

Private Sector Interaction in the Decision Making Processes of Public Research Policies

Country Profile:Croatia

1. Political, institutional and economic framework and important actors

Croatia has gone through an intense period of democratic, economic and social transition. Private Sector development and investment plays a key role in the revitalisation of the country and of its economy.

From 1999 to 2004 gross domestic expenditures on R&D (GERD) grew from 0.99% of Croatia's total GDP to 1.24%. In 2003, 56% of Croatia's R&D expenditure was funded by the Government sector. In 2004 its role declined and the contribution by the Business enterprise sector reached 52% while funds from abroad only represented 2% of the total¹.

To move towards a knowledge economy, especially the cooperation between science and industry and the involvement of the Private Sector in the National Science and Innovation System are of growing significance. However, science-industry cooperation is still in the infancy phase while investment in R&D is largely dominated by the Croatian Public Sector. As a remedy for the current weaknesses of the Croatian National Science and Innovation System, concerted actions between the Private and Public Sectors in establishing and implementing an efficient Science and Innovation System must be enhanced considerably to "put the knowledge into work".

Currently, Private Sector involvement in the scientific research decision-making process is rather weak in Croatia. The main reasons are of two different kinds: The first one involves cultural aspects deeply rooted in the country-specific historical heritage, while the second stems from purely economic reasons and the transition process towards a market economy. The cultural aspects rely upon a strong labour division between public R&D and industry R&D due to the domination of the standard research policy driven by the European tradition of academic freedom and curiosity-driven academic research.

Figure 1 depicts the main actors of the Croatian Science and Innovation System.

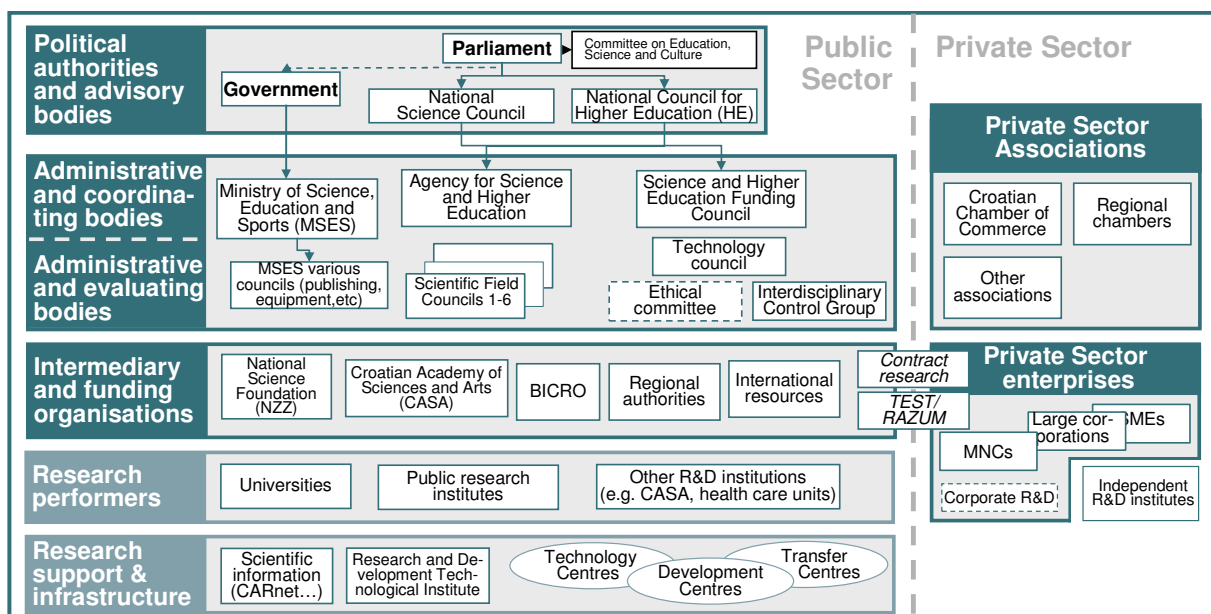


Figure 1: Research and innovation policy making and delivery structures in Croatia

¹ Source: Selected Data and Indicators for Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Science and Technology Statistics, Unesco Institute for Statistics, July 2006 and Central Bureau of Statistics, Croatia

a. Political and governmental authorities

The basic principles and guidelines of science and innovation policy are determined by the *Croatian Parliament*, which regulates these through laws and legal enactments. Policies are implemented through the *Ministry of Science, Education and Sports* as a part of the Croatian government and the leading authority for science and technology in Croatia.

