

Peer Review of Research Policy

The European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and RTD Policy Mix

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This presentation

- **The Open Method of Coordination**
- **What is evaluated: the RTD Policy Mix**
- **How was it evaluated: Peer Review**
- **Pros and Cons of this approach**
- **What was achieved?**
- **Summing up**

The Open Method of Coordination

- Based on the voluntary cooperation of its Member States.
- The Member States are evaluated by one another (peer pressure), with the European Commission's role being limited to surveillance and facilitation.
- The process is expected to produce enhanced **mutual learning and peer review**

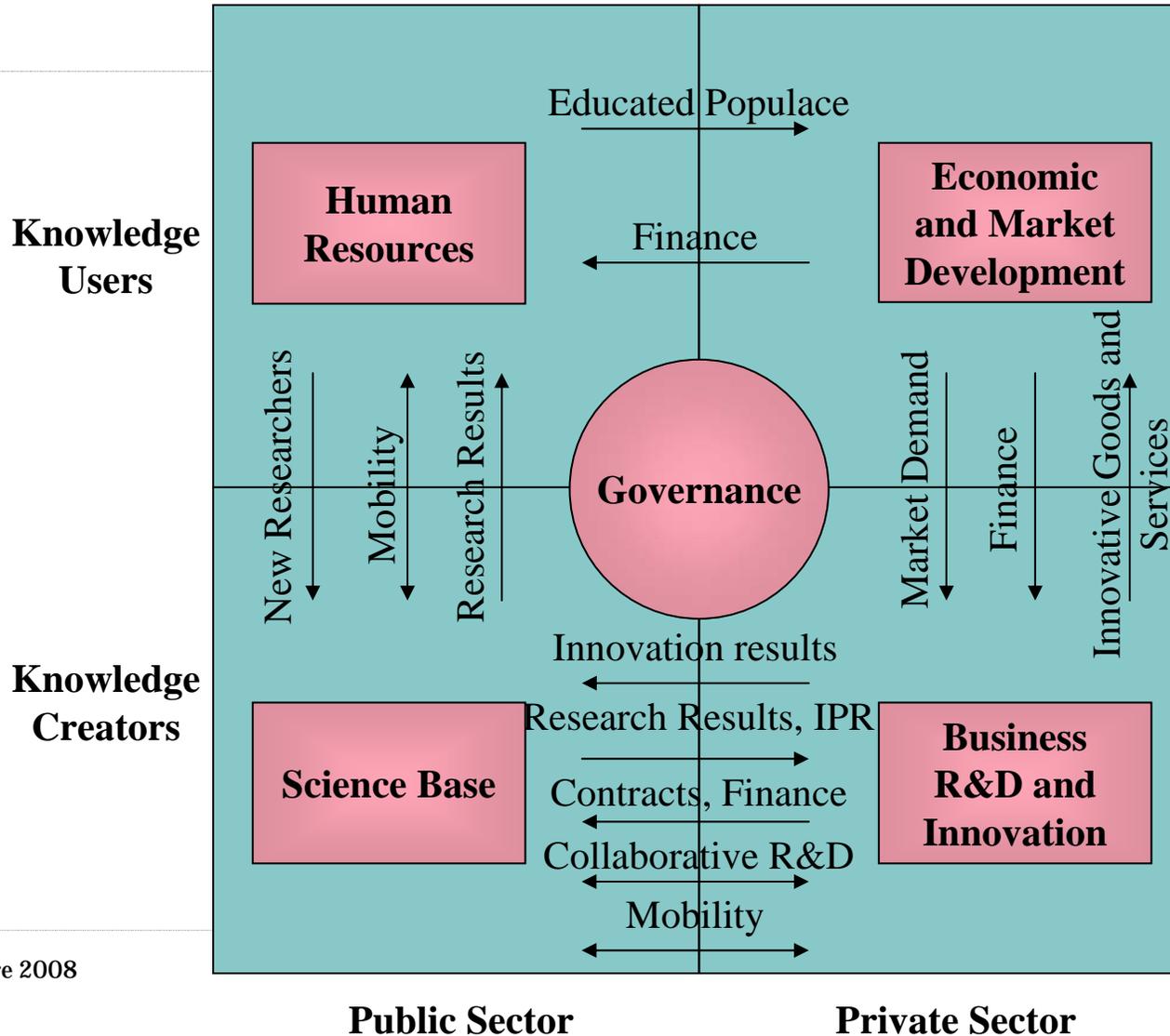
European Member States decide to review RTD Policy

