs	
Number of NCPs with status of public servant:	all	
Number of other staff members or experts in the NCP office(s):	0	
The name of the hosting organisation:	Two official NCP organisations operate in Sweden; the larger one (considered hereunder) is the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, VINNOVA	
	Its legal status:	Public Agency
	Linkages to the government:	Strong
The structure of the NCP system:	geographically:	Centralised
	organisationally:	Centralised
Annual budget (typical and approximately) in €	1 million Euro	
Distribution of budget by sources	National government	>95%
	Regional authorities	0%
	Own sources	5%
	EU	0%
	Other international	0%
	Other	0%
Services provided	Free of charge	Almost all services
	For fee	Courses (3% of total annual income) and some conferences (0.5% of total annual income)

4.9.2 The structure of the NCP system

The Swedish NCP system is centralised and located at VINNOVA, the Swedish Research Promotion Agency, which is also the national funding agency for applied industrial research, a governmental agency under the Ministry for Enterprise. VINNOVA is one of four governmental funding agencies operating national programmes. The NCP function is allocated to VINNOVA in a Research Bill, issued every four years.



Within VINNOVA’s structure (see below), the NCPs are all organised within the unit “EU-relationer” (EU-Relations). This unit is part of the International Collaboration and Networks Division (Internationella Kansliet in Swedish). The Head of unit for EU-relations report to the Director for International Collaboration who reports to the Director General. The four green divisions at the bottom of the organigram are the ones working with national R&D-funding and they are thematically oriented (health, transport and environment, ICT, production processes and working life sciences).

For each thematic FP7 programme a NCP has been nominated in Sweden. There is also a NCP for the IDEAS programme, the PEOPLE programme, the “research infrastructures”, the “research for the benefit of SMEs”, the “regional of knowledge”, the “research potential”, INCO, Nuclear Research and training (EURATOM) and the JRC. In addition, there is one NCP for legal and finance matters. In the larger sub-programmes of FP7, NCPs usually dedicate around 50% of the working time to NCP work, but less in smaller sub-programmes. Also COST promotion is done by a NCP, who is also COST contact point. The EUREKA contact point is in a different department within VINNOVA and linked to the NCP unit. The most important criterion for selecting a NCP is his/her thematic scientific or/and technological expertise, followed by language skills, sales skills, management skills and previous experience in FPs.

4.9.3 NCP services and tools applied

The information channels mostly used by the Swedish NCP system are websites, newsletters and infodays. For assisting clients training courses and consultation sessions are mostly deployed.

The frequency of service provision, as assessed by the interviewee is the following:

Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	3 (regularly)
Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	3
Proposal writing	5 (never)
Special SME unit in operation	Close cooperation with the VINNOVA SME department (for national funding)
Participation in projects	3
Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.): in the case of FFG/EIP in the role of experts	3
Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	3

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

VINNOVA also runs dedicated FP support programmes:

- SMINT is a dedicated programme for SMEs to support their participation. An average grant is approx. 150.000 SEK (approx. 15.000 EUR); the overall size of the programme is 0.3 mio EUR.
- Planeringsbidrag is a planning grant for coordinators, approx. 250.000 SEK in size (approx 25.000 EUR) and with 0.5 mio EUR available per year.

The tools used by the Swedish NCPs are the following:

Information days	3
Training seminars, workshops	3
Newsletter	3
Websites	2 (often)
Stands in large conferences, fairs	4 (rarely)
Road shows	3
Individual consultation (face-to-face)	3
Group consultation	4
Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	2

1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never

As mentioned already, all courses offered are fee based, whereas the information days are for free.

4.9.4 Quality assurance

According to the interview with the Swedish senior NCP, no formal internal quality assurance system is deployed, but a yearly reporting is carried out and events are regularly evaluated. The grants provided (SMINT, etc.) are being followed up and the success of the participants is being traced. Statistical analyses of proposal submission and success rates are done. But in the interview it was highlighted that it is difficult to link these statistics directly to the NCP system. The NCP system has been already subjected to external evaluation.

4.9.5 NCPs as part of the national STI and ERA governance

In general, the national STI policy formulation and implementation and the NCP system could be linked better, according to the interviewee. A high-level group of directors of several agencies dealing with research and innovation is established.

Regular meetings and well running e-mail-groups are established between NCPs and Programme Committee Members. But NCPs do not usually participate as experts in the PC meetings (usually the two members are one from the relevant ministry and one from the agency, this includes next to the Ministry of Enterprise e.g. in the field of energy the Ministry of Energy and the Energy Agency). NCPs regularly receive information about the Competitiveness Councils and about CREST, but not about CREST Working Groups, the High Level Group for Joint Programming, SFIC, ESFRI or the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility. In the interview it was made clear that communication is not formalised and rather ad-hoc but nevertheless very frequent. Moreover, some NCPs are regularly involved or even participate in high-level groups or coordination bodies of the national ERA governance system.

The Ministry of Science is responsible for coordination for the contributions to the ERA system in Sweden.