The Croatian Parliament appoints the *Committee on Education, Science and Culture*, responsible for proposing legislation under the authority of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

There are two high-level advisory bodies for issues of science and higher education. The *National Science Council* is a strategic and advisory body for the general development and quality control of scientific activities in Croatia, including research projects at Higher Education institutions. Among other tasks, it monitors and evaluates the quality of scientific organisations, makes budget proposals for scientific activities and organises the evaluation of scientific projects and programs. It submits, in coordination with the *National Council for Higher Education*, the annual proposals for the allocation of budget and resources for science and higher education to the Croatian Government. The members of both committees are nominated by the Government and appointed by the Croatian Parliament. Each council consists of 13 members. The majority of these are professors or reputable scientists from public research institutes. However, three members of the Science Council come from the Private Sector (currently from the PLIVA-research Institute, the Institute of Immunology and the Holy Spirit Hospital), while only one member of the National Council for Higher Education has been chosen from a small firm.

Science, technology and innovation policies in Croatia are developed and implemented under the authority of the *Ministry of Science, Education and Sports* (MSES). According to the Act on Organisation and Scope of Ministries and other State Administrative Organisations (Official Gazette, 199/2003), MSES carries out administrative and other tasks related to the development of scientific research activity, technology development, of all levels of the education system, of sports and of scientific-technical information and communication. MSES is the pillar institution of the entire science and technology system since it creates and implements national scientific research policy and takes decisions on the amount of investments for research and research organisations. Budgetary allocation is made following the evaluation of the projects and programs/themes submitted through a public call on a competitive basis.

In addition, the *Science and Higher Education Funding Council* was established on May 25, 2005 as an expert body of the *National Science Council* and the *National Council for Higher Education*. The main aim of the *Funding Council* is to provide the *National Science Council* and *National Council for Higher Education* with the expertise and professional assistance on budget planning and expenditures. *The Funding Council* consists of fifteen members, three of them from scientific institutes, six from universities, two from polytechnic schools, two representatives from trade unions and two representatives which are appointed by the Minister.

The advisory body for the area of technology is the *Technology Council* which was established by MSES in 2001 with tasks to develop technology and innovation policy, to implement the HITRA –TEST program (technology projects), to evaluate project proposals, to propose to MSES the financial means and grants needed for each project realization and to monitor the project performance. The Technology Council consists of 13 members appointed by the Minister. Two of them are representatives of big commercial enterprises, one from a small technology-based company and one from a hospital. The remaining members come from universities and public institutes.

b. Intermediate bodies

The *Agency for Science and Higher Education* was recently established by the Croatian government (Official Gazette 101/2004) as an intermediate level of management between the state policy and the Croatian science community. The main mission of the Agency is to serve

the administrative and professional needs of the National Science Council and the National Council for Higher Education and to improve the quality of higher education and scientific system. It performs also tasks related to the creation of the National Network for Quality Assurance of Higher Education and its integration into the European Quality Assurance Network (ENIC/NARIC).

For the purposes of evaluating the project proposals and supporting related budget allocation decisions, the *National Science Council* appoints six *Scientific Field Councils*, classified by scientific fields - for natural, technical, biomedical, bio-technical, and social sciences, and the humanities. In the evaluation process, the Councils rely upon the recommendations of peer review groups. There are 45 peer review groups appointed by the Minister, classified according to the six aforementioned categories to serve the requirements of scientific councils in the process of project evaluation. Peer review groups evaluate project proposals, interim (annual) reports and final reports. They nominate evaluators for each project proposal and, based on the evaluators' grades, reach a final decision on accepting or declining a project. Projects are contracted for a period of three to five years. Principal researchers of contracted projects submit a report on their research once a year and based on the evaluation of the report, the Minister decides whether to continue project activities. Following the completion of the project, a final report is submitted, and is evaluated by the respective peer review group. The evaluation of project performance is based on the final report as well as on the reputation and personal achievements of the individual scientist determines to a large extent the acceptance of future project proposals.