- The Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST)
- One of its remits is to coordinate European science policies
- The European Commission co-funds the OMC process
- As follow-up to specific themes (e.g. R&D and SMEs, tax incentives for R&D) the aim was now to understand what **Policy Mixes** are needed to raise the R&D intensity
- Volunteer countries to be reviewed: Belgium, Estonia, France, Lithuania, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom
- In a previous cycle: Romania, Spain and Sweden

What is RTD Policy Mix about?

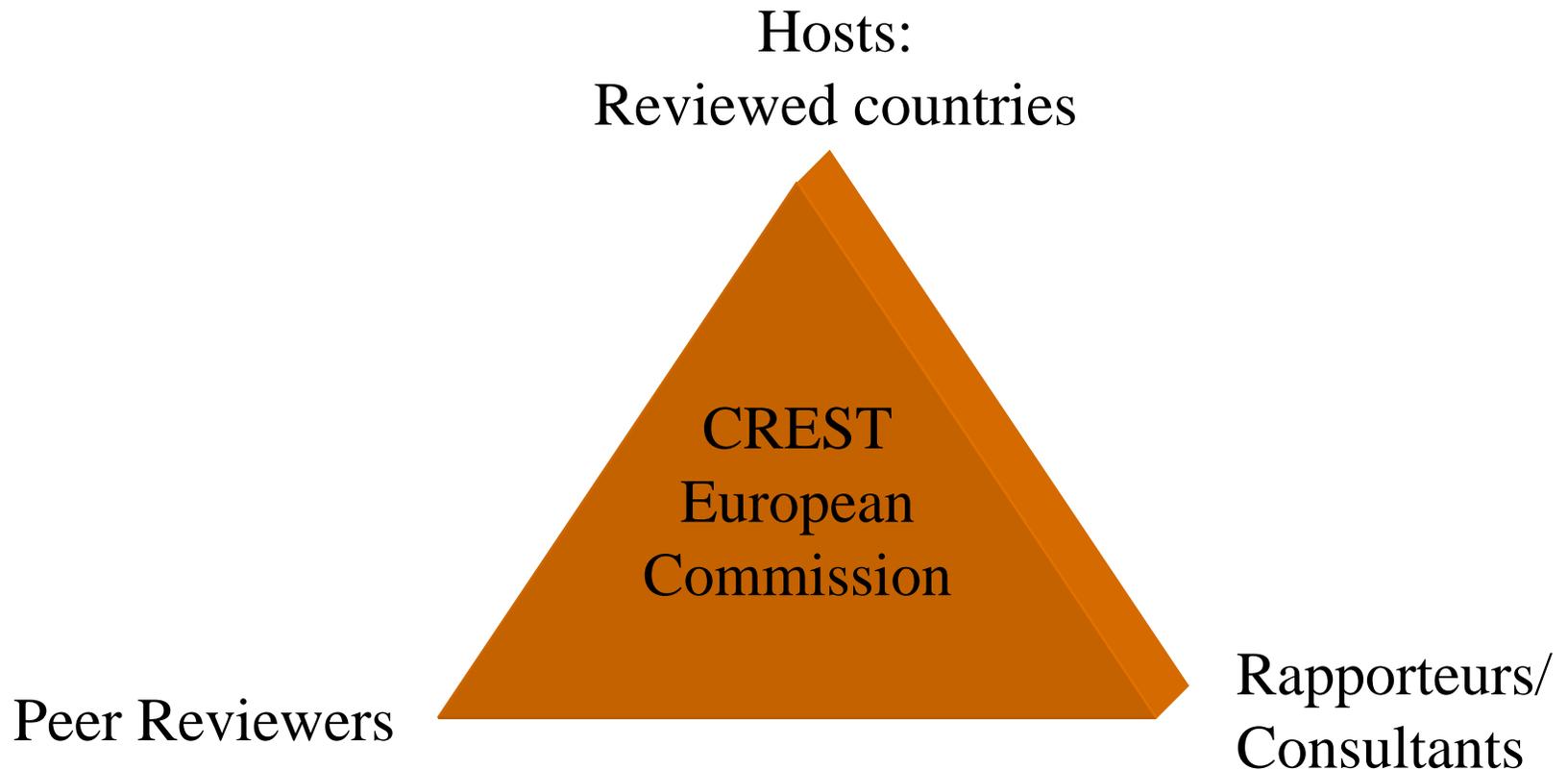
- Defined as the **combination of policy instruments** which interact to influence the quantity and quality of R&D investments in public and private sectors.
- This includes RTD policies (e.g. direct and indirect funding policies, human capital policies, financial policies for R&D, market demand policies, etc..)
- But also non-RTD policies that influence R&D investments