4.9.6 Lessons learnt

Based on the interview the following recommendations can be given

- a centralised unit is recommended, the structure should be kept simple, the Swedish experience to locate NCPs at a governmental agency is very good;
- dedicated knowledgeable people have to be employed, cooperating well with each other;
- a regional network should be established with the universities, in Sweden all universities have a node for EU research funding; regional contact points are appointed by the regions, located at municipalities and some in private institutions. Coordination is done by the central NCP structure (VINNOVA).

5. Information Sources

www.europa.eu/legislation

www.gsrt.gr

www.eubuero.de

www.forschungrahmenprogramm.de

<http://rp7.ffg.at>

<http://eurofed.stis.fgov.be>

<http://www.abe-bao.be>

<http://eurosfaire.prd.fr>

<http://www.kpk.gov.pl/en/kpk/contact/people.html>

www.apre.it

www.eurocenter.info

www.europaprogrammen.se

www.mvzt.go.si

www.senternovem.nl

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net4society published by Melanie Buscher for DASTI/NET4SOCIETY

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European Commission (2004): Survey on FP6 National Contact Points (NCPs) in the 15 EU Member States and the 18 countries associated to FP6; accessed on 18 May 2010 on http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html.

GSRT et al. (2009): Report on Benchmarking of the National contact Point System in the Western Balkan Countries. Deliverable produced by the WBC-INCO-NET-project funded by the European Commission under FP7 (project number 212029).

Lanyi, S. (2000): Romania. In: UNESCO (ed.): European ST& Policy and the EU Enlargement. Report from a Workshop of Experts from Pre-Accession CEEC and EUROPOLIS Project Group. Venice: UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology for Europe, pp. 186-192.

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- Schuch, K. (2005): The Integration of Central Europe into the European System of Research. Guthmann-Peterson: Wien und Müllheim a.d. Ruhr.

Appendix A - Questionnaire to European NCPs

A1. General questions

Name:	
Phone number (where we can reach you for the interview):	
Date(s) suggested for the telephone interview:	
e-Mail address(es):	
Address (postal mail):	
Country/City	
Main employer:	
Position (in the main employer's work place):	
Position in your country's NCP system?	

A2. Structure of your NCP system

Does your NCP system belong to the following categories (please, tick 'x' only one!)	Government office		
	Public agency		
	University		
	Other public organisation		
	Non-governmental, non-public organisation, but non-profit		
What is the legal status of the organisation(s) hosting the NCP system? (please, tick 'x' if only one!). If there is more than one single organisation hosting the NCP system, please estimate the distribution in NCP manpower of the different organisations in terms of ownership in %.	Other (specify):		
	Government		
	Other public (incl. agency, university)		
	Private		
How many organisations in your country are officially appointed NCP organisations?	Other (specify):		
	Geographically	Centralised (most of the NCPs work in the same location)	
		Decentralised	
	Organisationally	Centralised (most of the NCPs work in the same organisation)	

		Decentralised	
	Other (specify):		
What is the involvement of your government in the operation of your NCP system? (role, function, way of support, control/supervision, etc.)			
What are the main financial sources to run businesses in your NCP system? (please, estimate the approximate share in %; take care to have at the end 100%)	National government		
	Regional authorities (development agencies, regional councils, etc.)		
	Private sources		
	Own financial sources		
	EU		
	Other international		
	Other (specify):		
What is the approximate size of the annual budget of the NCP system (in EUR) (including personnel costs of the staff working for or in the NCP system; operating costs; other costs directly attributable to run the operations of the NCP system).			
How many of your NCP services are provided free of charge? Please give estimation in %.			
If you charge services, please give examples and estimate the total annual income from these services as share in total annual income/budget:	Service #1 (specify):		
	Service #2 (specify):		
	Service #3 (specify):		
	Service #4 (specify):		
What is the total number of staff working officially for the NCP system in your country (please give an estimation in full time equivalent including administrative and secretarial staff)?			
What is the number of persons, who officially carry the "title/assignment" NCP in your country (headcount)?			
Do you have a NCP for any of the FP sub-programmes indicated on the right side? Please answer with "yes" or "no"	NCP for "health"		
	NCP for "food, agriculture and fisheries, biotechnology"		
	NCP for ICT		
	NCP for nano-sciences, materials and production technologies		
	NCP for "energy"		
	NCP for "environment"		
	NCP for "transport"		

	NCP for “socio-economic sciences and humanities”	
	NCP for “security”	
	NCP for “space”	
	NCP for “frontier research actions” (IDEAS programme)	
	NCP for the PEOPLE programme	
	NCP for “research Infrastructures”	
	NCP for “research for the benefit of SMEs”	
	NCP for “region of Knowledge”	
	NCP for “research potential”	
	NCP for “INCO”	
	NCP for “nuclear research and training”	
	Other NCP: please specify	
	Other NCP: please specify	
How many of your NCPs are public servants (in %)?		
Are there independent experts contracted to assist the work of your NCPs?		
What is the average % of working time an officially assigned NCP typically dedicated to the NCP activities?		
For the selection of an NCP, which skills do you consider most important for a NCP? Please order the skills criteria on the right side by ranking (1 to 5)	Skills category	Rank order
	a) Thematic scientific and technological expertise	
	b) Previous experience in FP	
	c) Management skills	
	d) Sales skills	
	e) Language skills	

