THE PROACT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

a method proposed to explore good practices in regional innovation and research policy
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CONTENTS

FOREWORD ......................................................................................................................................................... 3

1. STRATEGY FORMATION ................................................................................................................................. 4
   1.1 Finding a vision ........................................................................................................................................ 4
   1.2 Stakeholder involvement ....................................................................................................................... 5
   1.3 Coordination of and facilitating strategy development ....................................................................... 6
   1.4 The emphasis placed on innovation and research at the regional level ............................................... 7
   1.5 Balancing EU / national / regional / local policy agenda .................................................................... 9
   1.6 Dealing with risks in the strategy ......................................................................................................... 9
   1.7 Summary of the benchmarks associated with strategy formation .................................................. 10

2. POLICY DEPLOYMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION ...................................................................................... 11
   2.1 Innovation and research policy programme and schemes of work ................................................. 11
   2.2 The governance of implementation .................................................................................................. 12
   2.3 Networking practices of the policy implementing organisation(s) ................................................ 13
   2.4 The way the money goes .................................................................................................................... 13
   2.5 Ex-ante, interim and ex-post evaluations .......................................................................................... 14
   2.6 Learning and feedbacks ...................................................................................................................... 14
   2.7 Summary of the benchmarks for policy deployment and implementation .................................... 16

3. PRACTICES AT THE PROGRAMME LEVEL ................................................................................................. 17
   3.1 Initiation and decision on programme ............................................................................................... 17
   3.2 Transparency in the proposal calls and submissions ......................................................................... 18
   3.3 Responsibilities and management ..................................................................................................... 18
   3.4 Documentation ..................................................................................................................................... 20
   3.5 Monitoring ....................................................................................................................................... 20
   3.6 Audit .................................................................................................................................................. 21
   3.7 Sharing project / programme experience internally and externally ............................................. 21
   3.8 Summary of the benchmarks for programme and project level activities ................................... 22
FOREWORD

The ProAct benchmarks and practices were found and finalised in a series of discussions. The benchmarks described are intended to contribute to the development of policy learning within a regional innovation systems framework. The benchmarks should not be treated as a set of practices that a region must achieve however. Policymaking is context specific and this process should be sensitive to historical, social, political and economic characteristics, which are unique to national and regional fabric.

Nonetheless, the authors and the ProAct network members suggest that this guide has been shaped by two principles:

- A greater number of the policy practices exist in mature regional administrations than in new and often less developed regional administrations;
- It is not necessarily an inferior policy if a policy practice does not exist or is incomplete. However, ‘achieving the ProAct described practices’, on the whole, can facilitate policy co-ordination and contribute to greater effectiveness in the formulation and implementation of regional innovation and research policies.

Every attempt has been made to simplify the identification of the practices. The intention of this benchmarking exercise is not to evaluate the substance of the policy practices but rather to ensure the completeness of the practices. Therefore, the benchmarking process proposes that a three point scale be used which will inform policy makers about the practice of regional policy making. The scales are defined as the following:

- (3) points are given if the practice is fully completed or if the practice extends to a full reach;
- (2) points are given if the practice is partially completed or not fully extended;
- (1) point is given if the practice is not observed or greatly under-performed.

The scorecard is not intended to be a quantifiable exercise but, rather, contribute to the current and future policy process. The benchmarks and the associated rankings can facilitate a dialogue among policy makers, stakeholders, industrialists, innovation experts, academia and other interested parties. This discourse can bring forth transparency to the policy making process and reveal areas which could benefit from targeted upgrading.
1. STRATEGY FORMATION

Strategy formation underpins what the region intends to accomplish and creates the themes and context which directs activities. Policies are identified and formulated during this first phase. It is this early stage that builds the underlying foundation for policy implementations and the associated programs and activities. There are six elements within the strategy formation process:

i. Finding a vision
ii. Stakeholder involvement and the consequences of this involvement
iii. Co-ordination and facilitation of strategy development
iv. The emphasis placed on innovation and research at the regional level
v. Balancing EU / national / regional / local policy agendas
vi. Managing risks and uncertainties

Within the six policy elements are a number of benchmarks, which can inform policy makers about appropriate policy practices.