The Ministry appoints different councils for evaluation and allocation of budgetary resources in different areas of scientific activities, such as: scientific publishing (books, journals, and university textbooks), scientific conferences and scientific associations.

The Interdisciplinary Control Group exercises a supervisory role over the innovation and technology policy. The Interdisciplinary Control Group was founded in order to control the overall operation of the technology infra-structural network, distribution and spending of allocated resources². It specially controls the use of public resources appropriated for the Program for Supporting Knowledge-Based Companies (RAZUM) and for technology projects (TEST). Activities of the Interdisciplinary Control Group are coordinated by MSES, and the members are representatives of the ten ministries.

The *National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia (NZZ)* is a relatively new organization, established in 2000 by the Croatian Parliament (Official Gazette, 117/00). Its foundation is of outstanding importance for supporting scientific excellence in Croatia since NZZ is the first government foundation responsible for funding scientific and developmental projects in addition to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

The *Business and Innovation Centre of Croatia (BICRO)* was established in 1996 for developing the financial systems of technology based business and is presently coordinating the RAZUM program in cooperation with technology centres.

Additional financial resources for R&D in Croatia are provided by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, regional/local authorities and international resources.

c. Research performing institutions

Scientific and research activities in Croatia are carried out within an institutional system that consists of five types of institutions: (a) public (state) institutes; (b) institutions of higher education; (c) other research legal entities like the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences and health care institutions; (d) independent commercial institutes; and (e) corporate industrial institutes. The first three types of institutions make up the state or public sectors of R&D, while the corporate in-house institutes and independent commercial institutes form the Private Sector R&D community.

² OG 108/2001

Public science institutes conduct scientific research. Their task is primarily to carry out scientific programs of strategic interest to the Republic of Croatia, and to establish, together with universities, the scientific infrastructure for the whole system of science and higher education. Research activities performed are organised either as national research projects performed by university institutions or as continuous research programs divided into the research themes performed by the research institutes.³

d. Private Sector

Private Sector research performers consist of corporate in-house institutes (e.g. PLIVA institute, Ericsson Nikola Tesla, etc.) and of independent contract-research institutes (e.g. Končar Institute for Electronics Ltd., Ship-building Institute, Tobacco Institute, etc.).

The *Croatian Chamber of Commerce* and regional *Chambers of Commerce* are more engaged in innovation activities than in R&D activities. In practice, they mainly take care about innovators and innovators' associations, their participation at international fairs, awards, etc.

Activities of industrial and production associations are mainly directed towards production and marketing of products while R&D activities are not in their focus. For example, UMIS-SMEA, the Small and Medium Entrepreneurs' Association, has taken the initiative to co-organise a two day conference "European Day of the Entrepreneur" in Zagreb in 2004, based on the EC's EDE framework⁴.

2. National research policy decision processes, Private Sector involvement and possible barriers

The legal framework for national research policy and for Private Sector involvement is provided by the following main legal acts and measurement: *Act on Scientific Research Activity*⁵ the *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher education* adopted by the Croatian Parliament on 17 July 2003 (Official Gazette, 123/03), *National Scientific Research Program* (OG 16/1996) and *Strategy of Development of the Republic of Croatia in the 21st century* – Science (OG 108/2002). The legal framework for encouraging university-business cooperation and involvement of the Private Sector in R&D is provided by the first innovation program - *Croatian Program for Innovative Technological Development* (HITRA), adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on April 5, 2001. The following acts and Government decisions create the legal framework for the implementation of the HITRA Program:

- Guidelines for the Implementation of the HITRA Program Involving the Potential for National Scientific Research, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on April 5, 2001,
- Regulation on the Procedure for the Implementation of the Program for Development of Knowledge-Based Companies, Official Gazette of the RH, No. 33/2001,
- Foundation of the Interdisciplinary Control Group for the realization of the Croatian Program for Innovative Technological Development (HITRA, Official Gazette of the RH, No. 108/2001.

Intellectual property protection (including patenting) is regulated by the Law on Patents and related laws and is under the jurisdiction of the Croatian State Intellectual Property Office (CSIPO). There is no special legislation concerning intellectual property rights within the academic community, nor for the commercialization of research results. However, there are also no restrictions in this area. The basic legal regulations covering IP, which refer primarily to the sharing of the ownership of IP rights between inventors (employees) and employers, are stipulated by the Labour Act (OG 38/95). This act gives employers the rights of appro-

³ The terminology "projects - themes" serves to define the difference between research activities at universities and institutes, there are no difference in their content.

