The Open Method of Coordination in Research Policy:

Assessment and Recommendations

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**The Open Method of Coordination
in Research Policy:
Assessment and Recommendations**

A report from the Expert Group for the follow-up of the research aspects of the
revised Lisbon strategy
January 2009

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Executive Summary

The Open Method of Coordination is a policy instrument created in the year 2000 to make Member States progress jointly towards the goals of the Lisbon strategy. The 3 % objective and 3 % action plan, launched in 2003, led to a dedicated OMC process in the field of research policy. The Competitiveness Council appointed CREST to oversee its implementation. Since then, the CREST-OMC instrument has unfolded through yearly cycles, of which there have been four to date. In each cycle, a series of working groups have discussed specific research policy issues. All working groups have produced a report with the results of their discussions and recommendations. Working groups consisted of national civil servants and experts. The topics for discussion have included, among others: policy mixes for research policy, internationalisation of R&D, effectiveness of fiscal measures to stimulate R&D or intellectual property rights.

The Expert Group for the follow-up of the research aspects of the Lisbon strategy (LEG) has carried out an assessment of the impact of the Open Method of Coordination. The assessment is based on a series of 174 interviews with national policy-makers and on the expertise of the members of the group. The main conclusion of this assessment is that the CREST-OMC constitutes a novel approach and that considerable achievements can be noted even though it has only been in place for 5 years. At the same time, this expert group has identified several areas where further development is possible in order to strengthen and make the most of the unexploited potential of this new policy instrument.

The achievements of the CREST-OMC are:

1. A new approach: CREST-OMC has created and developed an entirely new approach to EU and Member States' research policy-making. The different cycles of the CREST-OMC bear evidence to a process of developing a new mechanism, a new way of understanding and organising Member States' interactions in their collective efforts to realise the vision of a European Research Area.

2. Mutual learning: CREST-OMC has had positive impacts in terms of learning at the national level. Learning has taken place mainly as a "combined inspiration", a process by which the CREST-OMC reports and results have stimulated discussions on some concrete national policy instruments or specific aspects of national research programs.

3. The scope of the 3% objective and beyond: From the very beginning, achieving the 3% Barcelona target through the CREST-OMC policy instrument has been related to a series of systemic and structural aspects of research-related policies at the national level. CREST-OMC has provided support and inspiration sources to the real problems and issues of Member States' research policy-making.

4. <u>The added value</u>: When considered in relation to other policy instruments aiming at stimulating learning, CREST-OMC has two distinctive and positive features: (a) it engages actively national civil servants to a higher degree than other instruments; and (b) CREST has been politically very active and engaged in unfolding the CREST-OMC instrument.

5. <u>The working inside CREST-OMC groups</u>: The working inside the CREST-OMC groups has been *flexible* and *adaptable*, and there has been a *high degree of commitment* and *engagement* by most participants in the groups.

The way forward: What can be improved?

1. <u>Focus on coordination</u>: The coordination aspect of the CREST-OMC has been underdeveloped during the first five years of using this instrument, and thus there is a significant unexploited potential for improving the coordination forms that were envisaged at the outset. (See Section 2 for different possible forms of coordination).

2. <u>Ambiguous expectations</u>: The first five years and four cycles of CREST-OMC have shown that there are some differences as to how learning and coordination have been organised in each of the CREST-OMC groups. On the one hand, this has generated a rich and positive variety of understandings and flexible arrangements according to the specific needs of each topic. On the other hand, some ambiguity remains since national representatives and actors in the CREST-OMC process hold diverse expectations as to the type of learning/ coordination that this instrument ultimately aims at.

3. <u>Overcoming the ambiguity of CREST-OMC. – Three options for the future</u>: There are many possible ways of unfolding the learning and coordination dimensions of CREST-OMC (see section 2.2). The report identifies three overall possible options for the future:

   a. <u>A 'coordination focused'</u> CREST-OMC. The overall idea with this coordination focused option is that CREST-OMC unfolds different forms of voluntary coordination in the EU context.

   b. <u>A 'learning focused'</u> CREST-OMC. This option would be the closest one to the way CREST-OMC operates today, but would aim at strengthening its learning processes and improving the use of the results.

   c. <u>A 'coordination-through-learning'</u> CREST-OMC. This third option would not renounce to one of the main objectives in detriment of the other, but would put emphasis on a 2-step process of 'learning first', 'coordinating second'. Hence, this option would strengthen both dimensions in a sequential manner.

4. <u>The scope is still narrow</u>: CREST-OMC is focused only on research policy topics. However, it is a common understanding among experts in the field of innovation and knowledge-based economy and society that knowledge-related topics cut across several traditional divisions of work between national ministries/ Directorate Generals. The focus on research policy

needs to be complemented by considering all relevant policy issues that need to be addressed to harness European knowledge capacities for the achievement of societal goals.

5. <u>More added value</u>: The added value of CREST-OMC is still limited when comparing with other learning-oriented policy instruments. The limits of CREST-OMC are mainly twofold. Firstly, CREST-OMC strongly emphasises learning processes and tends to disregard possible forms of coordination. Secondly, the focus is limited to topics only within the field of research policy.

6. <u>The CREST-OMC in the national context: The limited awareness</u>: One of the findings of this report that catches the eye is the limited awareness and dissemination of the CREST-OMC results and reports in the national contexts. Although we found differences across countries, the problem appeared to be general. Possible reasons that need to be addressed include the limited human resources for dissemination and the lack of structured horizontal coordination mechanisms at the national level.

7. <u>The working procedures can be improved:</u> Most respondents participating in the working groups had generally positive views about the work in the groups. Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement, summarised in recommendation 4.

In brief, our assessment is that the CREST-OMC has achieved important results as a new policy instrument for unfolding the vision of the Lisbon strategy and the European Research Area. However, there is additional potential in the Open Method of Coordination that remains unexploited. Therefore the CREST-OMC needs to evolve to become a strategic learning *and* coordination policy instrument, rather than remaining a tool for the exchanging of information. This report suggests as well that the scope of OMC-CREST needs to be broadened beyond research issues, and points at a series of process-oriented improvements, all of which would raise the value-added of this policy instrument.

On the basis of the above, this report puts forward the following set of specific recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Focus on "coordination through learning" for the future development of the Open Method of Coordination

The report provides three options for the future of the OMC in research policy: a learning-only option, a coordination-only option, and a 'coordination-through-learning' option. Policy-makers need to consider carefully which option is the most appropriate for the further development of the CREST-OMC instrument. Policy-makers need as well to take into consideration which specific form of learning and coordination are most suitable for each topic of research policy (see section 2 of this report).

It is the opinion of this expert group, though, that the third option is the best one: by emphasizing a two-step process of 'learning first, coordinating second', this option combines forms of reflexive policy learning and strategic coordination.

Recommendation 2: Widening the scope to policy areas related to the knowledge-base

Until now, the CREST-OMC has had a focus only on topics related to research policy. The future of the Open Method of Coordination in the context of the European Research Area and the Lisbon Strategy needs to be much broader. We recommend to expand the scope of OMC to knowledge-related policy areas, well beyond the traditional 'research policy' and into areas of the knowledge-based economy, innovation and competitiveness.

Recommendation 3: Improving the added value

Improving the added value of CREST-OMC in the context of ERA and the Lisbon strategy is essential. This is especially important in view of the launch of other policy instruments focused on learning, developed during the past years.

Tapping into the unexploited potential of CREST-OMC by strengthening its learning and especially its coordination dimension, and expanding its scope of action to knowledge-based policy areas, will be crucial in this regard.

Recommendation 4: Improving the working procedures

There are several avenues to improve current OMC-CREST practical working procedures:

- The clarity of the topics (the clearer the better) is critical for the success of the process.
- Thorough background preparations are recommended in order to create a common language among national representatives, to clarify the terminology used, and to enhance the competences of participants in the working groups;
- Member States should make efforts to choose the appropriate participants in the working groups, continuing to engage highly motivated and committed experienced policy-makers whenever possible;
- More extensive use should be made of external experts who are professional managers of these kind of knowledge-intensive working processes.
- The reports should be shorter and as free of EU jargon as possible.

1. Introduction

The Lisbon strategy, launched at the European Council in March 2000, aims at modernising the European economy so that it becomes the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. Research and innovation have been at the core of the Lisbon strategy ever since it was designed, and re-designed in 2005. One of the most visible targets has been the commitment by Member States to increase their gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) to approach 3% of GDP by 2010, the so-called Barcelona target. In close relation to these efforts, the European Union has also developed a political vision for a European Research Area (ERA), which aims at overcoming the current situation of 27+1 research and innovation policies and systems. The overall goal of ERA is to create a unified area all across Europe for research. In particular it aims at opening European, national and regional research activities as a way to stimulate excellence and efficiency in research.

Achieving the objectives of the Lisbon strategy and of the European Research Area requires a profound reform of national policies, and above all, new approaches to policy-making at the EU and the national levels. This is particularly so given that the policy competences for implementing the Lisbon and ERA visions lie mainly with the Member States (and their regions). The Open Method of Coordination was created as a new policy instrument to coordinate voluntarily Member States towards the achievement of the EU's common objectives. The Open Method of Coordination stimulates the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices and hereby allows Member States to optimise their own policies, but also to discuss where there is scope for increased policy coordination and for Community action in support of their policies.

In the field of research policy, the Competitiveness Council appointed CREST to oversee the implementation of the OMC. Therefore, since 2003, the OMC in the field of research policy has been implemented through a process of yearly cycles. During each cycle, CREST agrees on a limited set of policy issues and installs specific working groups to discuss these. At the end of each cycle, working groups report back to CREST and CREST draws conclusions and, where appropriate, formulates policy recommendations. For the sake of simplification, the CREST-supported Open Method of Coordination is here called CREST-OMC. Since the year 2003 there have been three completed cycles of CREST-OMC, namely, 2003-4, 2005-6 and 2006-7; while the fourth cycle 2007-8 is still ongoing at the time of writing. The topics for discussion during these cycles have included, among others: policy mixes for research policy, internationalisation of R&D, effectiveness of fiscal measures stimulating R&D or and intellectual property rights.

More detailed information about the OMC in research policy can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/coordination/coordination01_en.htm

The purpose of this report is to assess the impact of the CREST-OMC, and to draw a series of concrete recommendations for the future use of this instrument on the basis of the findings. The European Commission (DG RTD, Directorate C European Research Area: Knowledge based economy, Unit C.3 Economic analysis and monitoring of national research policies and the Lisbon strategy) has asked a group of independent experts to design and implement an assessment of the CREST-OMC. The assessment focuses on the following aspects: *The awareness and the dissemination at the national level*: Are policy makers at the national level aware of the existence and results of the CREST-OMC? Is there an awareness of its aims and working methods? How far are the results and reports of CREST-OMC disseminated within the national context? *The Impact at the national level*: Are there any concrete examples where the CREST OMC has resulted in new/modified policy measures at the national level? *The work inside the CREST-OMC working groups*: How has the work inside the working groups been? What were the expectations of the participants in the process, and the dynamics in the working groups? *The overall opinion of policy makers about the CREST-OMC*: What is the opinion of national civil servants regarding the benefits and shortcomings of the CREST-OMC? What can be done better and differently? *The future of the CREST-OMC*: how should the CREST OMC evolve in future? What should its place be in the Community policy portfolio?

The data of this assessment has been based on 174 personal interviews with civil servants in the 27 EU member countries and in Norway. The interviews were based on a series of semi-structured qualitative questions formulated in a specific and homogeneous interview questionnaire. The respondents had two main profiles: firstly, civil servants or experts who have been members of at least one CREST-OMC working group, and secondly, national civil servants who have not taken part in CREST-OMC. This sample of respondents aims to provide a balanced view about the questions regarding knowledge, awareness and impact. See the annexes for more information about the methodology.

2. The context of CREST-OMC

2.1 The origins and development of CREST-OMC

The creation and development of the CREST-OMC as a policy instrument in the context of EU research policy has to be understood as a historical process. As mentioned above, the CREST-OMC was launched in relation to the Barcelona 3 % target set in 2003 (European, 2003). This was part of the overall Lisbon strategy launched by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000.

In order to implement the 3% target, the European Commission designed an action plan. Since the beginning, the implementation of this target assumed a broad and systemic approach to research and innovation. In particular, the action plan covers successively aspects linked to three overall objectives, namely, improving the effectiveness of public support for research and innovation, redirecting public resources towards research and innovation, and improving framework conditions for research and innovation.

To fulfil the objectives in the areas related to investment in research (the 3% objective), the action plan states that it will use different policy instruments where appropriate. These instruments are an open co-ordination process, the European technology platforms and a mutual learning process (European Commission, 2003: 6). These instruments are to be combined in policy mixes according to specific needs of the Member States.

This means that since the Spring European Council of March 2003, the Open Method of Coordination has been used in areas related to investment in research (the 3% objective), and it has also been used in the area of human resources and mobility of researchers.

In the action plan the expectations of the Open Method of Coordination as a policy instrument are defined explicitly in the following terms:

> *"An open co-ordination process, as called for by the Spring 2003 European Council, will facilitate mutual learning between Member States in their efforts to increase and improve research investment. It will also help increase the effectiveness of Member States' actions by ensuring, on a voluntary basis, greater consistency with each other and with related Community actions. Lastly, it will organise the data gathering and reporting necessary to enable the European Council to take stock of the progress achieved towards the objective it has set, and assess its efficiency"* (European Commission, 2003: 8).

Hence, there is a triple expectation of this open coordination, namely, to facilitate mutual learning, mutual consistency of national policy actions, and data gathering. This is again mentioned later on in the action plan, when the objectives of policy mixes are mentioned:

> *"Improve the effectiveness of public actions to promote research and innovation by designing policy mixes using in a coherent way various policy instruments, and by developing the interactions with policies put in place by other countries and at European level, notably on the basis of information shared and lessons learned through the open process of co-ordination"* (European Commission, 2003: 11).

The official website of the Commission, entitled 'Investing in Research', is also quite clear regarding the expectations of this method: [1]

> *"The process is expected to produce the following* **outcomes***:*

- *Enhanced* **mutual learning** *and peer review*

- *Identification of* **good practices** *and of their conditions for transferability*

- *Development of* **joint policy initiatives** *among several Member States and regions*

- *Identification of areas where* **Community initiatives** *could reinforce actions at Member State level."*

The different cycles

The first OMC cycle (2003-2004) was based on a series of working groups on the following topics related to the Commission's 3% Action Plan:

- Public research spending and policy mixes

- Public research base and its links to industry

- Fiscal measures and research

- Intellectual property and research

- SMEs and research

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[1] "Investing in research" website: http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/coordination/coordination01_en.htm

Based on the corresponding reports from each working group, CREST issued an overall report with 30 policy recommendations, and specific lines for launching the next cycle (CREST, 2004).

The second cycle of the CREST-OMC Second OMC cycle (2005-2006), focused on more specific topics:

- Effectiveness of fiscal measures for RTD,

- Improve the design and implementation of national policy mixes (with peer reviews performed on the policy mixes of Sweden, Romania and Spain),

- Promote the reform of public research centres and universities in particular to promote transfer of knowledge to society and industry,

- Design measures to promote the growth of young research intensive SMEs, and

- Intellectual property and research.

Based on the above, CREST published in 2006 its second overall report about the application of the OMC (CREST, 2006). Furthermore, under the Austrian presidency, a conference was organised in May 2006 on this matter, where several national policy-makers, industry representatives and experts discussed the role of the Open Method of Coordination and its future in relation to ERA.

The third OMC cycle (2006-2007) focused on the following topics:

- Coordination of the Framework Programme and the Structural Funds

- Internationalisation of R&D

- Policy mixes (with peer reviews performed on the policy mixes of Belgium, Estonia, France, Lithuania, The Netherlands and the UK)

- R&D in services.

Just as in the previous cycles, CREST issued a report about the Open Method of Coordination (CREST, 2007).

The fourth OMC cycle (2007-2008) was launched in December 2007, with working groups on the following topics:

- Universities

- Industry-led competence centres

- Internationalisation of R&D

- Policy mixes

2.2 The Concepts of Coordination and Learning

Before reporting the findings of this assessment, it is important to contextualize the CREST-OMC instrument within an overall understanding of the Open Method of Coordination as a specific form of new EU policy instrument, and to understand the different conceptual definitions of "coordination" and "learning".

One of the crucial aspects of the Open Method of Coordination is its open-end nature. Open-ended nature refers to two fundamental aspects of this instrument. Firstly, it refers to the dynamic and changing nature of the European common goals, which are defined at the onset of different cycles, and hence subject to changes through time. In the CREST-OMC this openness refers to the different choices of topics for coordination that have been decided by CREST in the different cycles. Secondly, and also very importantly, 'open-ended' nature refers as well to the lack of obligatory rules. It is essential to keep in mind that Member States act on a voluntary basis, since the Open Method of Coordination does not have any binding effects.

Another general feature of the OMC is that it has generally had a double focus on coordination and learning. This has been combined with an additional and complementary focus on data gathering, and an eventual development of joint policy initiatives.

Hence, coordination has been generally understood as the gradual and voluntary rapprochement of national policies, objectives and practices on the basis of common guidelines and targets at the European level. Learning, for its part, has been generally understood as the opportunities offered by the process to identify good practices and develop new courses for action for policies and programs at the national level.

Admittedly, coordination and learning continue to be elusive concepts for real policy-making and for the social sciences. Beyond the general understanding mentioned above, there is still considerable ambiguity as to what coordination and learning really are. Therefore, it is of paramount importance at this stage to define them as unmistakably as possible, before assessing the CREST-OMC.

Dietmar Braun has recently provided a useful definition of five different possible degrees of political coordination. Inspired by the work of Scharpf and Peters (Peters, 1998) (Scharpf, 1993), he identifies the following types:

- "No coordination" refers to the absence of any mutual adjustment of actors;

- "Non-concerted coordination" is a process that leads to the mutual adjustment of actors, which is not based on pre-defined concerted action;

- "Positive integration" goes a step further as actors cooperate explicitly in order to deliver certain specific and limited common objectives;

- "Policy integration" strives for the active political positive coordination of final goals;

- "Strategic coordination" aims at the development of encompassing common visions and strategies for the future upon which political action is designed.

The second and third types belong to administrative coordination, meaning that coordination efforts are undertaken at the administrative-implementation level of policy-making; whereas the last two types are undertaken at the political level of policy-making. Figure 1 illustrates these different degrees of coordination.

Figure 1: Forms and degrees of coordination
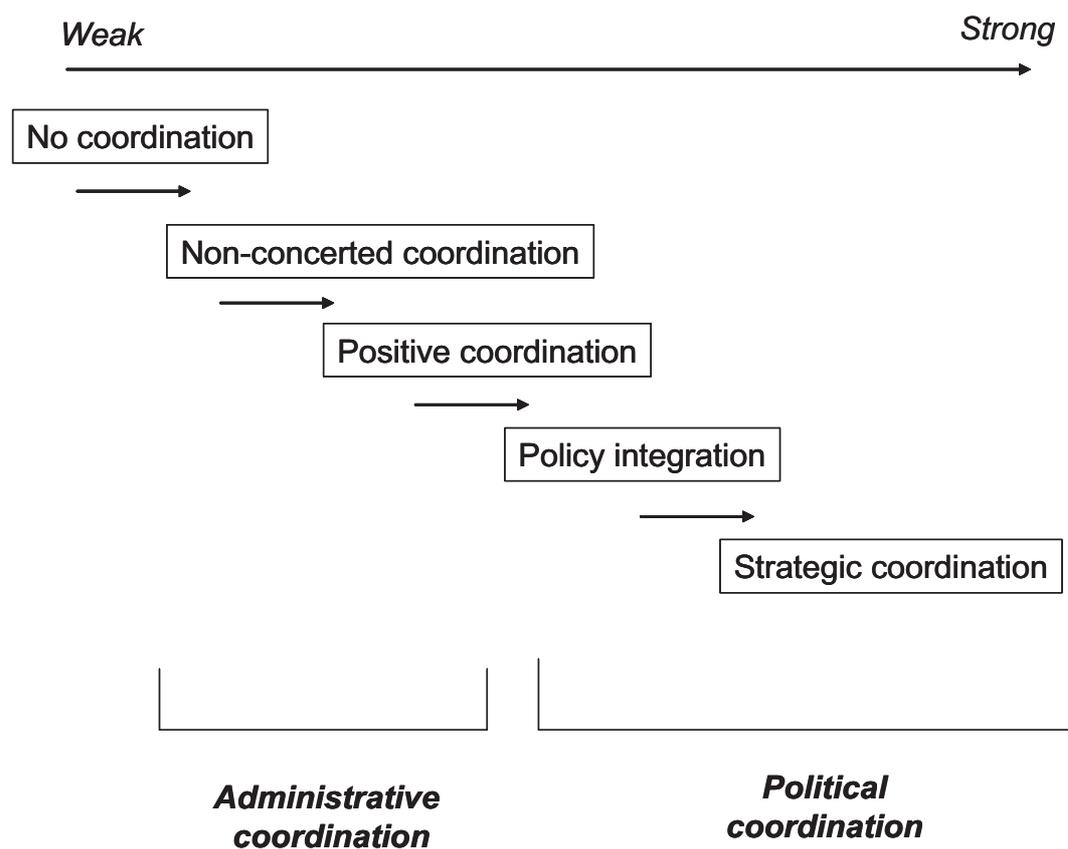
Source: (Braun, 2008)

Looking now at learning, a similar scale could be defined. Previous works about policy transfer have mentioned different types of sources for transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000) (Radaelli, 2000). Discussing learning in the context of the OMC, in this report we can distinguish five different degrees of cross-border policy learning:

- "No learning from abroad/no transfer" refers to policy change in a country, in the absence of any direct or indirect sources of inspiration or ideas from abroad;

- "Inspiration": when policy in one country inspires a change in some specific instruments and/or concrete aspects of a policy in another country, but the final outcome does not actually draw upon the original;

- "Combined inspiration": the same as above, but involving the mixtures of several sources of inspiration from different countries (typically in multi-lateral settings), and largely based on a selection of 'good cases' of policy instruments or concrete aspects of programmes;

- "Policy emulation" involves the transfer of ideas and forms of implementation behind *the entire policy*.

- "Reflexive policy learning/ transfer": the same as above, but involving significant original elements of adaptation and development based on a reflexive process at the political level.

Figure 2: Degrees of learning and policy transfer from abroad.
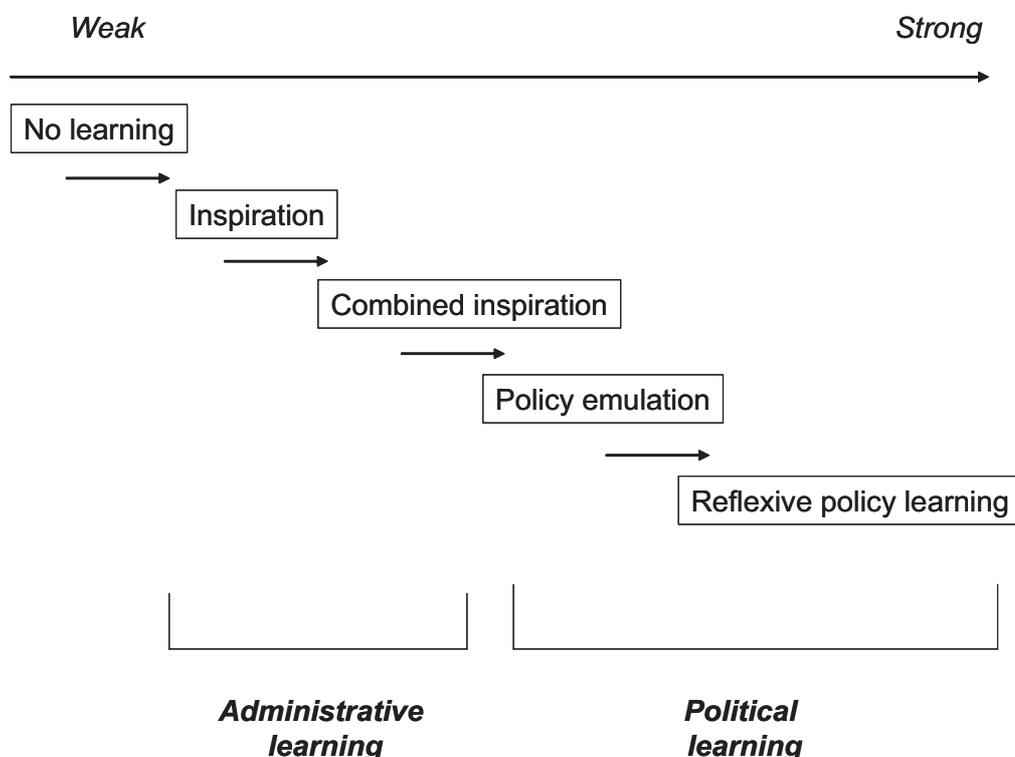
Source: Own elaboration

3. The interview results

The interviews focused on the following key aspects of CREST-OMC:

- The general opinions of respondents regarding coordination and learning in the ERA;

- The opinions of respondents regarding the benefits and shortcomings of CREST-OMC;

- The opinions of the respondents about the work inside the CREST-OMC working groups;

- The views of the respondents regarding the CREST-OMC in the national context;

- The degree of awareness among respondents, and degree of dissemination at the national level;

- Respondents' evidence of the impact of CREST-OMC at the national level; and

- Respondents' opinions regarding what can be done better.

3.1 General opinions of respondents about coordination and learning in the ERA

In general, respondents have a positive view about the need to coordinate RTD policies in the EU27, and about the voluntary nature of coordination and learning in the CREST-OMC.

The reasons for these positive views are based on the following arguments. Firstly, the cross-country and voluntary way of working of CREST-OMC is perceived as a crucial element for the development of the European Research Area. The second reason put forward is that all countries, no matter their size and level of development, need processes for learning from other experiences. The CREST-OMC provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and experiences across the EU27 in a way that did not exist before. Thirdly, some respondents have also emphasized the importance of coordination and learning in the EU for the purpose of strengthening the position of the EU on the global scene.

Having said that, it is important to note that the concept of the European Research Area (ERA) seems to be perceived as 'lacking teeth' precisely because it is based on these new forms of implementation. In national circles, it often proves hard to see what ERA means in practice, how this is distinguished from Community-method initiatives (common EU programmes), and how it interacts with national policies.

There are two crucial aspects related to this:

Firstly, most respondents lack an overview of ERA and the operation of the policy instruments related to the cross-country coordination/learning type of actions where the EU works as a catalyser.

For most of the respondents it is still unclear what the precise role of CREST-OMC is in relation to other ERA instruments, like for example, ERAWATCH, ERA-NET, Article 169 or Article 171. In other words, most respondents lack an overall view of coordination and learning- supporting policy tools at the EU level, and their respective complementarities.

Secondly, there is a different interpretation of the notions 'coordination' and 'learning' among the respondents. From the various answers we can derive different interpretations, covering in fact the entire range of coordination and learning forms that were conceptualized above. Respondents interpret the coordination notion very differently, in a continuum from "non-concerted coordination" to "strategic coordination". The same is the case for learning, for which respondents had very different interpretations, from "inspiration" to "reflexive policy learning".

It is also important to note that some respondents explicitly expressed fears of top-down steering from the EU, based on imposed and obligatory forms of coordination and learning, and seeking uniformity.

There is, nonetheless, a general positive opinion about the need for voluntary actions through ERA-based instruments, and about the need for traditional Community instruments (Framework Programme, etc). There is a general positive attitude towards the cross-country coordination/learning actions of the ERA instruments, because they are more flexible and more decentralized than traditional Community action in research policy. Similar issues were underlined in a previous report from this expert group (LEG, 2007a).

Besides, there is also a widespread understanding that the unfolding of ERA through its cross-country coordination and learning has to take into consideration the large diversity within EU27 Member States' interests and situations.

3.2 Respondents' opinions about the benefits and shortcomings of the CREST-OMC

As mentioned above, there is a general positive view about the CREST-OMC among most respondents. However, as the interviews unfold, most respondents come to point out the ambiguous nature of CREST-OMC as a tool for coordination and/or as a tool for learning.

There are obviously different views about the learning and/or coordination dimension of CREST-OMC. Focusing on the first, a group of national policy-makers emphasize the importance of the

learning aspects. The respondents' view is that CREST-OMC is an intellectual body focused on learning aspects, but not a political body for more stringent coordination of policies. This group of respondents emphasize the positive aspects and role of the learning aspects of the CREST-OMC.

Another set of policy-makers are more of the opinion that the coordination aspects are the crucial ones in the CREST-OMC. This group of respondents emphasizes that while at the beginning the CREST-OMC was based on the Lisbon strategy, particularly on the Barcelona target, the overall emphasis on learning has meant that it has become detached from this target as time has gone by. Therefore this group of respondents are of the opinion that the process needs to be more integrated and linked directly to ERA, rather than being a collection of independent topics only focusing on mutual learning.

Naturally, the <u>different opinions about the relative importance of the learning or of the coordination aspects, and about which different forms of coordination and learning shall be defined in the future</u>, are reflected in the different views of the respondents regarding the benefits and shortcomings of CREST-OMC.

In the view of our respondents, the <u>benefits of CREST-OMC are</u>:

1. It is a positive mechanism for exchanging information and experience about specific issues of national research policies.
2. It provides a broader scope to policy-makers in their approach to issues of policy design, and provides a set of good practices.
3. It gives the opportunity to develop new networks of policy-makers across national boundaries, and to build trust among them.
4. The selection of topics has been positive in the sense that it has followed the interest of Member States.
5. It has been a flexible and adaptable process.
6. There has been a general commitment by most participants in the working groups of the different cycles.

Likewise, <u>the shortcomings of CREST-OMC</u> are:

1. The working procedures for CREST-OMC have not always been well defined, and sometimes it has been difficult for the participants to understand the working procedures.
2. Human resources at the national level are too limited to ensure widespread dissemination and the most effective use of the outcomes of the CREST-OMC groups.
3. Some participants did not possess adequate knowledge of the issues under discussion, nor did they understand the specific nature of the CREST-OMC.

4. Some participants do not have ways to influence policy design in their own countries.

5. Policy recommendations are very broad. The outcomes and the report should have more teeth, and be able to make a real difference.

6. The Member States are at different levels of socio-economic development, and therefore; they have different interests in different topics, or how a specific topic shall be addressed.

7. Sometimes a chairing country has been aiming at putting its own agenda forward, and this is perceived negatively.

3.3 The work inside the CREST-OMC working groups

The types of participants in the CREST-OMC working groups were very different. There were essentially three types:

a. Most countries send only policy-makers. Among those, it is important to distinguish between:

   i. Core policy-makers (influential staff in charge of the design of national policy-making), or

   ii. Second-tier civil servants (less influential staff from external agencies involved indirectly in national policy design in an advisory role; less central/junior civil servants with weak or informal links to policy design; or implementation-only policy makers not involved in policy design);

b. Other countries send a mix of policy-makers and external experts;

c. A small number of countries send only external experts with loose ties to policy-makers (some small Central and Eastern European Countries).

The appointment of the national participants in the CREST-OMC seems to be an important issue for the Member States. The more strategic the topic is for a country the more care is taken in sending the right person. However, some countries have difficulties finding the right persons, indicating that the level of knowledge and competences among policy-makers and experts is an important matter. This is particularly the case for some less developed Member States, and it is also related to the focus of the CREST-OMC.

Some respondents from the less developed countries within the EU27 indicated explicitly that the level of discussions and topics addressed within the CREST-OMC are not suitable for their level of socio-economic development. Much can be learned from advanced countries, but the gap might be too large. Along these lines, some respondents from less-developed countries complained about the 'cryptic' and 'non-understandable' language in the discussions and in the final reports.

The diversity shown above explains that the level of knowledge, competences, interests and expectations among the participants in the CREST-OMC working groups are very different.

Most respondents tend to indicate that <u>the success of the CREST-OMC working groups largely depends on putting the right people together</u>, meaning participants that have the right level of knowledge about the topic at hand.

It has also been reported that <u>the role of the chairman is crucial,</u> particularly in defining the clear lines of the process and the contents of the work. This is particularly so given the important asymmetry of individual competences, interests and expectations among the participants. Most respondents indicated that the chairman should preferably be an expert person.

There has been a learning process in the different cycles of CREST-OMC: In the earlier cycles the chairman did not lead the group to the direction expected by participants. There was a slow start. The later cycles have been better in this regard.

The role of the chairman directing the work of the group is very important. Several respondents pointed out that in some working groups the chairman had his/her own agenda without taking into consideration the opinion of the group. In other working groups the chairman was overanxious about the work and produced a huge report unnecessarily.

The work inside the working groups is such that at the beginning it is difficult to find out what to talk about, because the concepts and notions are very different throughout Europe. It might be that the concepts sound similar, but work very differently in practice and have different meanings, which is difficult to deal with. This is why <u>the groups need to create a common language and basic understanding from the beginning in order to be able to work effectively</u>.

The respondents point at the fact that there are <u>different expectations among the participants</u>:

- Some participants were prepared for discussing and exchanging ideas, whereas others were prepared for negotiating a set of guidelines or recommendations.

- Some participants attended the meetings for listening and reporting back to their countries, whereas others were more pro-active and contributed actively.

- Some participants complained that they brought a lot of data, but this did not appear in the final report. These were remarks from participants expecting the report to be a research-like outcome rather than the result of a learning/ coordination process.

<u>The dynamics in the working groups were changing along the process</u>. Several respondents have indicated that discussions were open and touched different problems, but when the report writing started the dynamics changed. The participants became more cautious in their wordings, national interests became more important, and a negotiation-like atmosphere emerged.

3.4 The CREST-OMC in the national context

Since the launch of the Lisbon strategy in 2000 and in particular since its re-launch in 2005, important efforts have been made by each Member State to develop a reform strategy and report on its implementation of, through the definition of a National Reform Programme (NRP) and the drafting of subsequent Progress Reports. NRPs are drafted on the basis of a set of Integrated Guidelines and priorities stipulated by the Spring European Council. The Barcelona 3% target has been one of the most important targets of the Lisbon strategy during these years. There are obviously large differences among countries in how these general arrangements have been applied. In most EU countries our respondents mention the political relevance of the National Reform Programmes for their respective national R&D policies. These results relate well with previous analysis conducted by this expert group (LEG, 2006).

Regarding the national coordination of Lisbon-related aspects, there are important differences across countries. This has to do with the size of the countries, since in the large Member States the more complex and varied organisational structures and perspectives, the more challenging the coordination (horizontal across departments, and vertical across different governmental levels). But it has to do as well with different traditions of public administration, those more process-oriented and others more outcome-oriented. Nonetheless, from our respondents it is obvious that there are several degrees of success in terms of achieving fluid levels of horizontal administration at the national level in issues of R&D policy making. In some countries the respondents are more self-critical about problems associated to national coordination than in others. This aspect of national horizontal coordination is important in the context of CREST-OMC because it is related to the issues of awareness and dissemination of CREST-OMC reports and results (discussed below), as well as with the overall learning and coordination dimensions of CREST-OMC.

When considering the learning dimension of national policy-making, the respondents indicated that the Member States are using a wide variety of sources of ideas and inspirations when formulating their R&D policies. Not surprisingly, virtually all respondents pointed at the role of stakeholders in the process of defining policies, some with more institutionalised roles than others. Other sources of ideas and learning were essentially international, either on a bilateral basis (following closely policies developed by countries with similar features or with English-based accessible documentation), or on a multilateral basis (information from the OECD, World Bank, and the EU). Obviously, this shows that, although they are interesting sources of ideas (read below about dissemination), the CREST-OMC reports and results are one among a multitude of sources for learning at the national level.

Respondents underlined on several occasions the abundance of reports coming from the EU, the difficulty to absorb the information provided and the impenetrability of distinguishing among all the reports those most relevant to their specific national context. Such remarks relate well to

similar indications in earlier work of this expert group (LEG, 2007b). This is an important topic, since some respondents tend to regard the work of CREST-OMC as the production of yet another set of reports; this was the case particularly with respondents who did not take part in the CREST-OMC working groups. In any case, most Member States seem to be seriously committed to make use of available sources of information in order to develop evidence-based policy-making tuned to the changing needs of the society and the economy.

The findings also show different attitudes towards international sources of information, ranging from a very active and positive attitude (particularly small new countries) to a more passive and sceptical attitude about what those sources and reports can actually bring to the real problems of policy design and implementation in a specific national context. Here, the <u>different capacity and competences of national civil servants seem decisive in terms of absorbing and making most active use of the information available</u>, not least from the CREST-OMC results and reports.

3.5 Degree of awareness and dissemination of CREST-OMC at the national level

One of the most significant findings of the 174 interviews conducted in this study is the <u>low degree of awareness about the CREST-OMC among the national policy-makers that were in our sample</u>. The respondents who took active part in the CREST-OMC working groups tend to report that there is very low awareness of CREST-OMC activities in their respective national policy-making contexts. Besides, this group of respondents seem to know little about other CREST-OMC working groups/topics other than those in which they were directly involved. This means that the participants in the CREST-OMC working groups are engaged in their respective groups, but know little about other related activities following the CREST-OMC process.

For the second sample of respondents, those who did not take part in the CREST-OMC working groups, the lack of knowledge and awareness is even more evident. The vast majority of this group hardly knows about the OMC. Exceptionally, there are very few respondents who indicate a superficial knowledge about the OMC procedures in relation to CREST (i.e. have heard about it). In any case, by far the bulk of respondents in this group report explicitly his/her lack of knowledge about the CREST-OMC.

It is worth pointing at the fact that <u>some respondents tend to confuse the CREST-OMC with other new policy tools in the EU context</u> like ERA-NET or ERAWATCH. In other words, respondents have difficulties identifying clearly the CREST-OMC policy tool from other coordination-oriented new policy tools developed in the EU during the past few years.

There is no significant variation across national contexts regarding this. In other words, our respondents throughout the EU and associated member countries tend to indicate a low degree of awareness about the CREST-OMC and to confuse this policy instrument with other instruments.

Awareness about the CREST-OMC is limited; however, it is very important to note that the CREST-OMC is highly linked to the political and strategic interest at the national level of the specific topics being discussed/dealt with in the corresponding CREST-OMC exercises. This means that when there is a match between national priorities and CREST-OMC topics, there seems to be a fortunate situation in which there is slightly more awareness at the national level. The timing aspect is therefore crucial.

Naturally, the degree of awareness is linked to the question of the forms and levels of dissemination of the CREST-OMC results and reports within national contexts. Regarding to dissemination, the respondents indicate in a great majority that the results of the CREST-OMC are not disseminated within their national ministries. In other words, in most national contexts there is only an individual dimension and not an organisational dimension of dissemination. This individual dimension corresponds to the specific persons who participated in the CREST-OMC working groups. This is to say that most countries do not have a systematic way of disseminating the results of CREST-OMC within their national ministries. This is largely related to what this expert group has identified as the "silo thinking" of knowledge-based policies in many national contexts as well as at the EU-level context (LEG, 2008b).

There are however two interesting exceptions to this: One exception is the fact that we have identified some entrepreneurial individuals, who are personally committed to dissemination of CREST-OMC results. One example was found in a Central and Eastern European Country, with a specific policy-maker who seems to be very committed on a personal basis to foster dissemination. Another exception was found in a Nordic country, where the specialized agency has organised internal workshops to disseminate knowledge and ideas directly related to CREST-OMC.

In relation to this latter point, it is very important to mention the fact that in some countries there is evidence that the CREST-OMC has been actively considered as a tool for the on-going training and education of civil servants. Both young and more senior staff members are delegated to working groups with the explicit goal to acquire and develop new knowledge and abilities. These ministries have actively used the CREST OMC as a European discussion, networking and learning platform for their own staff. In some occasions, the process of learning associated to the CREST-OMC working groups seems to have been more important and more interesting than the reports and specific outcomes of the working groups as such.

Nonetheless, the reasons indicated for the low degree of dissemination inside national ministries are the following:

A) Lack of time and human resources. When participants in the CREST-OMC working groups finish their work, they typically lack time to engage in an effort to disseminate the results and reports related to the CREST-OMC work.

B) The internal communication within national ministries on these types of matters does not seem to foster dissemination. In most countries there is a clear-cut separation between units or departments dealing with EU matters (mostly the Framework Programme) and those dealing with national-only policy matters. This separation seems to be an internal barrier for making the most of policy tools like the CREST-OMC, which cut across this EU-national boundary.

C) Most policy-making at the national level is a process based on experimentation and improvisation, rather than a systematic process. This lack of systematic dimension means that information related to CREST-OMC does not tend to be systematically disseminated, but used in an ad-hoc manner if the topic is currently under the focus of attention.

D) Some topics of the CREST-OMC are more generic and others more specific. An example of specific topic is intellectual property rights (IPR) - there tend to be relatively few people in national ministries that follow this specific topic, and they were involved in the working groups. On the other side, topics that are more generic in nature tend to be slightly more disseminated.

E) Dissemination relates as well to the type of participants attending the CREST-OMC working groups. The more involved these persons are in their national policy-making context, the more likely the results and reports of the CREST-OMC working groups will be disseminated in the national context.

The respondents were asked to indicate if their organisations know the CREST-OMC reports. Respondents were presented with a closed list of all reports of CREST-OMC. The table 1 below shows the findings.

It is important to note here that the table below does not provide statistical representative data, for the reasons explained in the annexes of this report. Notwithstanding this, the table provides useful information about which CREST-OMC reports seem to have received most attention at the national level.

Table 1: Number of respondents indicating general knowledge of the CREST-OMC reports in the three first cycles.

CYCLES	Reports	Total mentions
1rst CYCLE	1. Public research base and its links to industry	35
	2. SMEs and research	41
	3. Fiscal measures for research	47
	4. IPR and research	46
	5. Public research spending and policy mixes	46
2nd CYCLE	1. Effectiveness of fiscal measures for RTD	39
	2. Improve the design and implementation of national policy mixes - Synthesis Report	21
	a. Report about Spain	11
	b. Report about Sweden	15
	c. Report about Romania	10
	3. Promote the reform of public research centres and universities, promoting knowledge transfer	38
	4.Design measures to promote the growth of young research intensive SMEs	35
	5. Intellectual property	37
3rd CYCLE	1.The final report on internationalisation of R&D	48
	2. The final Report on R&D in Services	32
	3. Guidelines for FP7 and Structural Funds	44
	4. The Synthesis Report on Policy Mixes	37
	5. National reports about policy mixes:	
	a. Belgian report about policy mixes	19
	b. Estonian report about policy mixes	11
	c. French report about policy mixes	14
	d. Lithuanian report about policy mixes	10
	e. Dutch report about policy mixes	17
	f. UK report about policy mixes	25

3.6 Respondents' evidence about the impact of CREST-OMC at the national level

For the purposes of this report, "impact" is conceptualized in the following way: the effect produced by the CREST-OMC reports and results on the development of national research policies. As we saw at the onset of this report, the CREST-OMC has two important dimensions, namely the coordination dimension and the learning dimension. After discussing some general findings about impact, this assessment looks at the impact in terms of the coordination and learning dimensions respectively.

Consistent with the section above about awareness and dissemination, we can say that the impact of CREST-OMC tends to be linked to the individuals participating in the CREST-OMC working groups, and to the priorities set-up at the national level of policy-making.

When asked spontaneously to recall the topics that have had some impact at the national level, the respondents mention different topics according to national perspectives. For most countries the work around the topics of the internationalization of R&D, research at universities, and fiscal measures for R&D, seems to have been most interesting and with some degree of impact at the national level. New Member States have obviously been very interested in the topic of aligning the FP7 and the structural funds, and in the policy mix.

Regarding learning effects, the findings of our study show almost unequivocally that <u>the impact of CREST-OMC in terms of learning has been a "combined inspiration"</u>. As defined in section 2 of this report, this corresponds to the situation where the CREST-OMC reports and results are a source of multilateral inspiration for concrete policy instruments or specific aspects of programmes of national research policies.

One example of the "combined inspiration" type of learning impact is the action plan towards R&D cooperation with a third country, developed in recent months by one EU27 Member State. This action plan has used CREST-OMC results on the internationalisation of R&D (during the third cycle). There is obviously no one-to-one cause-effect relationship between CREST-OMC and that particular national action plan. Instead the relationship can be seen as the synergy of dynamics at the EU and the national level, largely based on the strategic interest of that country to develop specific lines of action towards that specific third country and to use actively parts of the results from the corresponding CREST-OMC exercise.

A second positive example is the CREST-OMC working group about research and universities (during the second cycle). Three respondents from the same country mentioned that this report has inspired the development of their country's policy instruments towards enhancing research at universities, and to establish advanced forms of measurement of research production.

A third example is a small EU27 country. Respondents from this country indicate that the national ministry actively used part of the report and knowledge acquired in the participation in CREST-OMC fiscal measures for research (during the first and second cycle) for the redefinition of their policy instruments in this field. Other sources of information and inspiration were used too, but CREST-OMC was a useful one, particularly for the specific 'good practices' that were brought about in the working group.

Regarding the impact in terms of coordination, the findings show that the CREST-OMC has had an impact in terms of non-concerted coordination. As defined earlier, non-concerted coordination is a process that leads to the mutual adjustment of actors, which is not based on pre-defined concerted action. In other words, it is a mode of coordination based on spontaneous adaptation, rather than on concerted positive coordination. This is based on two main findings. Firstly, the results above about "combined inspiration" modes of learning indicate that there is some effect in terms of subtle national adaptation of research policies. This is mainly in terms of the inspiration generated by CREST-OMC at the administrative level of learning dynamics (specific policy instruments, and aspects of programmes).

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, our findings show that virtually none of the respondents indicated that their country has followed the recommendations of the CREST-OMC reports in a 1:1 way. The nature of the recommendations of the CREST-OMC reports and the way in which they are used, do not comply with stronger forms of coordination as those identified in section 2 above (positive coordination, policy integration or strategic coordination). The narrow nature of the recommendations, still very limited to CREST-only topics, is a poor basis for stronger types of coordination. Likewise, the absence of pre-established procedures for translating these recommendations into common guidelines and targets, for national action, and for the monitoring of national action, is a crucial weakness in this sense.

In brief, there is evidence of mutual adaptation among Member States in relation to the CREST-OMC. Yet, this is not because of an explicit "positive coordination" type. Rather, the coordination in the CREST-OMC assumes the form of a "non-concerted coordination" type, and this largely based on the learning effects of this instrument.

3.7 The respondents' opinion about what can be done better in the future

Regarding the future shape of the CREST-OMC, respondents were asked to tell, what can be done better?

1. The topics need to be more focused and more specific, making sure there is a real demand from the Member States.

2. The topics should also include implementation issues, not only policy design issues. An example could be to focus on advanced tools for programme evaluation and impact assessment.

3. The groups should be manageable: groups should not be too large and have strong chairmanship.

4. More active use should be made of modern means and technology for working together in the working groups.

5. The process selecting the topics and national experts/civil servants should be made more transparent.

6. The process should be more actively driven by CREST, and the Commission should get less involved in the process and in the discussions. The Commission should not set up the agenda but it should facilitate the collaboration among Member States.

7. There should be less Euro-jargon and language in the discussions and in the reports, and more practical assistance of 'how to do things'.

8. The style of the reports should be improved to make them more readable and shorter.

Regarding the types of participants in future CREST-OMC groups, almost all respondents indicated a preference for keeping current practice, i.e. the working groups should be composed mainly of national policy-makers, and of some external experts appointed by their respective Member States. Some respondents on the other hand, stated that other type of stakeholders like regional governmental actors, industry and universities could also take part in the CREST-OMC working groups.

Some possible new topics for future CREST-OMC cycles, as suggested by the respondents:

- New evaluation and impact assessment methodologies

- Public procurement as an innovation incentive

- Human resources and innovation

- Consolidation of funding sources between EU and national levels

- How to select thematic priorities

- Setting up a good research agenda

- Building up a strong research landscape and institutions (in less develop countries, particularly)

- Criteria for funding trans-border R&D joint programmes

- Alternative governance models for research management and policy

- Policies for enhancing R&D in the private sector

- How to design and implement forward-looking science policies
- Measures to truly improve the governance of institutions and public administration in R&D policies
- A better and more coherent legal framework for state aids to R&D

Most interesting about the future of CREST-OMC were the answers to the question about what the future working procedures of this policy instrument should look like. The answers to this question showed the different opinions of the respondents regarding the learning and/or the coordination aspects of CREST-OMC.

The respondents emphasizing the coordination dimension suggested the following points to improve the working procedures:

- There is a need for more negotiation, and less open-ended discussions.
- There is a need to develop more stringent guidelines like in the National Reform Programmes. A development to more binding recommendations of CREST-OMC would give the work more nerve, and be a move in the right direction (Northern European respondent).
- There should be a follow-up to check the implementation of the key recommendations.
- CREST-OMC should be moving gradually from voluntary to mandatory, eventually imposing penalties for non-compliance.
- CREST should be more involved at the end of the process, discussing further the recommendations turning them into clear guidelines for national action.

In contrast to the above, the respondents emphasizing the learning dimension of the CREST-OMC, suggested the following points to improve working procedures:

- Avoid stringent recommendations in the reports and the 'politization' of the CREST-OMC process.
- The cycles are too short to allow for real learning, hence they should be expanded in time.
- Before the CREST-OMC working group starts meeting, participants could be offered a good background technical document with up-to-date and state-of-the-art information about the topic at hand, upon which build up the discussion in the working group.
- External consultants could be *more actively* used in the management of the learning process.
- The working procedure could be *more geared* towards securing the dissemination of the know-how of the most advanced Member States to less developed Member States.
- More resources should be provided for the learning process and it should be explored how the relationship between CREST-OMC and OMC-NET could be improved.

4. Assessing the CREST-OMC

Based on the qualitative data above regarding the respondents' views and opinions, as well as on the basis of the expertise of the members of this expert group, this section provides an overall assessment of the CREST-OMC. As it will be shown below, the CREST-OMC has made considerable progress in its short life span. We identified, however, several aspects that can be further developed in order to strengthen this new policy instrument.

4.1. What has been achieved?

The CREST-OMC can be characterized by the following important accomplishments since 2003:

4.1.1 A new approach

The first accomplishment of the CREST-OMC is that it has created and developed an entirely new approach to EU and Member States' research policy-making. The different cycles of the CREST-OMC bear evidence to a process of developing a new mechanism, a new way of understanding and managing Member States' interactions in their collective efforts to materialize the vision of a European Research Area. The unfolding of this new approach has been based on a reflexive process: at the end of each cycle, CREST has produced an overview report reflecting about the previous cycle and designing the subsequent cycle. This reflexive stance has certainly reinforced the processes of creating, developing and cementing the CREST-OMC, and of conveying interesting results as a new policy instrument in the realm of EU research policy and the ERA. It is also very important to note in this regard the overall positive attitude of the respondents towards this assessment study of the CREST-OMC.

4.1.2 Evidence of learning impact

In addition to the above, our findings provide unequivocal evidence that the CREST-OMC has had a positive impact in terms of learning at the national level. Section 3 presented three cases as modes of example of such learning at the national level connected to the CREST-OMC policy instrument. Following our initial conceptual clarification in section 2 of this report, the impact of CREST-OMC in terms of learning has been a "combined inspiration". This corresponds to a learning process by which the CREST-OMC reports and results are a source of multilateral inspiration for some concrete policy instruments or specific aspects of programmes of national research policies.

4.1.3 The scope: The 3% target and beyond

Another important achievement of the CREST-OMC is its relatively broad coverage of research policy aspects. Since being given the mandate to steer the process in 2003, CREST has made use of the CREST-OMC instrument in order to help Member States achieving the 3 % target. From the very beginning, achieving this overall target was related to a series of systemic and structural aspects of research-related policies at the national level. This means that the implementation of CREST-OMC has covered a broad series of topics within the research policy realm. This has been positive not only for the goal of supporting Member States' efforts towards the 3%, but also, and perhaps most importantly, to provide sources of inspiration, learning and mutual exchange for the real needs of Member States' research policy-making. This latter point is undoubtedly the most positive contribution of the CREST-OMC, namely, that it has provided support and inspiration sources to the real problems and issues of Member States' research policy-making.

4.1.4 The added value

The third accomplishment of the CREST-OMC relates to its added value. When considered in relation to other policy instruments within ERA that also aim at fostering learning processes, there are two specific and positive aspects of the added value of CREST-OMC. The crucial difference of CREST-OMC vis-à-vis other policy instruments is that to a much higher degree:

- The CREST-OMC involves directly policy-makers, in contrast to other instruments which are mainly based on experts' involvement (and on policy-makers' involved to a much lesser extent); likewise,

- The CREST-OMC has a clear political dimension with CREST's role being to design and be actively engaged in the process, whereas the other policy instruments have a much weaker political anchorage (only in the decision of topics, but not more).

The active engagement of national civil servants and the political dimension of CREST have been important elements in the added value of CREST-OMC as an instrument, particularly in relation to its achievements in terms of learning processes as "combined inspiration".

4.1.5 The working inside the CREST-OMC groups

Section 3 above showed how respondents are generally quite positive about the working inside the CREST-OMC groups. This refers firstly to the flexibility and adaptability of the process within each CREST-OMC group, and historically, across the different cycles. The positive attitude refers as well to the commitment and engagement by most participants in the working groups.

4.2 What can be improved? The potential of CREST-OMC

Notwithstanding the important achievements mentioned above, it is the assessment of this expert group that some of the potential of the CREST-OMC as a policy instrument helping to materialize the ERA vision remains unexploited.

4.2.1 Limited impact in terms of coordination

As shown above, the impact of the CREST-OMC has been mainly in terms of enhancing and channeling various forms of learning processes among the Member States. There is clear evidence that the CREST-OMC has been able to generate a "combined inspiration" type of learning process, as defined conceptually at the onset of this report.

However, the same does not hold true for coordination. The respondents of our interviews point to the fact that their respective countries have not engaged in explicit forms of coordination as identified in the typology of section 2 in this report. Instead, there is evidence that there is a gradual process of mutual adaptation among the countries engaged in the CREST-OMC, but that this is more of a spontaneous nature in close relation to the learning effects, rather than an effect generated by positive and explicit forms of coordination. This is to say that the coordination process in relation to the CREST-OMC is the so-called "non-concerted coordination", where the mutual adaptation of the actors is visible, but it is not based on explicit concerted coordination arrangements.

Is this a problem for CREST-OMC? The answer has to be found partly in the expectations of this instrument (which will be discussed next), and also in the potential of this instrument as such. It is the assessment of this expert group that the coordination aspect of the CREST-OMC has been underdeveloped during the first five years of life of this instrument, and that there is a significant unexploited potential for improving the coordination forms envisaged in this instrument's procedures. After all the name of the instrument is the "open method of coordination" and not the "open method of learning".

4.2.2 What expectations? The ambiguity of CREST-OMC

Section 2.1 of this report reproduces the official definitions of the Open Method of Coordination in relation to the 3% target. As it can be seen, these definitions of the Open Method of Coordination seem to emphasize three aspects, namely, learning, coordination and information exchange.

Hence, it can be said that there were three, closely interrelated initial expectations related to the OMC, namely, to facilitate mutual learning, to generate mutual consistency of national policy actions based on voluntary coordination, and to collect national data in order to exchange

experiences and good practices. These expectations however suffer from a certain degree of ambiguity. This is because they are neither explicitly, nor clearly stating what is the expected form of learning, coordination and experiences exchange that have to be achieved, nor exactly how. There is a fundamental ambiguity as to whether the expected and desired forms of learning and coordination are mainly of administrative or political nature, nor what degree and type of learning and coordination the CREST-OMC should aim at.

The five years and four cycles of CREST-OMC have shown that there are differences as to how the learning and coordination have been organised in each of the CREST-OMC groups. On the one hand, this has generated a variety of understandings and flexible arrangements according to the specific needs of each topic. On the other hand, there remains some ambiguity since national representatives and actors in the CREST-OMC process hold diverse expectations as to the final type of learning/coordination this instrument ultimately aims at.

4.2.3 Overcoming the ambiguity: Three options for the future of CREST-OMC

The ambiguity of the CREST-OMC is a problem because:

- The lack of clarity about the nature of CREST-OMC renders the goals and final purposes of CREST-OMC opaque to the final users of its results, namely all national civil servants dealing with research (and innovation) policies (not only those involved in the process).

- The participants in the expert groups have different expectations and views about coordination and learning.

- The ultimate goals of the OMC and its corresponding procedures have not been well defined in advance. The success of specific CREST-OMC groups' outcomes has relied mostly on the chairman's ability to pre-define the working procedures of the group.

Therefore it is necessary to solve this ambiguity.

This expert group sees three possible options for the future of the CREST-OMC policy instrument. Each of these options is related to the balance between the learning and the coordination aspects of this instrument.

> Option 1: Coordination focused CREST-OMC
>
> Option 2: Learning focused CREST-OMC
>
> Option 3: Coordination-through-learning CREST-OMC

The first option is a 'coordination focused' CREST-OMC. This option would pay most attention to the outcomes of the process in terms of mutual adjustment of the Member States, and would strengthen the role of the recommendations put forward by the working groups. The overall idea with this coordination focused option is that CREST-OMC unfolds different forms of voluntary coordination in the EU context.

The second option is a 'learning focused' CREST-OMC. This option is the one that would be closest to the way, in which CREST-OMC operates today, but redressing its structural weaknesses in terms of learning mechanisms. The overall idea would be to strengthen the processes conducive to a maximization of learning among participants and among the users of the results of the CREST-OMC work.

The third option is a 'coordination-through-learning' CREST-OMC. This option would not renounce to one of the main objectives in detriment of the other, but would put emphasis on a 2-step process of 'learning first, coordinating second'. Hence, this option would strengthen both dimensions in sequential manner.

For each of these three options, there are a series of crucial aspects to be defined, namely, the overall rationale of the option, the selection of themes, the composition of the working groups, the roles of the participants in the working groups, the organization of work inside the working groups, the types of outcomes of the process, and the use of the outcomes. Table 2 below summarizes them.

Table 2: Three options for the future of CREST-OMC

	Option 1 Coordination focused	Option 2 Learning focused	Option 3 Coordination through learning
Overall rationale and goals	Rationale: To coordinate in a voluntary way some selected aspects of national R&D policies. Goals: Foster national coordination by defining a set of common European targets/guidelines/recommendations for voluntary action at member-state level.	Rationale: To enhance the knowledge and learning of policy-makers in Europe in specific areas of R&D policies in the EU by stimulating a cross-border exchange of experiences and development of ideas. Goals: Foster learning among participants and among the users of the results of the CREST-OMC work.	Rationale: To enhance the knowledge and learning of policy-makers in Europe in specific areas of R&D policies in the EU by stimulating a cross-border exchange of experiences and development of ideas; and to coordinate in a voluntary way some selected aspects of national R&D policies. Goals: Foster learning among participants and among the users of the results of the CREST-OMC work; and foster national coordination by defining a set of common European targets for voluntary action at member-state level.
Selection of themes	The themes should be well-defined topics in R&D policy, in a selected range of possible topics, typically on policy design matters, geared towards helping fulfilling specific Lisbon and ERA-related objectives (like the 3% GERD/GDP). The selection should be made exclusively by CREST on the basis of the interests of the Member States, and according to the Lisbon strategy European Integrated Guidelines and ERA overall objectives.	The themes should be well-defined topics in R&D policy, in a wide range of possible themes including policy design and implementation, and practical 'how to do things' as well. The selection should be made both by CREST and by Commission, according to the interests of Member States and some collective 'knowledge deficiencies' identified by the Commission.	The themes should be well-defined topics in R&D policy, in a wide range of possible themes including policy design and implementation, and topics associated to the Lisbon strategy and ERA goals. The selection should be made both by CREST and by the Commission, according to the interests of Member States and some collective 'knowledge deficiencies' identified by the Commission.
Composition of the working groups	National policy-makers only (national experts in some exceptional circumstances)	National policy-makers and national experts, with the assistance of independent consultants.	National policy-makers and national experts, with the assistance of independent consultants.
Roles of the participants	National policy-makers with powers and a mandate in order to negotiate the definition of common European targets/guidelines/recommendations. Independent consultants and experts prepare a 'background document' which provides basic information	National policy-makers and national experts are the main actors in the working group and those performing the main bulk and 'content' side of the work. Independent consultants and experts prepare a 'background document' which provides basic information	National policy-makers and national experts are the main actors in the working group and those performing the main bulk and 'content' side of the work. Independent consultants and experts prepare a

	The Commission facilitates the overall process. CREST appoints a chairman among the national representatives or it appoints the Commission.	about the topic at hand, developing a 'common language' ahead of the meetings. These independent consultants could also be active in the process, for example by acting as chairman or as 'coacher' in the process.	'background document' which provides basic information about the topic at hand, developing a 'comon language' ahead of the meetings. These independent consultants could also be active in the process, for example by acting as chairman or as 'facilitator' in the process. The Commission facilitates the overall process.
Organization and logic of the work	National policy-makers discuss and find common grounds with the objective of developing a series of clear and well reasoned recommendations that will be discussed at CREST level, and taken up at Council level regarding the possible establishment of common European guidelines.	National policy-makers and national experts exchange experiences and information, with the objective of developing useful ideas and solutions to typical problems faced by them in their daily work of designing specific R&D policy tools and implementing those in their respective national contexts.	National policy makers and experts exchange experiences and information, with the objective of developing useful ideas and solutions to typical problems faced by them in their daily work, AND with the objective of developing a series of clear and well reasoned recommendations that will be discussed at CREST and decided at Council level regarding common European guidelines.
Types of outcomes	Reports with a clear identification of problems at the national and European levels in order to fulfill Lisbon and ERA R&D policies in order to fulfill Lisbon and ERA goals, and a set of well defined and well reasoned recommendations for potential common guidelines at European level to be voluntarily endorsed and put in place at the national level.	Reports with substantial ideas and information useful for national policy-makers.	Reports with substantial ideas and information useful for national policy-makers. The reports should also have a clear identification of problems at the national and European levels in relation to R&D policies in order to fulfill Lisbon and ERA goals, and a set of well defined and well reasoned recommendations for potential common guidelines at the European level to be voluntarily endorsed and put in place at the national level.
Use of the outcomes	The recommendations are taken up by CREST which discusses it further, and eventually decides to set-up a clearly defined set of common European guidelines for voluntary coordination among Member States. Final decision about the concrete European guidelines will be decided by the Council of Ministers of Research and/or the Competitiveness Council.	Specific efforts and procedures are designed to make sure that the reports and results of the CREST-OMC are disseminated widely in national contexts and their visibility is enhanced through the more active use of websites and other electronic means.	The recommendations are taken up by CREST which discusses it further, and eventually decides to set-up a clearly defined set of common European guidelines for voluntary coordination among Member States. Final decision about the concrete European guidelines will be decided by the Council of Ministers of Research and/or the Competitiveness Council.

4.2.4 The scope is still limited

Another important issue that deserves further attention in the future is the scope of this instrument. The unfolding of the CREST-OMC to achieve the 3% Barcelona target has focused on several different important aspects of research policy-making topics. This is a positive aspect. However, the scope of the CREST-OMC is still limited. It is a common understanding among experts in the field of innovation and knowledge-based economy and society that knowledge-related topics cut across the traditional division of work between national ministries/EC Directorates-General. The horizontal nature of innovation and knowledge-related issues has been repeatedly underlined in the 'third phase' of innovation policy, which is essentially system-oriented (LEG, 2008a). The narrow focus of CREST-OMC on research-policy-only topics does not prove suitable to address the overall goal of the Lisbon Strategy. Given the challenges of the globalized knowledge-based economy and the role of research and knowledge for competitiveness and high performance of innovation systems, the focus on research-policy-only topics is too narrow.

4.2.5 More added value is possible

As stated above, in general terms there is a positive added value of CREST-OMC because (a) this instrument has engaged directly national policy-makers; and (b) it has been politically endorsed by CREST throughout the different cycles. These two important aspects have been the main reasons for the CREST-OMC's positive impacts in terms of learning effects.

Yet, the added value of CREST-OMC as a policy instrument to improve research, innovation and competitiveness is still limited in two main ways. Firstly, there is an overall emphasis on learning processes to the detriment of stronger and more political forms of coordination (currently there is a relatively weak form of "non-concerted" coordination in the CREST-OMC, as mentioned above). In the EU context (and beyond it as well) there are already several learning-oriented policy instruments. As reported in section 3, many of our respondents were not entirely clear about the difference between CREST-OMC and other ERA-related and learning-related policy instruments. The reason for such confusion might probably be the unexploited potential in terms of coordination of the CREST-OMC.

Second, CREST-OMC is currently focusing on a narrow set of topics; namely, topics within the boundaries of research policy. The research-only focus of CREST-OMC is a limit to unleashing its potential in terms of coordination efforts in the ERA.

The CREST-OMC has the potential of more added value if these two limitations are tackled.

4.2.6 The CREST-OMC in the national context: Poor awareness and dissemination

One of the main findings of section 3 is the limited awareness and dissemination of the CREST-OMC results and reports in the national contexts. Although we found differences across countries, the problem appeared to be very general. Our national respondents provided a series of possible reasons. At the national level, the most relevant were the limited human resources for dissemination and the lack of structured horizontal coordination mechanism.

The result is that dissemination takes place in an individual rather than in a systemic way, meaning, that dissemination is based on the individual use of the reports and results that the national CREST-OMC participant makes in his/her national policy-making context. More efforts have to be done by each Member State at their respective national levels if this problem is to be tackled.

4.2.7 The working procedures can be improved

The interviews reported in section 3 are rather explicit regarding some of the problems associated to the working procedures of the CREST-OMC working groups. As stated above, most respondents participating in the working groups had positive views about the activities of the groups. Nevertheless, some scope for improvement was also mentioned. Among the issues that could be improved in this regard are the clarity of the topics (the clearer the better), the problems associated to the highly uneven levels of preparation and of knowledge of the national representatives, the importance of (and sometimes limited) personal motivation and commitment of the participants in the groups, the importance (and sometimes difficulties) of managing the working groups towards successful work outputs, and the nature of the reports (in general, good and useful, but too long and with EU jargon).

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings above and on the expertise of the members of this group, a series of recommendations about the future direction of the CREST-OMC are formulated as follows.

5.1 Recommendation 1: Focus on "coordination through learning" for the future development of the Open Method of Coordination

The report provides three options for the future of the OMC instrument in research policy: a coordination-only option, a learning-only option and a 'coordination-through-learning' option. Policy-makers need to consider very carefully which option suits best the further development of the CREST-OMC as an instrument. Policy-makers need as well to take into consideration which specific form of learning and coordination are most suitable for each topic of research policy.

It is the opinion of this expert group, though, that option 3, namely 'coordination-through-learning' is the best possible option for the future of the Open Method of Coordination, because it combines forms of reflexive policy learning and strategic coordination. This option would put emphasis on a two-step process of 'learning first, coordinating second', strengthening both dimensions in a sequential manner. Therefore, this expert group recommends moving CREST-OMC towards a 'strong-strong' area of Figure 3 whenever the topics of CREST-OMC allow for that.

This would help reducing the current ambiguity of the CREST-OMC instrument regarding learning and coordination objectives and procedures, as suggested in sections 2.2 and 4 of this report.

Figure 3: A strategic Open Method of Coordination in research and innovation policy
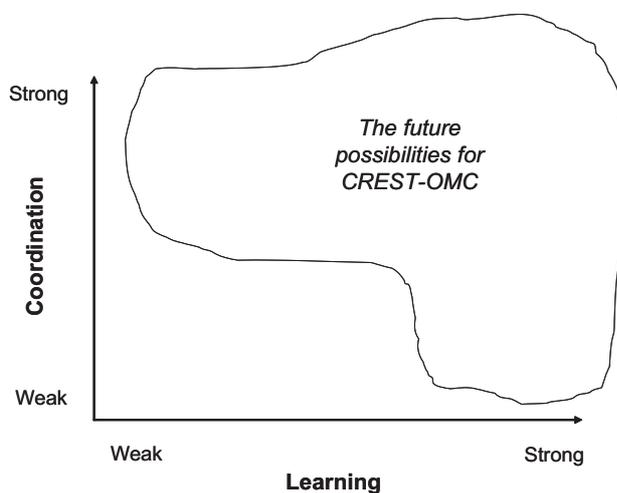
Compared with the two other options, option 3 would generate a solid learning platform at the national level, while providing the basis to identify common ground and to develop forms of coordination in an intra-European dimension. The other two options, focused on coordination only or learning only, are stimulating too, but not to the same degree and with the same potential as in option 3 "coordination-through-learning". The qualitative difference of this option is that it has inherent capabilities in terms of strategic action. As mentioned in section 2:

- "Reflexive policy learning" involves the transfer of ideas and forms of implementation behind *the entire policy* with significant original elements of adaptation and development based on a reflexive process at the political level.

- "Strategic coordination" aims at the development of encompassing common visions and strategies for the future upon which political action is designed.

The reason for this expert group's preference for the option "coordination-through-learning" whenever feasible is that <u>combining the forms of "reflexive policy learning" and "strategic coordination" will maximize the potential of the Open Method of Coordination as a policy instrument due to its focus on the strategic dimensions of ERA and the Lisbon strategy</u>. Learning becomes no longer the analysis of current and past practices or the mere exchange of information. It is the basis for national policy experimentation, and the basis for exploring new opportunities together, including possibilities for joint action. Strategic forms of learning and coordination mean that national policy makers can put their own problems into broader perspectives, identifying similar goals, and sharing their experiences about what works, when, and how. The OMC should become the learning platform for strategic policy-makers, and the coordination platform for intra-European collaboration.

5.2 Recommendation 2: Widening the scope to knowledge-based related policy areas

Until now, the CREST-OMC has had an exclusive focus on topics related to research policy. The future of the Open Method of Coordination in the context of the European Research Area and the Lisbon Strategy needs to be much broader. We recommend <u>to expand the scope of OMC to knowledge-related policy areas</u>, well beyond the traditional 'research policy' and into areas of the knowledge-based economy, innovation and competitiveness.

As stated repeatedly in the previous reports of this expert group, one of the main challenges related to the governance of research and innovation policies is precisely the evolution towards open, dynamic and systemic knowledge policies in Europe (LEG, 2008b). This requires new ways of

thinking and deploying old and new modes of governance. The 'silo thinking' of non-connected public policy areas needs to be overcome, if workable solutions and flexible responses to changing needs in knowledge, research and innovation processes are to be devised and applied successfully. The Open Method of Coordination offers a valuable opportunity to provide workable solutions and flexible responses in the intra-European context. But this will only materialize if the OMC is designed to become a strategic instrument, and is allowed to develop a true overview of the complexities of knowledge, research and innovation processes. In other words, only a wide perspective will allow the OMC to fulfill its potential of developing a strategic platform for different forms of policy action at the EU, national and other levels.

5.3 Recommendation 3: Improving the added value

Improving the added value of CREST-OMC is a crucial aspect that needs to be addressed. This is especially important in the context of the ERA and the Lisbon strategy, where a series of learning-oriented policy instruments have been developed during the past years in the fields of research and innovation policy.

Exploiting the potential of the CREST-OMC as a policy instrument requires the strengthening of the learning and especially the coordination dimensions of this instrument (as explained in the recommendation 1). A second crucial step will be to expand the scope of action from the narrow focus of research policy to a much wider focus of topics in the knowledge, research and innovation-related policy areas (as explained in the recommendation 2).

It is therefore necessary that the decisions regarding the development of option 3 in the future take into consideration the existing alternative policy instruments, and develop the full strategic potential of CREST-OMC as a policy instrument in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the European Research Area.

5.4 Recommendation 4: Improving the working procedures

The potential of CREST-OMC as a policy instrument can be better exploited by improving the working procedures in the following ways:

- More clearly defined and focused topics.

- Background preparations are very important. It is therefore recommended that external independent experts should prepare background material for the members of the working groups. Such preparations would help creating a common language among national representatives, clarifying the terminology to be used, and enhancing the capacity of the participants before the work starts.

- The personal motivation, expertise and commitment of the participants in the CREST-OMC working groups are essential for a successful working in these groups. Member States should make efforts to choose the appropriate participants in the working groups, continuing to engage highly motivated and committed core policy-makers whenever possible.

- The management of the working groups is a difficult but crucial task for the success of the work. Therefore it is recommended to make *more extensive use* of external experts who are professional managers of this kind of knowledge-intensive working processes.

- The reports should be shorter, and as free of EU jargon as possible.

Annex 1: The methodological framework

The data of this assessment has been based on 174 personal interviews with civil servants in the 27 EU member countries and in Norway (associated country). The interviews were based on a series of **semi-structured qualitative questions** formulated in a specific and homogeneous interview questionnaire.

The questionnaire has 17 questions and took approximately 1 hour for each respondent. The questionnaire was pilot tested in different national contexts in order to make sure the questions were understandable and suitable in different national and administrative contexts.

The data collected is qualitative and is based on the personal opinion of the respondents about their views concerning different aspects of the CREST-OMC. For obvious reasons, this data is treated anonymously, and it does not represent official views of the countries.

The sample of respondents were selected carefully and had two main profiles: firstly, civil servants or experts who have been members of at least one CREST-OMC working group, and secondly, national civil servants who have not taken part in CREST-OMC. The criteria for selecting this second group of respondents were the following, namely, civil servants positioned relatively highly in the relevant administrative-political organs of national policy making, or respected and well-considered expert civil servants at lower hierarchical levels, that act as important drivers for policy action (policy entrepreneurs). This sample of respondents (divided in these two sub-groups) is to provide a balanced view and opinion about the questions regarding knowledge, awareness and impact. See annex 2 for the questionnaire. The respondents who did not take part in the CREST-OMC were used to avoid bias regarding the level of awareness and the dissemination of the reports. However, for obvious reasons, these respondents could not provide interesting or useful answers to questions 14 to 17.

Regarding **the reliability of the data**, it is important to note that most of the questions are based on the personal opinion of the respondents and there are no reasons to believe that respondents, knowing the anonymity of the interview, have not answered in an honest way. There are however some questions in the questionnaire that are about factual information, more concretely, questions 4 and 5 about the coordination of STI-related issues in their country. Some respondents were more knowledgeable than others in this matter, therefore the information coming out of these questions was triangulated in order to identify inconsistencies. In most cases where there were inconsistencies these were more based on unclear answers rather than decidedly wrong information.

Regarding the **representativeness of the data**, it is very important to underline here that the data gathered in the interviews is representative only in the sense that it has gathered information from a wide spectrum of respondents in terms of country of origin, expertise and participants/not participants. This is to say that there is no statistical representativeness in our data, but a set of fixed criteria that allow a certain degree of certainty that <u>we have been able to collect the widest possible spectrum of qualitative data regarding opinions and worldviews</u> related to the CREST-OMC. This wide spectrum is <u>the most likely way to avoid biased data</u> when working with qualitative research methods, as in this case.

Annex 2: The respondents

Table 1: Number of respondents per country

Country	
Belgium	10
The Netherlands	10
Luxemburg	4
France	10
Slovenia	5
Czech Republic	5
Slovakia	2
Denmark	10
Norway	2
United Kingdom	9
Germany	8
Austria	9
Bulgaria	3
Finland	10
Sweden	10
Lithuania	3
Latvia	3
Estonia	3
Hungary	6
Poland	4
Romania	4
Greece	5
Cyprus	3
Ireland	10
Portugal	4
Malta	4
Italy	10
Spain	8
Total	**174**

Figure 5: Experts and generalists among respondents

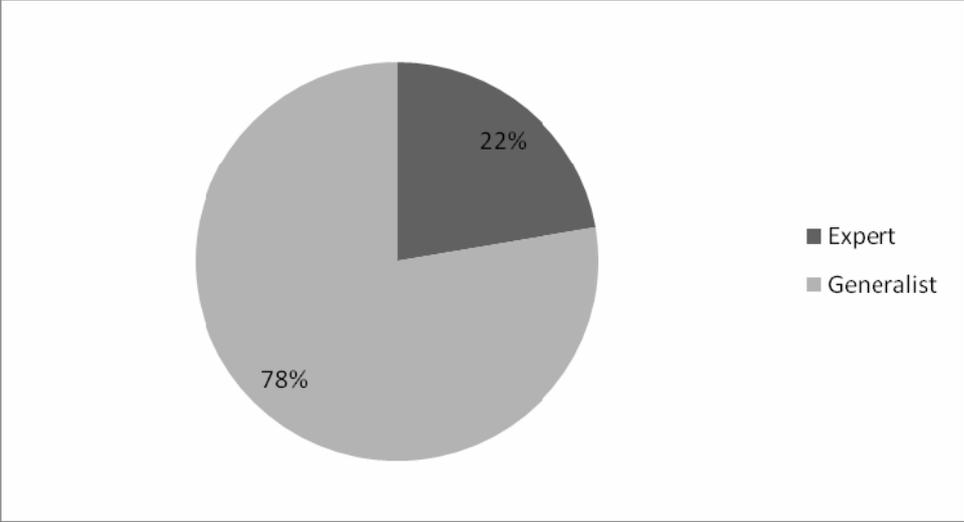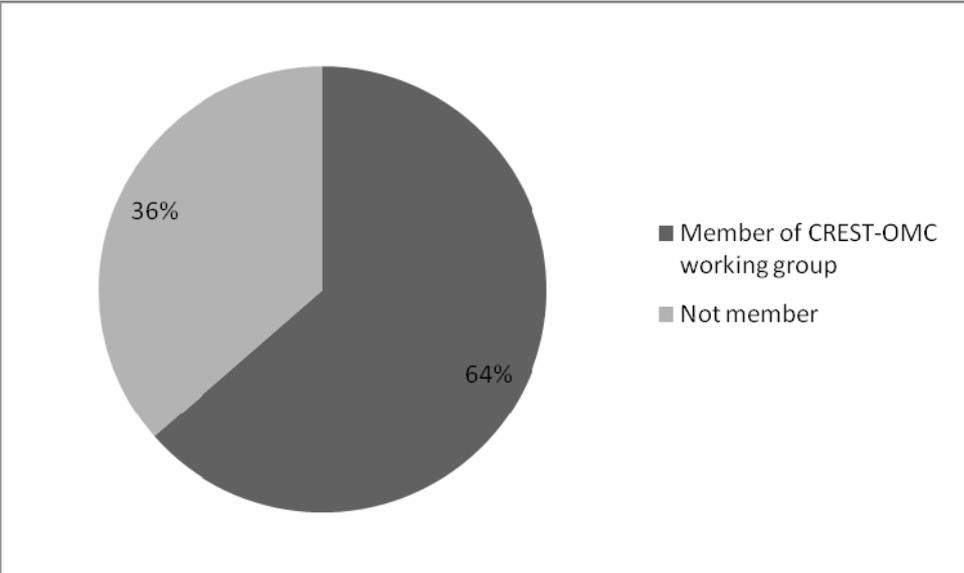
Figure 6: Respondents belonging or not to at least one CREST-OMC working group.

Annex 3: The questionnaire

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION (OMC) in CREST

PART 1: INDIVIDUAL DESCRIPTORS OF THE RESPONDENT

QUESTION 1: Basic information about the respondent. Please indicate the following

- Full name:
- Your Organisation and Country
- Position and title
- Short description of your job
- Role in national policy-making
- Generalist / or expert

For the interviewer, please, tickle in the following table about the respondent:

☐ Expert

☐ Generalist

☐ With leadership responsibilities

☐ Without leadership responsibilities

QUESTION 2: What do you think are the main sources of ideas, and information for policy-making in your country (national and international)?

Issues to be identified:

- Are the sources of learning mentioned, mainly national or international?

- Which international sources are mentioned? Is the EU mentioned, and what/ how?

QUESTION 3: The most important issues about STI (Science Technology and Innovation) might be different in each country, how do you see the need of coordination of national STI policies in Europe? Any common European problems?

Issues to be identified:

- Respondent's views about national differences in Europe

- Respondent's general views about relevance (or not) of EU efforts to coordinate national policies

- Respondent's general views about European common problems that deserve EU common policy.

QUESTION 4: On a practical level, how is the link between the Lisbon process and your country's national decision process in STI (Science technology and innovation) policy?

Issues to be identified:

- How are the issues of the Lisbon coordinated horizontally at the national level?

- Any inter-ministerial coordination group or committee?

- Which ministry is the main coordinator regarding Lisbon agenda issues?

QUESTION 5: In your opinion, how does the horizontal coordination at national level of Lisbon National Reform Plans work?

Issues to be identified:

- Effective coordination?

- Any real synergy between National Reform Plans and national STI policymaking? – or just mere 'reporting' to Brussels.

- How much has the STI ministry and the STI national policy-makers been directly involved in horizontal coordination regarding Lisbon agenda?

PART 3: PARTICIPATION in OMC-CREST

QUESTION 6: Have you personally taken part in one of OMC-CREST working groups? If yes, which one(s)?

☐ Member of a OMC-CREST expert group

☐ Not member of a OMC-CREST expert group

QUESTION 7: If you personally participated in one of the OMC-CREST expert groups, what is your impression about the process in terms of participants' expectations, participants' competences and general nature of the discussions/ negotiations?

Issues to be identified:

- Where there different (asymmetric) expectations of the participants taking part at OMC-CREST working groups? F.ex. some expecting to 'negotiate' whereas other expected to 'discuss' in an open-ended manner.

- What was the respondent own expectations?

- And his/her own contribution to the group?

- Do you think this was a difficult or easy process / consensus-based or disagreement / Equal or unequal competences of the experts …

PART 4: GENERAL AWARENESS ABOUT OMC IN CREST

QUESTION 8: Are you aware of the existence of the CREST guidelines and reports for research policy following the 'Open Method of Coordination'? And, in your opinion, is your organisation aware of that?

Issues to be identified:

- Respondent's own general awareness
- The degree of his /her organisation general awareness (other people in the organisation)

QUESTION 9: In your opinion, what explains the (high or low) degree of general awareness about OMC-CREST in your organisation? And why?

Issues to identify:

- Anyone reading the recommendations and reports produced by these OMC-CREST expert groups?
- Respondent's identification of the barriers / stimulus for the spread of OMC- CREST-related activities inside his / her organisation
- Is lack of awareness an organisational problem (separate EU unit little contact with other units), or a political problem (political scepticism to any EU-level initiative resulting in systematic marginalisation within the organisation)? Or another type of problem?
- Vice versa, is widespread awareness due to organisational features or/ and political features?

PART 5: ACTUAL USE OF OMC-CREST ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

QUESTION 10: Can you name any of OMC-CREST reports that were particularly influential at national level? In what topics have they been influential?

Issues to be identified:

- The respondents' own knowledge about these reports, and their contents
- The topics of specific national interest

QUESTION 11: Please, indicate which of the following OMC-CREST reports and recommendations associated to the 'Open Method of Coordination' <u>are generally known by your organisation</u>?

Please tick

Reports from the first OMC cycle (2003-2004):

1. Public research base and its links to industry	
2. SMEs and research	
3. Fiscal measures for research	
4. IPR and research	
5. Public research spending and policy mixes	

Reports from the second OMC cycle (2005-2006):

1. Effectiveness of fiscal measures for RTD	
2. Improve the design and implementation of national policy mixes	
a. Report about Spain	
b. Report about Sweden	
c. Report about Romania	
3. Promote the reform of public research centres and universities, promoting knowledge transfer	
4. Design measures to promote the growth of young research intensive SMEs	
5. Intellectual property	

Reports from the third OMC cycle (2006-2007):

1. The <u>final report</u> on internationalisation of R&D	
2. The final Report on <u>R&D in Services</u>	
3. <u>Guidelines for FP7 and Structural Funds</u>	
4. The <u>Synthesis Report</u> on Policy Mixes	
5. National reports about policy mixes:	
a. Belgian report about policy mixes	
b. Estonian report about policy mixes	
c. French report about policy mixes	
d. Lithuanian report about policy mixes	
e. Dutch report about policy mixes	
f. UK report about policy mixes	

Reports from the fourth OMC cycle (2007-2008): No reports available yet.

QUESTION 12: Can you provide one or two concrete examples where your organisation has used the OMC-CREST recommendations as an input (direct or indirect) to new national policy initiatives? Please elaborate.

Issues to be identified:

- Specific cases where there has been national reform / change / transformation, which is directly or indirectly associated to discussions/recommendations/guidelines from the OMC-CREST

- We want good examples and cases – good stories…Cases where there has been a direct correlation, but problems have emerged later on, for whatever reason.

QUESTION 13: In your opinion, what are the benefits and shortcomings of using voluntary and bottom-up approach in the OMC-CREST and in the Lisbon strategy?

PART 6: ON THE FUTURE USE OF OMC

QUESTION 14: In your opinion, what can be done to improve OMC-CREST method?

Issues to be identified:

- Respondent's view on whether the OMC-CREST is "improvable".
- More stringent or more lax approach could improve it? F.ex. by requesting national goal-setting as Lisbon strategy national reform programs.
- The role of the Commission: more or less involved
- The balance between commission and member sates
- Supranational vs. national
- Strengthening the coordination or the learning aspects.

QUESTION 15: Do you consider convenient to extend or diminish the number and types of participants in OMC-CREST exercises?

Issues to be identified:

- any type of organisations that should be involved in the OMC? i.e. regional actors or end-user communities, need to be involved?

QUESTION 16: Are there other important topics that need to be addressed by OMC-CREST

QUESTION 17: Do you consider convenient to modify the working procedures used in the past in OMC-CREST exercises?

Issues to be identified:

- More negotiation, less open-ended discussions
- More stringent guidelines like National Reform Programs in OMC-CREST / or keep "recommendations" like now?

Annex 4: References

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This report has been prepared by the 'Expert Group for the follow-up of the research aspects of the revised Lisbon strategy' (LEG) and provides an assessment of the impact generated by the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the field of research policy at national level. It has been based on 174 interviews in the 27 Member States and Norway with relevant national policy-makers. The evaluation served as a basis to provide recommendations for the further use of this policy instrument. The report concludes that the OMC has achieved important results but also leaves a large potential unexploited. According to the Expert Group, a re-orientation of the OMC towards a 'coordination-through-learning' instrument with a wider scope and improved working procedures would be needed.

This report can be downloaded at:
http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/omc_coordination_2009.pdf