1.1 Finding a vision

Does the region project a unique picture of the future? A vision of what the region may look like in the future may be described in policy documents, web-sites, or other media. The vision could possibly highlight the specialisation of the region and the opportunities which region would like to pursue. It is also telling if the design and development stages of the vision are revealed. Two open-ended questions can be asked which may identify both the vision and the design and development process:

i. Is there a process for identifying regional specialisation? If there is a process, how does it work?
ii. Is there a process for identifying new regional opportunities? If there is a process, how does it work?

Were any of the following management tools and techniques used to design and develop the region’s vision:

- surveys,
- expert consultation,
- negotiation with neighbour regions / other policy makers,
- SWOT analysis,
- competitor analysis,
- other?

### Benchmark 1:
**economic boundaries of the region are considered in the vision and / or the main strategic directions**

(3) the practice exists if the main regional strategic documents:
- deal with `economic spaces` beyond the immediate region (also, if necessary, including global market forces); and
- the anticipated development in all parts of the region is also considered.

(2) the practice partially exists if the main regional strategic documents:
- consider only some parts of the economic space, i.e. there are important neighbouring region(s) that were left out when the region’s vision and / or the main strategic directions was / were developed.

(1) the practice does not exist if the main regional strategic documents:
- deal only with anticipated development within the region’s administrative borders only.
Benchmark 2:
rigorous analysis is performed before the vision and / or the main strategic directions are found

(3) the practice exists if:
- the regional strategy is based on studies developed by internal experts and/or with the help of external experts. Both internal and external experts have experience in the topic; and
- studies include elements which are relevant to the future development of the region. For example, this could include future business opportunities of the regional economy and drafted solutions to the main problems of regional development.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- the regional strategy relies on studies developed with the help of experts, who have proven experience in the topic they were contracted for, but;
- these studies do not cover all the topics that are important for the future development of the region. Coverage of the studies is not sufficient if the studies cover a narrow range of issues.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- expert studies are not conducted before the regional strategy is drafted.

1.2 Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement is important for many reasons. Representative groups may have different viewpoints, support different strategies and visions of the future from a narrower section of the wider population. Regional policy makers can solicit these views using an array of actions. It is important to reveal the nature and scope of this involvement. Some leading questions can assist in this process:

- What are the different phases of stakeholder consultation in drafting the strategy?
- How long do these phases take?
- Which social groups, companies, experts, stakeholders from the region are contacted in the design process of the strategy?
- How is this contribution taken into account?
- What mechanisms are used to consolidate the different inputs?
- Are alternative strategies discussed?
- Are there safeguards to ensure that all stakeholder views are considered?

It is important that stakeholders are involved in the process but it is not necessary that policy makers accept all the views, which are espoused.

Benchmark 3:
important stakeholders are involved in finding the vision and / or the main strategic focus

(3) the practice exists if:
- all the important stakeholders take part in the strategy design process; and
- their views have been taken into account in the regional strategic documents developed; and
- the main elements of the consolidated strategy are accepted by these stakeholders.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- there are some important stakeholders, whose views are not taken into account; or
- some stakeholders were asked, but their views were not adequately taken into account.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- stakeholders were not consulted, when the region's vision / strategy was drafted.
Benchmark 4:  
the vision / strategy is disseminated widely

(3) the practice exists if:
  ▪ all regional stakeholders and the general public are aware of the regional vision / strategy (e.g. it is accessible on the Internet or the strategy appears in the written and electronic media, etc.)
(2) the practice partially exists if:
  ▪ only some stakeholders in the region are aware of the regional vision / strategy
(1) the practice does not exist if:
  ▪ the majority of stakeholders are not informed about the reach of the strategy; or
  ▪ the strategy is not available to the public.

Benchmark 5:

discussions on strategic options are effectively facilitated

(3) the practice exists if:
  ▪ there were public forums where all different strategic options were discussed.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
  ▪ during the strategy design process, several strategic options emerged, but only a select number of the options were discussed
(1) the practice does not exist if:
  ▪ The different strategic options were not discussed.

1.3 Coordination of and facilitating strategy development

It is important to know who takes the lead in the different phases of compiling the strategy and how it happens. Strategy development and the different roles may include the following elements:
  ▪ The roles of the different stakeholders in the process.
  ▪ Who compiles the different drafts of the strategy document?
  ▪ Are strategic tools used to develop objectives?
  ▪ What are the key indicators, which are associated with the strategic objectives?

