

Interfirm Networks in the EU Framework Programme

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The paper will present findings concerning interfirm networks in the EU framework programme. It is based on a survey with Finnish participants in shared-cost activities in the Fourth EU Framework Programme for RTD. The paper will first present three additionalities of the framework programme: 1) promotion of cross-country collaboration, 2) promotion of cross-sector collaboration, and 3) promotion of complex networking. It will shortly present new data about cross-sector collaboration, which shows that companies collaborate more with universities and research centres in EU projects than their other R&D activities. The paper will, however, concentrate on the last point, which refers to interfirm networks.

The paper will introduce four types of interfirm network relationships in EU projects: horizontal, vertical, mixed and 'other'. The first, horizontal, refers to collaboration with competitors, the second, vertical, to collaboration with clients and/or subcontractors but not with competitors, the third, mixed, to collaboration with companies belonging to both the above classes, and the fourth to collaboration within a consortium that has no other firms or if it does, these do not belong to any of the afore-mentioned categories. The paper will analyse the prevalence of each category in EU collaboration by industry and programme line. One of the findings is that vertical and mixed networks were the dominant patterns, especially in the most R&D intensive areas of information technology and telecommunications. The paper will also pay attention to the additionality and strategic value of each network type and develops a new typology to analyse the incentive effect of public programmes. Mixed networks turned out to be most additional though differences were not very large. Mixed networks represented the most complex network structure and had more problems in collaboration than other company networks. The legal frame offered by the EU framework programme was especially useful for this network pattern.