
Patterns of Innovation of Cooperation Systems

A Background

Every cooperation system, a cluster of regional economic development, a strategic alliance of providers around a common product, a policy network, should ask itself how its own innovative capacity can to be rated. This question should be answered in relation to the following four criteria:

- **Culture of innovation Do we generate a positive climate for innovative people?**
- **Strategy for innovation: Do we know what the objectives of innovation are?**
- **Resources for innovation: Do we allocate necessary resources for innovation?**
- **Structure for innovation: Does our structure enable innovation?**

To assess the four criteria, three to four items should be rated in relation to each of them. The rated values range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items listed below can of course be modified or adapted to a specific area of innovation. The results are then entered in a graphic. This produces a simple pattern of innovation (innovation diamond) that provides information on the innovative capability.

B How to proceed

Step 1: Discuss general points

When assessing the innovative capacity of a group, it is helpful in a first step to discuss the following general points in order to prepare for the more detailed rating:

- What is the culture of innovation like in the network?
- Is there a strategy for innovation?
- What resources are available for innovation?
- Are structures for innovation in place?

A general discussion of these points will usually help provide sharper focus for the subsequent assessment.

Step 2: Rate the innovative capacity

In a second step the innovative capacity of the network is assessed by rating items in four categories (see the example of a completed table below).

Criteria	Items	Rating (1 to 5)
Culture of innovation	Innovations enjoy high status within the value system of the organisation.	3
	A positive culture of mistakes is in place.	1
	There are concrete incentives to innovating thinking and action: acknowledgement, reward, promotion, etc	4
	Total	8

Criteria	Items	Rating (1 to 5)
Strategy for innovation	The thematic areas for innovation are clearly defined and communicated	5
	Performance assessment and personnel development of the seconding organisation take innovation into account.	2
	Strategic and operative teams are selected on the basis of innovative capability and heterogeneity.	4
	Total	11

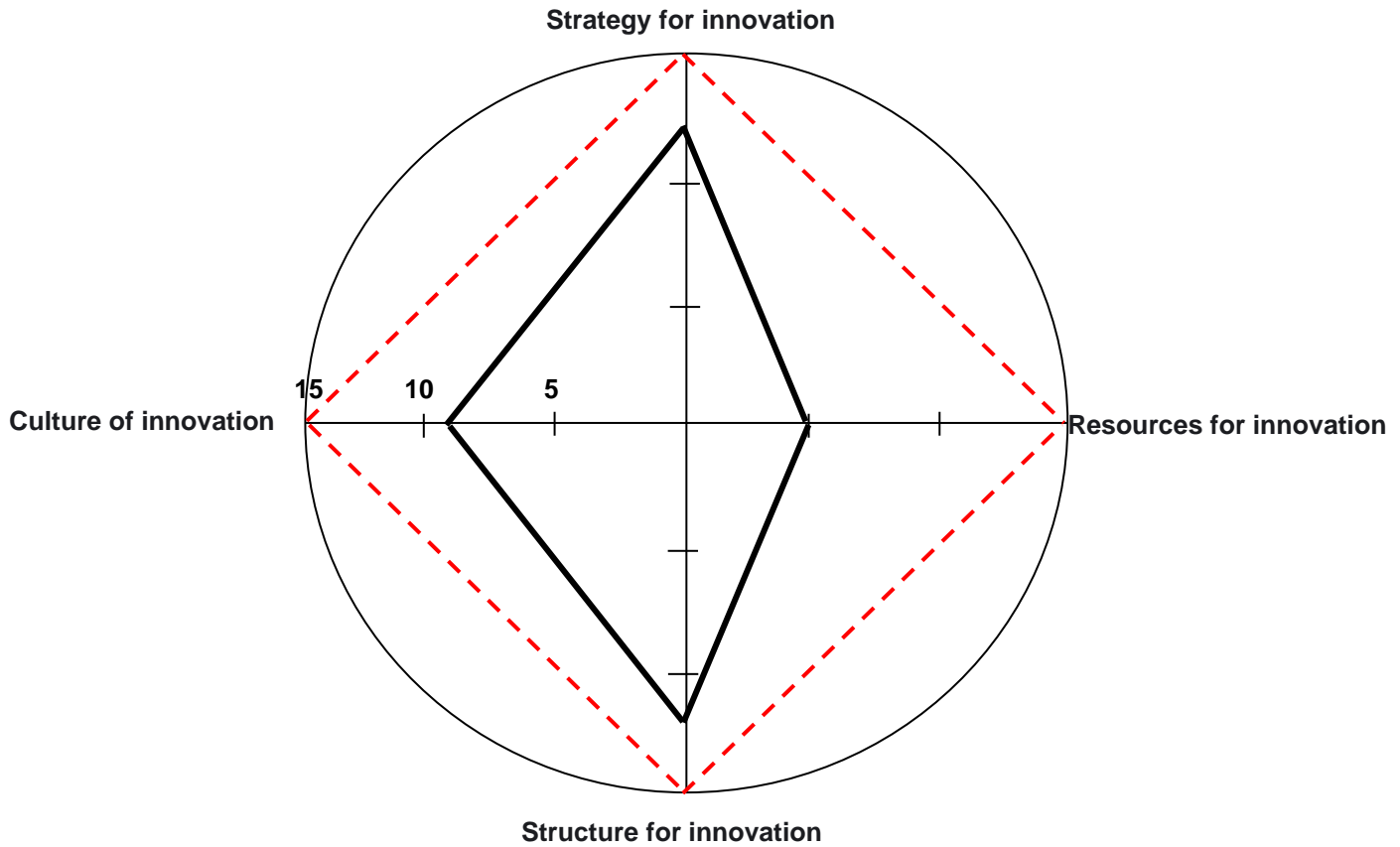
Criteria	Items	Rating (1 to 5)
Resources for innovation	Funds for innovation are a fixed component of financial planning, the allocation of funds is transparent.	0
	Further training promotes the innovative capacities of staff members/network partners.	3
	Staff has access to external expertise and can be released.	2
	Total	5

Criteria	Items	Rating (1 to 5)
Structure for innovation	Communication and coordination mechanisms are defined or innovative projects.	4
	Organisational learning is carefully promoted, there is scope for creative thinking.	4
	The experience of staff members is incorporated into innovative processes.	4
	Total	12

Step 3: Visualize and interpret results

In a next step the rated values should be entered in the diagram below, and the results interpreted. Both the IDEAL innovative capacity of the project (red dotted lines) and the ACTUAL innovative capacity of the innovation project (black unbroken lines) can then be visualised in the diagram.

Visualize the innovation pattern of cooperation system X:



Possible conclusions concerning the innovative capacity of project X:

Although the development cooperation project would like to be innovative, as manifested in the innovative aspects of its strategy and structure, insufficient resources are being made available. This might also be the reason why the culture of innovation is weak, because although the project talks about innovation, it doesn't practice it, because that would mean incurring costs. This is fatal for the partners, because innovation for them means having to make more effort, while motivation for creative thinking and action remains low.

Step 4: Define development measures

Ultimately the aim is once again to determine whether measures can be identified to further develop the innovative capacity of the network, and if so, what they would be.

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