Benchmark 6:  
the responsible parties acted in concert when designing the strategy

(3) the practice exists if:
  ▪ the different roles for the strategy design team were defined at the onset of the process;
  ▪ the responsible parties agreed to a strategy design process.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
  ▪ some of the roles were defined but some roles were unclear; and / or
  ▪ the design process was not clearly stated.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
  ▪ responsibilities and the design process were unclear.
Benchmark 7: accordance between the different regional economic strategic documents

(3) the practice exists if:
- objectives in the different strategic documents are aligned;
- when someone reads the different strategic documents, the reader can identify regional priorities.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- regional objectives are more or less clear in the different strategic documents, but there are too many of them and there is no priority order between the objectives.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the different (economic) strategic documents have different objectives and they do not overlap or the overlap between them is confusing; and/or
- the objectives could oppose one another.

1.4 The emphasis placed on innovation and research at the regional level

The support to ‘fresh thinking that creates value’\(^1\) is essential at the regional level policy design. In this respect the followings should be clarified:

- Innovation has a central position in the regional strategy.
- Stakeholders are aware of the importance of innovation.
- Focus of the regional strategy on specialisation and regional characteristics.
- The understanding that innovation is evolutionary in nature and thus the support for developing skills and capabilities is important (and probably more effective) than providing subsidies and other industrial development schemes.

Benchmark 8: innovation and research are at the centre of the regional strategy

(3) the practice exists if:
- innovation is emphasised in the regional strategic documents;
- innovation is a central theme in the key strategic documents.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- regional innovation priorities are considered; but it is not the most important core theme;
- objectives are mentioned which have only a distant relationship with innovation.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- innovation and research and development have no or only a nominal role in the regional strategy.

Benchmark 9: stakeholders understand the importance of regional innovation

(3) the practice exists if:
- stakeholders (including multi-nationals and SMEs) are aware of the role which innovation can play in economic growth;

\(^1\) See Richard Lyon’s words in The Economist’s special report on innovation, 13 October 2007 (p.4)
- policy makers and other stakeholders recognise that social and political conditions can contribute to innovation (e.g. higher education and other institutions which support creativity, removing bureaucratic obstacles, financial incentives, etc.)

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- some stakeholders are aware of innovation but not all (e.g. SMEs are not).
- although some firms and higher education are innovative, policy makers do not support their innovative actions.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- in the region there is no common definition about the role of innovation (e.g. it is narrowly defined, for example, to support only R&D or new scientific attainments, etc.); and/or
- stakeholders have only vague or no ideas about the role of innovation in regional economic prosperity.

### Benchmark 10:
awareness for the need for regional specialisation

(3) the practice exists if:
- the strategy focuses on regional specialisations such as one or a few technology foci, sectors, a cluster or type of firm (e.g. support for locally owned SMEs).

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- the strategy focuses on a broader set of regional objectives (e.g. support for the electronics industry in general etc.).

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the strategy does not recognize the need for regional specialisation (only general, not region-specific objectives are apparent).

### Benchmark 11:
emphasis on a regional ‘flavour’, the details and specific context of the region

(3) the practice exists if:
- the regional strategy incorporates a local profile or economic, social, and cultural identity (for example, the strategy identifies regional SMEs and universities or unique opportunities, regional technological expertise, etc.).

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- most of the regional development strategy was designed with some elements of a regional perspective.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the regional context is not included in the strategy.

### Benchmark 12
building capability and potential

(3) the practice exists if:
- in the strategy, there is a tendency to support competitive firms; or
- the main objective is to build skills and capabilities.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- in the strategy, there is a tendency to support competitive firms; but
- other social issues are equally important (e.g. support for deprived areas, subsidising traditional industries, etc.)
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   ▪ the strategy focuses primarily on supporting survival of uncompetitive firms.

1.5 Balancing EU / national / regional / local policy agenda

Regional policies are embedded in a policy environment, which entails policy levels from above and below. Synergetic impacts are expected only if the different policy levels are aligned. It is advisable to clarify if:
   ▪ the different policy levels are in accordance and aligned; and
   ▪ regional efforts are likely to be supported at the regional level or not.

Certainly, there can be cases when the regional policy proves to be going in the right direction while the other policy directives from the other levels are not (or vice versa). Still, thinking and learning about potential frictions is useful.

Benchmark 13: mutual understanding between different policy levels

(3) the practice exists if:
   ▪ the goals from the EU / national / regional / local policy levels are closely aligned; and
   ▪ substantial synergies between the actions of the different levels are very likely to emerge.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
   ▪ in the strategy design process the EU / national / regional / local policy levels defined similar goals; BUT,
   ▪ the actions from the different levels are expected to differ.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
   ▪ the different policy levels have different aims which affect innovation and research policies and outcomes;
   ▪ no synergy is expected between the actions of the different policy levels.

Benchmark 14: regional policies are recognised at the national level

(3) the practice exists if:
   ▪ regional initiatives are apparent at the higher policy levels.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
   ▪ regional initiatives are not apparent at higher policy levels; or
   ▪ the regional initiatives changed at the higher policy levels.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
   ▪ regional initiatives (if any) get distorted on higher policy levels.

1.6 Dealing with risks in the strategy

Uncertainty is a key concept in innovation management and so it should be in the strategic management of regions. Therefore, it is advisable if the regional strategies leave room for flexible adaptation to an always-changing environment.
Benchmark 15:
the strategy is flexible

(3) the practice exists if:
- the regional strategy deals with uncertainty (e.g. there are scenarios in the strategy); and/or
- the strategy is an orientation framework and the objectives can be adapted to the changing circumstances; and/or
- there are regular policy practices which are used to update the strategy.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- there are occasional practices which allow the strategy to be updated; and
- in some cases the objectives can be adapted in response to unexpected outcomes.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the strategy does not analyse uncertainty or risk;
- the strategic objectives cannot be change for many years.

1.7 Summary of the benchmarks associated with strategy formation

Below the benchmarks for the eight ProAct regions are summarised. Visit www.proact-network.net for:
- the full-text case studies of the eight ProAct regions;
- the ProAct Online Benchmarking Tool!

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<tr>
<th>Policy element</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
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<td>3. strategic directions are found</td>
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<td>Stakeholder involvement</td>
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<td>3. major stakeholders are involved in finding the</td>
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<td>4. the vision/strategy is disseminated widely</td>
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<td>5. discussions on strategic options are effectively</td>
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<td>6. the responsible parties acted in concert when</td>
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Source: www.proact-network.net

Legend:
(3) the practice is fully completed or if the practice extends to a full reach;
(2) the practice is partially completed or not fully extended;
(1) the practice is not observed or under-performed.
2. POLICY DEPLOYMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Policy deployment and implementation encompasses the region’s practical responses to realise the stated vision and strategies. From an innovation and research and development policy standpoint, six elements are identified within the deployment and implementation process:

i. Innovation and research policy programme and schemes of work  
ii. Governance  
iii. Networking practices  
iv. The way money goes  
v. Evaluations  
vi. Learning and feedbacks

Under each of the six policy elements are a number of benchmarks, which can inform policy makers of the appropriate policy practices.

2.1 Innovation and research policy programme and schemes of work

Innovation and research policy programmes and schemes of work should be in accordance with the main directions laid out in the strategy formation process. Orientating questions could include:

- Which regional research and innovation programmes were launched? E.g. incubation, strengthening university-industry links, science parks, innovation centres, etc.
- How and why were these programmes chosen? Are there any programmes that cannot be traced back to the prevailing strategy? If so, what is the rationale for these programmes?
- How would you describe the flexibility of the innovation-related programmes? Do they allow for flexible implementation or is it mandated that the programmes be strictly followed?

Benchmark 1: strategic objectives and the innovation and research policies and programmes are in accordance

(3) the practice exists if:
- innovation and research policies clearly promote the regional strategy (i.e. most of the programmes directly support the regional innovation process); and
- the innovation policy objectives are being attained with the selected programmes.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- some of the innovation policy objectives are not being attained (or cannot be attained) with the programmes chosen.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- formal innovation and research programmes and work schemes are not widely introduced (e.g. the budget for such tools is low).

Benchmark 2: flexibility in the programmes / schemes of work

(3) the practice exists if:
- the strategic programmes and schemes of work can be adapted to social, economic and political changes (i.e. the programmes are not necessarily ‘carved in stone’). Any change however, has to meet the stated strategic objectives;
- the strategic policy guidelines (the strategic documents) provide only a frame for policy, which is implemented to meet real needs of the region.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - only some programmes can be adapted to any changes in the environment.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - programmes cannot be changed regardless of new developments.

2.2 The governance of implementation

In regions, which have demonstrated propensity for innovative behaviour, policy governance is embedded in a networked environment. Such a setting encourages an array of individuals, institutions, firms and other vested parties to participate in all facets of the strategy process. These policy stakeholders are contribute by providing new ideas and undertake programme responsibilities and evaluations. This policy governance recognises the role of the political theatre but is protected from political interference. Some key questions to consider include:
   - How systematically are regional stakeholders contacted during the programming phase by the regional policy makers?
   - Is there a tendency for political interference in regional development? If yes, what is the nature of this interference and what impact does this have on the policy process?

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<th>Benchmark 3: supportivenetworked governance</th>
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(3) the practice exists if:
   - regional policy makers systematically keep in contact with stakeholders and those involved in implementing the policy.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - regional policy makers keep infrequent contacts with stakeholders and those involved in implementing the policy;
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - there is no further contact between stakeholders and policy implementers once the strategy has been formulated.

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<th>Benchmark 4: independenceingovernance</th>
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(3) the practice exists if:
   - governance is completely independent of political interference: if there is a political change after general or regional elections, professional integrity remains central to on-going and future regional strategies.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - governance is not completely independent of political interference: for example, if there is a political change at the regional, local or national level, personnel may change but on-going programmes will continue.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - regional policy governance is dominated by political persuasion: personal (or even family) relationships are much more important than professional considerations.
2.3 Networking practices of the policy implementing organisation(s)

Not only should stakeholders be systematically contacted, the breadth and efficiency of networking are also important in the implementation process. The questions to consider are:

- Does the policy implementing organisation contact all the important stakeholders? Are neighbouring regions included in these discussions?
- Are there any procedures, which can resolve any potential conflicts between stakeholders?

Benchmark 5:

effective policy assistance to the dialogue between stakeholders

(3) the practice exists if:
- all significant stakeholder groups participate in the policy networking process; and
- by facilitating regular dialogue between stakeholders, conflicts are resolved or avoided.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- only some stakeholders take part in the dialogue; and/or
- the dialogue between the stakeholder groups is only occasionally facilitated.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- there is no dialogue between the different stakeholders; or
- conflicts are not always satisfactorily resolved.

Benchmark 6:

involvement of partner and neighbouring regions in programme implementation

(3) the practice exists if:
- there is active collaboration with partner and neighbouring regions: for example, there are joint programmes and shared investments.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- collaboration among partner and neighbouring regions exists, but these activities mostly entail discussions and dialogue: joint programmes and actions are not important.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- partner regions do not co-operate in regional strategy activities.

2.4 The way the money goes

The financial support system is equally important for policy makers and the target audience. Even a very good strategy and supportive policy may have a low impact if appropriate resources are not in place. The financing mechanism of any regional innovation and research system must be comprehensive and transparent. Is the financial system for the regional programmes adequate? Once the money has been allocated, can it be easily accessed? Is the governance over the financial system appropriate for current and future programmes? These are the questions to consider.

Benchmark 7:

appropriate financial governance

(3) the practice exists if:
- the financing of regional programmes is fluid (i.e. there are no obstacles or bottlenecks); and/or
- the budgetary situation of the region is stable which contributes to programmes being financed.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - while the budgetary situation of the region is stable, financing some programmes is not guaranteed.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - programmes and projects are under-funded.

2.5 Ex-ante, interim and ex-post evaluations

The different uses of public money should be evaluated, even in those programmes which are complicated or the outcomes and impacts are expected to occur beyond the immediate delivery period. The following questions explore the evaluation practices:
- Are there regular independent ex ante, interim and ex-post evaluations of the programmes?
- How are the programmes evaluated (e.g. peer review, surveys, case studies, etc.)?
- To what extent is the evaluation independent? Who/which organisation performs the evaluation?

Benchmark 8:
appropriate evaluations are in place

(3) the practice exists if:
   - independent, regular and thorough evaluations of resource allocation and impacts take place; and
   - the results of the evaluations are disseminated to relevant practitioners, interested professionals and the public.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - there are evaluations but they are either not independent, or frequent; and/or thorough;
   - the ex ante, or the interim, or the ex post evaluations are delayed or incomplete;
   - the dissemination of the results is not comprehensive or widely accessible.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - evaluations, if they exist, are not independent and not regular; and not thorough;
   - the results are not available to key people, institutions or the public.

2.6 Learning and feedbacks

Openness towards learning and supporting the ability to learn are key approaches in the innovation process. Specific issues to raise with the implementing organisations include:
- Have the policy implementing organisations introduced procedures and practices which capture possible learning outcomes? If yes, please provide some examples. Does current implementing experience have an impact on future practices (for example has any implementation practices been affected from the advice attained from a previous evaluation)?
- What are the consequences of any evaluation? Do the evaluations have an immediate impact on practices?
- Are there any learning objectives within the policy implementing organisation(s)?
- Are there examples of mobility of personnel for learning objectives?
Benchmark 9: awareness of learning in the implementing organisation(s)

(3) the practice exists if:
- the implementing organisations are open to learning opportunities; e.g. encourages evaluation, self-assessments, takes part in brainstorming activities with external organisations on policy issues, etc.; and
- in general the implementing organisations do not block improvement initiatives.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- not all implementing organisations are open to learning; or
- although the implementing organisations are open to learning; the pace of learning is slow which diminished the learning potential.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- future improvements are less likely because there is no learning culture in the organisation.

Benchmark 10: monitoring and evaluation results are used in future policy activities

(3) the practice exists if:
- there are regular (ex-ante, interim and ex-post) evaluations and monitoring activities; and
- the results have an immediate impact on policy practices.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- although evaluation and monitoring exercises are undertaken, these events are infrequent throughout the main regional policy instruments; and/or
- the results have little or no impact on policy practices (or only late impact if any).

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the results of any evaluation or monitoring exercise (if they occur at all) are only used for final reports etc. and are not disseminated to the policy stakeholders.

Benchmark 11 continuous capability building

(3) the practice exists if:
- there are learning objectives that are continuously and appropriately set and accomplished.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- there are some examples of learning, but the opportunity is not given to everyone (limited to some ‘strong’ people only or some parts of the implementing organisations etc.).

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- there is no training and learning objectives within the agency.

Benchmark 12: mobility of programme / project personnel for learning

(3) the practice exists if:
- staff are encouraged to learn from other departments, agencies and other organisation through study leave, secondments, tours, etc.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
   - there are some examples of mobility, but a formal procedure does not exist (e.g. they are not general).
(1) the practice does not exist if:
   - personnel mobility is discouraged.

2.7 Summary of the benchmarks for policy deployment and implementation

Below the benchmarks for the eight ProAct regions are summarised. Visit www.proact-network.net for:
- the full-text case studies of the eight ProAct regions;
- the ProAct Online Benchmarking Tool!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy element</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation and research policy programme and schemes of work</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. strategic objectives and the innovation and research policies are in accordance</td>
<td>DK 3 3 2 2 3 2 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. flexibility in the programmes / schemes of work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The governance of implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. supportive networked governance</td>
<td>3 2 3 2 2 2 1 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. independence in governance</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 2 2 1 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking practices of the programme implementing organisation(s)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. effective policy assistance to the dialogue between stakeholders</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 2 2 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. involvement of partner and neighbouring regions in programme implementation</td>
<td>2 2 2 1 2 2 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The way the money goes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. effective financial governance</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 3 2 1 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ex-ante, interim and ex post evaluations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. appropriate evaluations are in place</td>
<td>3 3 3 2 3 2 1 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning and feedbacks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. awareness towards learning in the implementing organisation(s)</td>
<td>3 3 2 3 2 2 3 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. monitoring and evaluation results are used in future policy activities</td>
<td>2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. continuous capability building</td>
<td>2 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. mobility of programme / project personnel for learning</td>
<td>2 2 0 2 2 2 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: www.proact-network.net*

Legend:
(3) the practice is fully completed or if the practice extends to a full reach;
(2) the practice is partially completed or not fully extended;
(1) the practice is not observed or under-performed;
(0) no information.
3. PRACTICES AT THE PROGRAMME LEVEL

Project management routines and procedures are commonly used to manage government programmes and projects. Project management techniques are often criticised as being overtly project-centric and focusing only on short term goals. Nevertheless, project management has emerged as the most popular approach among those policy makers that implement strategic programmes. Seven elements are proposed to benchmark at the programme level:

i. Initiation and decision on programme
ii. Transparency
iii. Responsibilities and management
iv. Documentation
v. Monitoring
vi. Auditing
vii. Sharing programme experience

With each of the seven policy elements are a number of benchmarks, which can inform policy makers about appropriate policy practices. In this part, benchmarks can be given for:
- one programme (e.g. one that is analysed in the ProAct case studies); or
- the general programme level practices.

3.1 Initiation and decision on programme

Two issues are important at the earliest deliberation of programme activities:
- ensure that the programmes are in accordance with the strategy and policy;
- ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed about the orientation of the proposed tendering and project process.

Benchmark 1: programmes are consistent with the regional strategy

(3) the practice exists if:
- the programme can be traced back to the agreed regional strategy; or
- the programme contributes to the realisation of regional strategic objectives.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- the programme cannot be traced to the agreed regional strategy; but
- it contributes to the realisation of regional strategic objectives.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- programmes are not linked to the presiding strategy and did not contribute to the regional strategic goals.

Benchmark 2: stakeholders are appropriately informed before the start of the programme

(3) the practice exists if:
- discussion took place between different stakeholders before the programme was drafted; and/or
- the programme concept was introduced at regional stakeholder forums.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- the programme idea was introduced without enabling substantive discussions; or
- not all the stakeholder groups were informed.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
- there was no contact between the different stakeholders before the introduction of the programme drafts.

3.2 Transparency in the proposal calls and submissions

International organisations (the UN, Transparency International, etc.) strongly recommend that organisations receiving public money should be selected through an open competitive process (within a national framework of public procurement). The following information pertaining to the bidding process should be available:
- Which institution co-ordinates the tendering process and selection process? Describe these processes.
- What are the time frames for (a) proposal submission, (b) contract preparation and (c) any negotiated stages?

### Benchmark 3:
the principle of competition is upheld

(3) the practice exists if:
- projects were submitted through a competitive bidding process (i.e. there are objective criteria and all potential proposers could bid).

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- although formally the process was competitive, there were some (administrative) barriers, which could exclude potential bidders (e.g. size limit, turnover limit, minimum number of PhDs, etc.); or

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the process was not competitive and the implementing agent was selected by another mechanism.

### Benchmark 4:
appropriate timing of calls

(3) the practice exists if:
- sufficient time was given to all phases of the bid process, (e.g. between drafting and issuing the calls, proposal submission deadlines, contract and project start times, etc.)

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- sufficient time was given to some phases but not to all the phases;

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- insufficient time was given to the entire process.

3.3 Responsibilities and management

Good practices in programme management are reflected in reasonable administration duties, time management principles and appropriate human resource management. Questions to pose are:
- Are the administration duties of the programmes extensive? Are the related administration costs high or low (reasonable)?
- Is there a policy on the time management of programmes?
- Did the programme implementing agent employ competent individuals to implement the programme?
Benchmark 6:
reasonable administration duties

(3) the practice exists if:
- the firms’ (the receiver’s or the programme’s other target audience’s) costs of administering the programme were reasonably low; and
- public administration of the programme was efficient.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- the firms’ (or other target audience’s) costs of the programme were low but public administration was not efficient for some reason; or
- the firms’ (or other target audience’s) costs of the programme were high but public administration was efficient.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- there were significant and unjustifiable administration duties reflected also in high costs against total programme budget.

Benchmark 6:
programmes/ project met time targets

(3) the practice exists if:
- there are effective policies and/or regulations related to project time management issues; and/or
- the programme was implemented as scheduled (without unjustifiable delays) and the organisation responsible for implementing the programme played a positive role in the timely delivery.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- there was no policy and/or regulation on project time management or it was not effective but the programme was implemented as scheduled; and/or
- although the programme was implemented as scheduled (without unjustifiable delays), the policy organisation in charge of the programme played a neutral or negative role in the timely delivery.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- there was no policy on time management; and/or
- the programme was not implemented as scheduled (there were unjustifiable delays), and the organisation responsible for the programme hindered the timely delivery.

Benchmark 7:
appropriate human resource management

(3) the practice exists if:
- competent individuals were employed to manage and implement the programme/ project based on skills and experience criteria.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- some individuals are competent, but many others are not.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- the programme did not employ appropriately skilled personnel.
3.4 Documentation

Taking responsibility and being accountable for policy actions implies a level of reliable documentation of the course of events. However, regional innovation and research policy support should not be overly bureaucratic. Clear and concise documentation is important when it comes to evaluation, audits or other assessments of policy performance. How is the information management system organised? Which means of communication are used for documentation? Upon request, would it be possible to present all the documents related to the programme so that every important step of programme implementation is apparent to the general public?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark 8: appropriate documentation procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3) the practice exists if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- procedures are in place for documents to be made available and these procedures are easy to follow (e.g. the documentation system enables timely continuation of the programme even if the people in charge of the programme change position / job);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- there is an archive policy ensuring that documents can be preserved and read for a specified period upon completion of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) the practice partially exists if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- documentation procedures are in place but these procedures are difficult to follow or they are not effective; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the documentation of some actions was good (e.g. ensuring that documents can be preserved and read for a specified period) but that of the others bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) the practice does not exist if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- there are no documentation procedures in place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Monitoring

Monitoring the progress of programme and projects is an important source of management information, which is indispensable for the governance of regional strategies. In this framework, the term monitoring means ‘an eye to ensure that processes are on the right track’. Effective monitoring mechanisms should pick up on any problems and the programme has a better chance of correcting any problems if issues are raised early. Relevant questions are: is monitoring a regular practice? If yes, what happens to the results of the monitoring exercise? Do they feed into the higher policy levels? What happens if unfavourable trends emerge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark 9: functioning monitoring mechanisms are in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3) the practice exists if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- there are regular (not necessarily formal) monitoring systems in place; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- modification of the programme are introduced when monitoring results identify any divergence from the objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) the practice partially exists if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a monitoring system is in place but the results are not used to modify programmes; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- monitoring was undertaken for some but not all programme activities; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- monitoring was undertaken for some but not all programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) the practice does not exist if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no monitoring systems are used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Audit

Like evaluations and monitoring exercises, audits are an important constituent to ensure the accountability of regional innovation and research projects. Organisations, which undertake audits, should be independent.

Benchmark 10:
audit systems are in place

(3) the practice exists if:
  ▪ programme audits take place; and
  ▪ there are or would be consequences of audits.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
  ▪ there are programme audits but no consequences take place;
  ▪ for some programmes audits take place while other programmes do not implement audits.
(1) the practice does not exist if:
  ▪ there are no programme audits.

3.7 Sharing project / programme experience internally and externally

Organisational learning is ineffectual without appropriate feedback. Feedback from the results of evaluations, monitoring exercises and audits can motivate programme planners and implementing agents. Discussing these results openly not only contributes to the transparency of the policy and programmes but it is also a dissemination tool: it helps to spread the practice of networking. The questions, which can help uncover these processes are:

  ▪ Are the results of evaluations, monitoring exercises and audits discussed within the implementing organisation? Are they discussed in public forum? Are the programme results disseminated? If yes, how?
  ▪ How can the contact between the policy officer and the contractor be described? Is it a formal relationship (roles are predefined) or a more proactive relationship (continuous dialogue, equal partners in the process, etc.)?

Benchmark 11:
the results from evaluations, monitoring exercises and audits are available to the wider public

(3) the practice exists if:
  ▪ evaluation, monitoring and audit results are disclosure with relevant agencies; and
  ▪ they are available to the public.
(2) the practice partially exists if:
  ▪ only some results from evaluations, monitoring exercises and audits reach the public; or
  ▪ although disclosure of the evaluation, monitoring and audit results took place, all the results did not reach the interested public (but e.g. only a few distinguished people); or
(1) the practice does not exist if:
  ▪ there are no evaluations, monitoring exercises and audits, or;
  ▪ evaluation, monitoring and audit results (if they exist) reached only the contractor policy makers or the higher level policy makers and are not available to the public.
Benchmark 12: proactive interactions between project officers and contractors

(3) the practice exists if:
- there were regular interactions between project officers and contractors; and
- the interactions contribute to the realisation of the programme / project.

(2) the practice partially exists if:
- there are occasional interactions between project officers and contractors (e.g. for some of the programmes/projects it works, for others it does not); and/or
- the discussion did not contribute to the realisation of the programme / project.

(1) the practice does not exist if:
- regular interactions did not take place between project officers and contractors (e.g. contacts were highly formal).

3.8 Summary of the benchmarks for programme and project level activities

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy element</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>North Denmark</th>
<th>South East England</th>
<th>Luxembourg</th>
<th>Vienna</th>
<th>South Moravia</th>
<th>Northern Hungary</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiation and decision on programme</td>
<td>programmes are consistent with the regional strategy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency in the proposal calls and submissions</td>
<td>the principle of competition is upheld</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate timing of calls</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities and management</td>
<td>reasonable administration duties</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>programmes/ project met time targets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate human resource management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>appropriate documentation procedures</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>functioning monitoring mechanisms are in place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>audit systems are in place</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing project / programme experience internally and externally</td>
<td>the results from evaluations, monitoring and audits are available to the wider pul</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proactive interactions between project officers and contractors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.proact-network.net

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