

Alignment in Austria – Presentation of the national theses paper

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Structure of the presentation

- The process:
 - Key actors, targets and work packages
 - National definition of alignment
 - The analysis
 - Quantitative analysis
 - Qualitative assessment & stakeholder process
 - 18 final hypothesis about the status of alignment in Austria
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The process

The policy steering group ‘Alignment’

- Process Ownership:
 - Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT)
 - Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW)
- Further members:
 - Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)
 - JOANNEUM RESEARCH POLICIES: provided scientific advice and support to the coordination of the process
- Role of the policy steering group:
 - Develop a national understanding of alignment
 - Develop the framework for the qualitative analysis
 - Discuss quantitative findings
 - Synthesis of core hypothesis from the process

Rationality

- Promotion of transnationally coordinated R&D as key logic of H2020 and the need for member states and national actors to strategically decide upon the participation in several types of bi- and multilateral initiatives
- Definition of grand challenges and implementation of related Joint Programming Initiatives

Targets

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- Developing a common understanding of ‚Alignment‘ by the Austrian community
- Identification of drivers and barriers for ‚Alignment‘
- Assessing the status of ‚Alignment‘ in Austria
- Capture different motivations for Alignment of different types of actors

National understanding of Alignment

Extending the definition of GPC- ERALEARN (2015)

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- Alignment is the strategic approach undertaken by Member States to modify their national research programmes, priorities or activities as a consequence of the adoption of joint research priorities in the context of Joint Programming, with a view to improve the efficiency of investment in research at the level of Member States and the European Research Area.
- Alignment can be implemented via (joint) actions undertaken by Member States or Associated Countries that aim to foster greater coordination and complementarities among national research priorities, programmes and activities around jointly identified strategic priorities (e.g. a Strategic Research Agenda).
- **Alignment is not limited to public-public partnerships . Also industry driven initiatives such as JTIs, especially with member states' participation (ECSEL) have to be anticipated as important drivers of alignment.**
- **The orientation of national actors towards the EU Framework Programme and the participation in respective project consortia is also seen as an important component of alignment.**
- **Therefore 'institutional alignment', i.e. the participation of universities and PROs in bi- and multilateral initiatives and the related strategic orientation of research agendas towards common defined objectives are key for alignment.**
- Alignment thus aims to: (1) increase synergies amongst (existing) national research programmes and activities; (2) trigger cost-efficiencies in research financing (e.g., via leverage effects); (3) enhance the level of scientific performance; (4) help identify research gaps; and (5) maximise research impact on policymaking and innovation, in order to tackle more effectively societal challenges. These goals could be used to assess progress with alignment.
- Alignment is a bi-directional process, hence common strategic priorities and agendas should also take account of Member States' national research priorities and interests.