⁴ See http://www.oecd.org/document/4/0,2340,en_2649_37429_32347588_1_1_1_37429,00.html for details

⁵ OG 96/93, 34/94, 43/96, 59/96-amended text

priation. This regulation is extended to the research area but, in principle, provides for freedom in IPR arrangements between R&D institutions and inventors/researchers as well with third parties, coming from outside the institution. There is no special tax policy to encourage Private Sector investments in R&D.

Instigation and design stages

The most frequent forms of Private Sector involvement are the preparation of different strategic documents or performing different professional and operational tasks for public administration that are not related to research policy. The involvement in preparation of strategic documents or studies usually is based on the personal reputation of eminent experts than on mutual interest of industry and government to produce a platform for common actions.

The national research policy for stronger Private Sector cooperation with the public R&D sector (state institutes and universities) as well for its increased involvement in R&D management (decision making) is formulated in the first innovation policy program - *Croatian Program for Innovative Technological Development* (HITRA). The involvement of the Private Sector in these stages of research and technology policy formulation could be currently identified primarily within the activities of the HITRA program and includes:

- involvement of enterprise representatives in supervisory boards of technology centres in order to help development of the centres and entrepreneur projects managed by the centres;
- involvement of enterprise representatives in the Technology Council (the participation of the representatives from the Private Sector in National Science Council and the National Council for Higher Education is also provided (see section 1) but their engagement is basically formal and symbolic in nature).

Other activities of the Private Sector include:

- the preparation of strategic documents like for example the Development *Strategy Croatia in 21st century- Science*, Official Gazette (108/2003). MSES has appointed a special Committee to formulate the strategic document on changing the position of science in Croatia. The Committee has been made up to follow the pattern of science-industry - government cooperation and includes two experts from a large research-intensive industrial company, one member from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, while the remaining three members represented the scientific areas of medicine, natural and social sciences.
- the organisation of conferences (e.g. PLIVA).

The HITRA program is especially targeted to encourage the commercialisation of research results in academic spheres as well as cooperation between researchers and industry. HITRA provides a framework for direct cooperation between entrepreneurs/industry and Croatian higher education and research institutions. Its strategic goal is to initiate the development of the National Science and Innovation System and includes the following long term goals:

1. Fostering cooperation between researchers and industry ;
2. Revitalisation of industrial R&D and
3. Encouraging the commercialisation of research results.

The cooperation of the research sector, including Higher Education with Private Sector businesses and entrepreneurs is organised and financed within two complementary programs that are currently aimed at the following four policy targets. The Programme *TEST* (technology projects) aims at pre-commercial development of new technologies (products, processes, services) and includes simple and complex projects. The Programme *RAZUM* – Development of Knowledge-Based Companies aims at commercial entrepreneurial projects (set-up, development and expansion of new enterprises) based on new technologies, i.e. products with higher added value. (see Table 1).

Sub-Program	Type of projects	Targets of the policy measures
TEST (pre-commercial projects)	“Simple” technology projects (TP)	Development of commercially promising products, processes and services prior to their commercial use up to the stage of original solutions (prototype/pilot stage)
	“Complex” technology projects (STIRP)	Development of multidisciplinary, cooperative research for launching new or developing existing technological areas
	Nuclei (Jezgre)	Research and technological nucleus aimed at concentration of R&D resources (experts, equipment, instruments) both from public and Private Sector to gain critical mass for technology and research based services.
RAZUM (corporate development)	Knowledge-based companies	Development of the knowledge-based companies at the start-up or expansion phase, aimed at the commercialization of research by entrepreneurial projects

Table 1: Policy measures of the Croatian innovation program HITRA

Approximately 30% of TEST projects imply some kind of cooperation or support from commercial enterprises out of which 10% are regulated by contracts and mutual agreements regarding investments, intellectual property rights and similar issues.

The institutional framework for technology development includes the following institutions as defined by the HITRA programme:

- Research and Development Technology Institute,
- Research and Development Centres,
- