

INCREASING INNOVATION CAPACITIES IN THE WB USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Implementing collaborative online platform for improving policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of research policy actions in the WB countries

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

Setting agenda (problem identification, setting priorities) and policy formulation/design (opening discussion, brainstorming solutions and drafting policies) are the key phases of any policy cycle, such as the intended development of the “Regional Strategy on R&D for Innovation”, as well as development of any other policy, strategy, action plan or regulation contributing to development of innovation capacities in the whole WB region or at the national level. The “evidence” and “expertise” that good policy needs in those phases of setting agenda and policy design will not come only from traditional experts or sources of apparently authoritative knowledge, but from customers, researchers, innovators and a much wider range of genuine expertise can be found across the community than we might normally assume.

The goal of this proposed action is to develop a regional collaborative online platform for improving policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of research policy actions in the WB countries. The platform would engage people from inside and outside of the governments, especially those directly impacted by the policies, and provide them with the online tools to a) set priorities and identify problems in the area, b) discuss, collaborate and refine proposed policies (strategies, action plans, regulations...) and c) collect feedback and evidences from the community on the execution of policies. Online platform would allow WB audience to express which questions, suggestions or ideas interest them the most in the phase of setting agenda (problem identification, setting priorities) and to send feedback and submit ideas in the phase of drafting policies, as well as to start discussing and voting on other people’s ideas and contributions. Most valuable ideas and contributions would rise to the top enabling policymakers to solve problems and steer innovation knowing what R&D and innovation community really wants. It would also support community to submit evidences and provide feedbacks once the policy is put in action.

The online tools and platforms that would give rise to this kind of collaborative model of policy development are all available right now. Solutions like *IdeaScale*, *UserVoice* etc. could be easily deployed to support development of research policy actions, as well as tools similar to those used at www.commentneelie.eu, Google Docs etc., to allow participants discuss and collaborate on policy drafts. The values behind these tools are to open up to external contributions early in the policy design process, enable peer-to-peer collaboration between interested parties and accept and resolve evidences and feedbacks on enforced policies to support a proper policy revision.

The regional collaborative online platform for improving policymaking could be integrated to the WBC-INCO.NET portal or established as a separate web site. New project in the platform would be one specific policy, so the platform could be easily organized for supporting regional but also national policymaking and monitoring.

REFERENCES TO RUNNING ACTIVITIES, LESSONS LEARNT FROM OTHER REGIONS, ETC.

Under the Objective 7.3 (ICT for Governance and Policy Modeling) of the EU FP7 ICT Work program 2009/2010 there are a number of research projects focusing on the development of advanced ICT tools for policy modeling, prediction of policy impacts, development of new governance models and collaborative solving of complex societal problems. Proposed action to implement collaborative online platform for improving policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of research policy actions in the WB countries could strongly benefit from the results of FP7 projects such as CROSSROAD, e-POLICY, Live+Gov and others, in terms of implementing innovative and most useful social media tools the research has pointed to.

ACTORS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THEIR ROLES

All interested partners of WBC-INCO.NET project should be involved in implementation of this project. The project proposal should be brainstormed by all partners to define exact scope of the project, actors, requirements specification with the detailed description of expected system functionalities and specific activities which would lead to successful project implementation.

EXPECTED IMPACT

This collaborative online platform could represent an ideal bridge across Governments' institutional boundaries allowing establishing a bidirectional communication flow between policy makers and R&D and innovation community. In essence it may be perceived as a reduction in the distance occurring between policy making and society's needs, both in terms of time and tools required. In other words, the use of such platform based on social media could allow to better inform the policy decision process by providing a clear and dynamic vision of the disparate stakeholders' opinions and priorities.


RELEVANCE TO THE WBC REGION


As it emerged from the review conducted within the CROSSROAD project (EU FP7 ICT Work program 2009/2010), the use of ICT tools for decision support in policy making has traditionally been a "closed door" activity usually carried out with static external inputs in the form of codified or unstructured data coming from different sources (e.g. statistical offices). The WB region especially has not done much in the area of public participation in policy making. The lack of a direct connection with the reality and context on which the policy has to impact and delay present in the policy response due to the time which has been spent to collect evidences necessary for the policy making are all problems inherited by the WBC tradition. The innovation brought by social media tools consists in offering the opportunity to open up the policy making earlier in the process by integrating it with the activity carried out over social media platforms. This allows establishing a direct link between the decision process and the external world as well as to reason on fresh and relevant information. Once the necessary platform and organization is in place, the use of social media tools could significantly contribute to produce a much more responsive and effective policy making contributing to development of innovation capacities in the whole WB region and at the national level.

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