Quantitative analysis

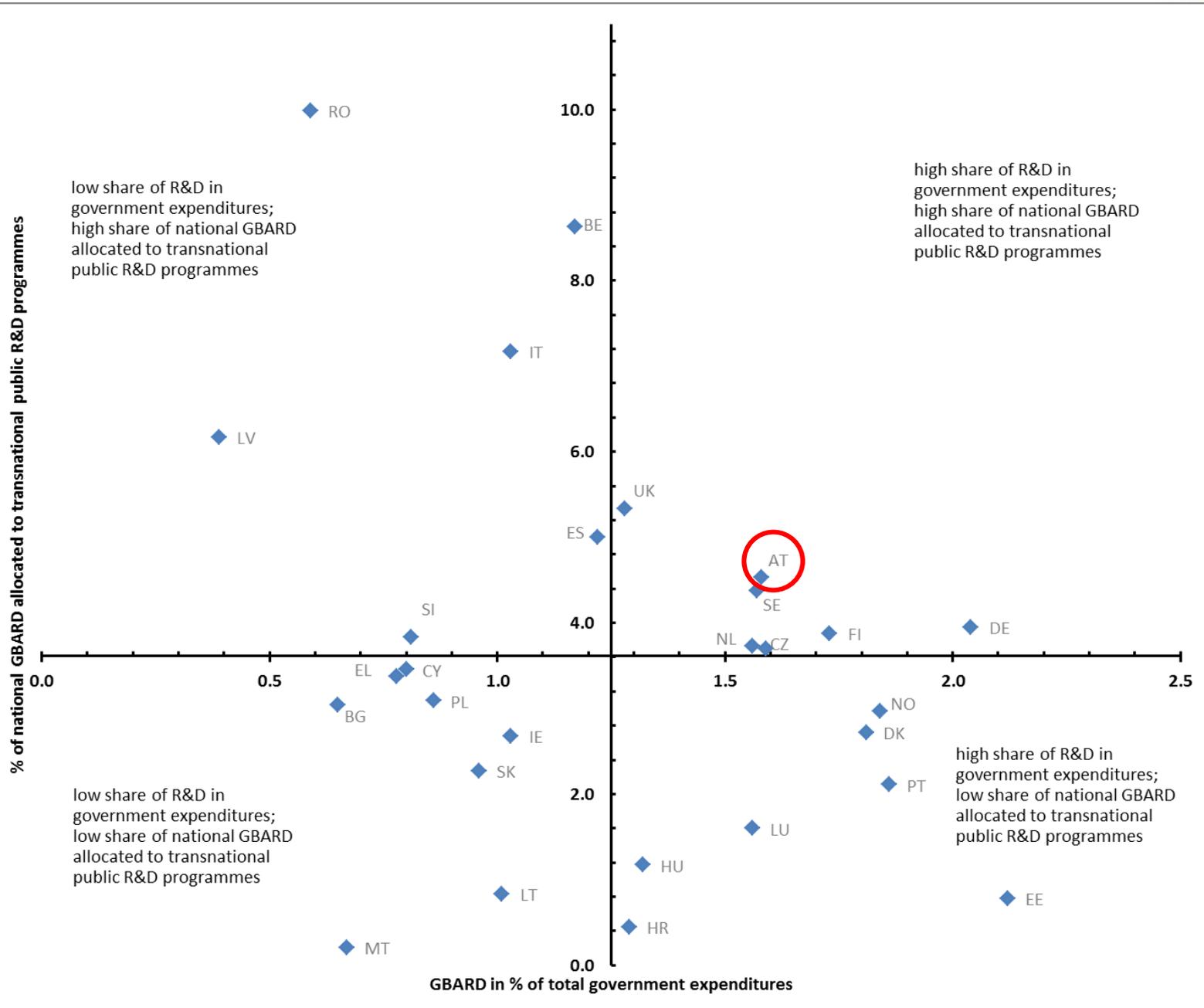
Quantitative analysis

■ Objective

- Get a comprehensive overview about national participations in bi- and multilateral initiatives and the EU Framework programme
- Compare with other EU member states

■ Data Sources

- Eurostat GBOARD Data
- ERALEARN
- eCorda
- FFG and FWF budgets dedicated to bi- and multilateral initiatives
- Survey of national participants (including companies) in governance boards of bi- and multilateral initiatives undertaken by the FFG in 2014



Qualitative analysis & stakeholder process

The process

- Interviews with key stakeholders from federal ministries, RFOs, RPOs, firms and universities to highlight:
 - their perception of the status of alignment in Austria
 - drivers and barriers for ‚Alignment‘
 - institutional motivations to engage in alignment activities
- Stakeholder WS to discuss and contextualize findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis
- On that basis development of 18 key thesis about the status of alignment in Austria, including a final feedback loop among participating stakeholders

=> Final **thesis paper** is based on a **broad national consus** among key stakeholders!

Conceptual framework

- GPC ERALEARN Typology of existing alignment approaches and tools, with focus on specific areas of national interest:

Typology	Typology
R&D –Planning, Foresight, Mapping	Alignment of (ex-post) evaluation frameworks and reporting
Joint Strategic Research (and Innovation) Agenda	Standardisation/harmonisation of scientific techniques and methodologies
R&D funding and implementation – institutional alignment	Joint training of researchers
R&D funding and implementation – joint calls (e.g. ERA-Nets)	Shared use of (hard) research infrastructures and data
R&D funding and implementation – integrated joint initiatives (Art. 185 and 187)	Coordinated or joint dissemination of scientific results

18 final hypothesis about the status of alignment in Austria

Hypothesis (1)

- National Alignment activities are a key prerequisite for the successful participation in the EU Framework Programmes.
- In relation to national public funding for R&D, Austria shows a strong engagement in transnationally coordinated R&D activities compared to other EU member states
- Compared to generic funding for R&D, thematic prioritisation via competitive funding modes is low in Austria.
- Austrian R&D-performers have in general a positive attitude towards alignment. The participation in the definition of joint research agendas, transnational networks, R&D projects and infrastructures are seen to be the most important alignment tools.
- Positive impacts of alignment especially comprise access to transnational technological trends and scientific developments. Alignment via joint activities allows for large and complex projects that might not be realisable on national level solely.
- Regarding research management, especially for basic research, alignment towards transnational standards helps to professionalise project management.

Hypothesis (2)

- Alignment activities have to be assessed against systemic features of the respective RTDI system and may help to improve national coordination of actors.
- Participation in transnational activities increases Austria's visibility in Europe and its impact on agenda setting in European programmes.
- Hence, Alignment is a key driver for the competitiveness of national R&D.
- Often high administrative efforts for the participation in transnational activities compared to sometimes only limited actual budgets for research are seen as a challenge.
- Hence, alignment activities require targeted resources, both in public administrations as well as in RFOs and universities.
- An explicit national budget for the co-financing of transnational R&D was suggested to overcome the fragmentation of resources among several ministries and RFOs.

Hypothesis (3)

- Alignment is not self-sufficient objective. Transnational R&D activities should be part of national program planning and complement it where potential benefits are expected. This calls also for an improvement of empirical evidence on the impacts of transnational R&D initiatives.
- A catalogue of criteria to strategically decide upon the future participation in transnational R&D activities should be developed.
- Regional agenda setting according to *Smart Specialisation* and the related allocation of structural funds are an important component of alignment.
- A Pre-requisite for successful alignment via transnational activities is the existence of national R&D programmes and priorities in respective areas.
- Institutional alignment requires visible benefits for the respective actors. These could be both financial or immaterial, like access to new partners.
- Efforts to improve interoperability by further aligning funding rules between national and transnational programmes should be intensified.



Thank you for your attention!

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