A3. Main functions, services and applied tools

Is there any document available that describes the functions of your NCP system? (please indicate where it is available)	Nomination letter:	
	Contract with the relevant government office:	
	Other (specify):	
Which broader service categories does your NCP system carry out (1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never)	Information services (awareness raising, disseminating general info – typically one-to-many)	
	Advising, assisting, training (typically one-to-few or one-to-one)	
	Proposal writing	
	Special SME unit in operation	
	Participation in projects	
	Policy support, representing your country in policy-related bodies (e.g. in Programme Committees of FP7, etc.)	
	Administrating, allocating funds (e.g. premium for success or grants for proposal preparation or other funding for promoting FP-participation of your researchers, etc.)	
Other (specify):		
What types of tools do you use and how frequently in your experience? (1 = very often; 2= often; 3=regularly, but average; 4=rarely; 5= never)	Infodays	
	Training seminars, workshops	
	Newsletter	
	Websites	
	Stands in large conferences, fairs	
	Road shows	
	Individual consultation (face-to-face)	
	Group consultation	
	Individual consultation via phone or other electronic means	
Others (specify):		
Which types of tools are you using mostly (more frequently) for information services?		
Which tools do you use mostly (more frequently) for assisting, advising your clients?		

If you support directly national/regional STI policy formulation and implementation, in which way do you do it?			
If you manage any funds, please specify their size (in EUR, available budget for 2010)?	Fund (name):	#1	Size:
	Fund (name):	#2	Size:
	Fund (name):	#3	Size:

A4. NCP system in the national ERA structure

How is your NCP system embedded into the national RTDI (research, technology development and innovation) funding system?		
How is your NCP system linked or embedded into your other intergovernmental international RTDI activities? Please answer with “yes” or “no”.	NCP is also COST contact point	
	NCP is also responsible for COST promotion	
	NCP is also EUREKA national project coordinator and HLG member	
	NCP is also responsible for EUREKA promotion	
	NCPs are also responsible for the promotion of bilateral intergovernmental cooperation	
	Other (specify):	
How are NCPs related to FP7 Programme Committee members? Is there an organised/regulated communication/cooperation between NCPs and PC members?		
Do NCPs or their host organisation regularly participate and/or involved in high-level groups or coordination bodies of your national ERA governance?		
Are your NCPs informed directly through government channels about the outcomes of the high-level groups of ERA governance (see right side)? Please answer with “yes”, “no” or “do not know”	Competitiveness Council / Council of the European Union	
	CREST (Comité de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, Scientific and Technical Research	

	Committee)	
	CREST Working Groups	
	High Level Group for Joint Programming	
	Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation (SFIC)	
	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI)	
	Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility	
	Other (specify):	
Are there any specific coordination mechanisms for the contribution to the ERA system in your country?		

A5. Quality assurance of NCP system

Does your NCP system apply any quality assurance system?		
If YES, than:	The guiding documents are available at the following address:	
	I attach the guiding document(s) – only in case if it is not available via the net	
Has your NCP system already been evaluated?		
If YES.:	What is the planned frequency of evaluating your NCP system in years?	
	What modes of evaluation did you use?	Please answer with “yes” or “no”
	- regular monitoring of data provided by NCP system	
	- evaluation is done by internal ministry staff	
	- evaluation is contracted to independent external domestic evaluators	
	- evaluation includes also external experts	
	- peer reviewing with other NCP systems is supported by the government	

Do you know any country where the NCP system regularly applies quality assurance?	
Do you know any country or international organisation or project or multi-country NCP network which aims at developing or improving the quality assurance of national NCP systems or international NCP networks?	

A6. Ideal NCP system

According to your experience and making a critical assessment of your country's NCP system, how would you set up the ideal NCP system?

What types of factors should be taken into consideration before making this decision?

Please assess the following statements (please choose one of the two options or describe why neither of them applies):

- Centralised (1) / decentralised (2), i.e. geographically distributed:
- Centralised / national (1)/ decentralised / dispersed (2), i.e. in different organisational structures
- Embedded into public administration (1)/ independent of public administration (2)

Do you have any recommendations for a newcomer such as Bosnia-Herzegovina on how to build its own NCP system and what factors should be taken into consideration and which factors should be definitely avoided?

Appendix B - List of interviewees

The interviews were made in the period of 1 February - 31 March 2010.

Name	Position	Country
ATANASOVSKA, Violeta	National NCP coordinator	Macedonia
CSUZDI, Szonja	National NCP coordinator	Hungary
HERLITSCHKA, Sabine	National NCP coordinator	Austria
JAMET, Paul	National NCP coordinator	France
JENKO, Bojan	National NCP coordinator	Slovenia
LINDBERG, Johan	ICT & Security NCP	Sweden
MUST, Ülle	National NCP coordinator	Estonia
SIEMASZKO, Andrzej	National NCP coordinator	Poland
VAN DINTER, Pascale	INCO, SSH, SiS, ICT NCP	Belgium