Analytical Framework

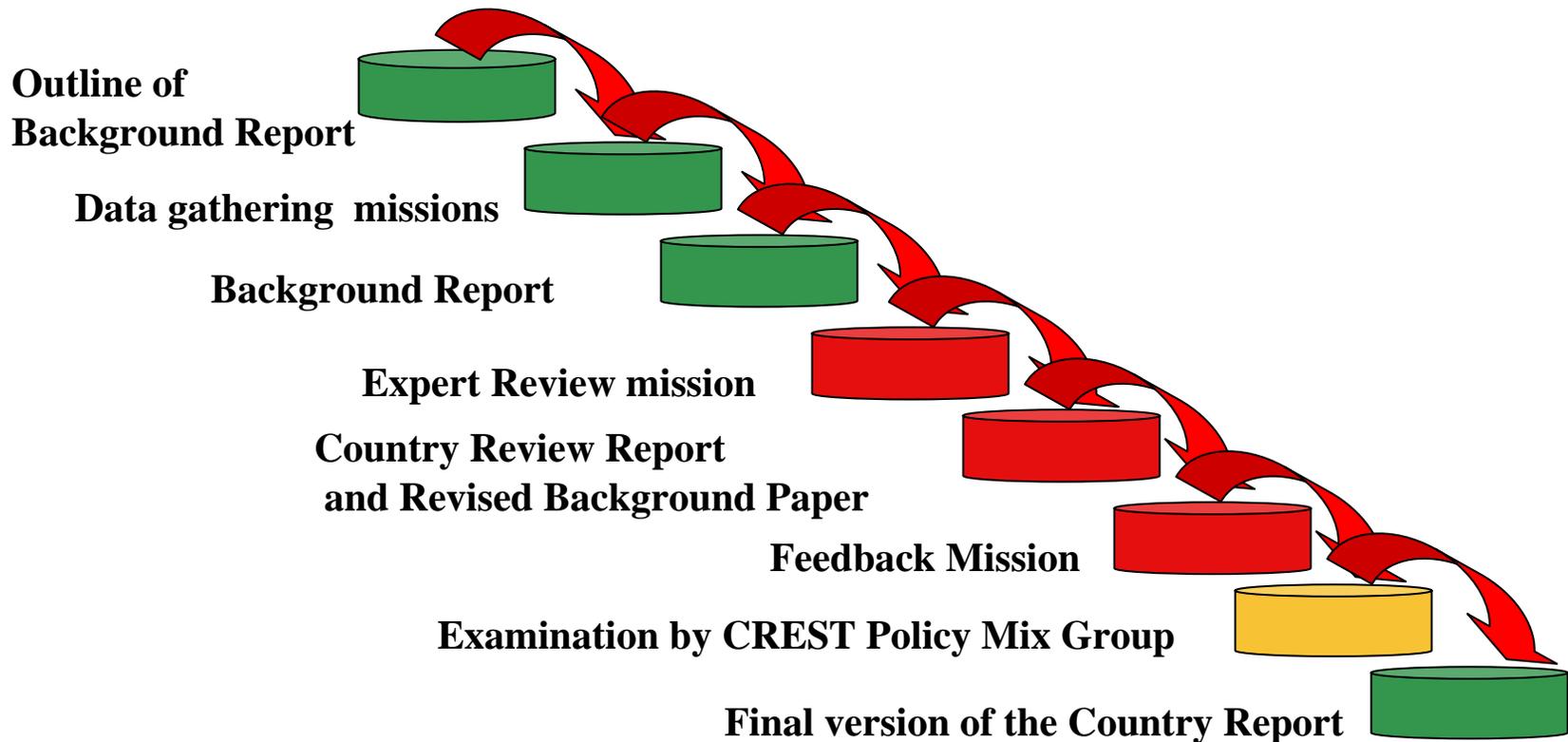


The OMC Peer Review process

The OMC exercise relies on processes between various actors



A series of steps in the CREST Peer Review



Example of the peer review mission to the Netherlands

- Mission took 2,5 days with four external peers from the European Commission, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom
- One host organization (Ministry of Economic Affairs) played a dominant role, a second played a role in the background (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)
- First half day: overview (visit to Innovation Platform)
- Second day: focus on issues on science base and human resources
- Third day: focus on policies for business sector, foreign direct investment
- Group meetings of 2 hours, no presentations mainly question and answer sessions
- Afterwards each reviewer wrote a 3-5 page report
- After 4 months report was presented to Minister of Economic Affairs

The peer review process

- **Who sets the terms of reference?**
 - The host country defines the agenda
 - The expert consultant can influence the agenda also by means of the background report
 - The expertise/background of peers also has an influence
- **The choice of peer reviewers**
 - Formally a request was sent out to the CREST group
 - The deal was to have senior policy makers with an overview and genuine view on the whole policy mix
 - 'Well-connected' hosts hand-picked their peers
 - In practice later in the process the senior policy makers were less interested
 - New Member States had more difficulty in finding peers
 - Needs a good balance of expertise across the research and innovation system

Can peers handle the complete Policy Mix?

- In some cases the focus was already provided by the host country or the expert consultant (background report)
- Peers do tend to focus on what they know about
- Thus a good mix in backgrounds needed (science policy, business oriented technology policies, human resources, etc...)
- Tendency to dwell on governance issues rather than policy mix
- Impossible to get the full detailed picture of the full range of policies and how they interact
- Thus often focus on obvious blind spots

Pros and Cons of this approach

- **Pros**
 - Mutual learning: peers also bring something to the table
 - Its is voluntary: very open debates
 - In some countries the EU label gave the exercise extra weight
 - Gives an outsider perspective
- **Cons**
 - Dealing with the complete Policy Mix is quite ambitious
 - A particular host organization can dominate the agenda
 - The process needs senior policy reviewers, they are difficult to get
 - Whether it achieves something depends on the 'window-of-opportunity' at the receiving end

What was achieved?

- The large RTD countries: yet another report, thanks very much!
- EU countries where RTD was not yet high on the agenda: gave huge visibility to the exercise and to RTD as an issue
- A divided country as Belgium: brought together actors from all regions and helped to share a common view on the countries' performance
- In the Netherlands: helped bring some issues on the agenda (e.g. accountability of university research) but no-one on the receiving end of that message
- Mutual learning:
 - Innovation Voucher scheme was borrowed and copied in other countries
 - Discussions on role of tax incentive schemes

Summing up...

- A research policy wide view is feasible if well prepared and a focus on certain weaknesses in the portfolio is chosen beforehand
- Needs senior policy reviewers with a mixed background covering the various corners of R&D policy
- The feedback is at a very generic level.... “you should do more of this...”
- The concept of a CREST wide ‘examination’ did not work
- Balance between ‘critical assessment’ and ‘mutual learning’ not clear to all stakeholders
- Whether it has an impact depends on the political and policy opportunity windows available in the host country

Thank you

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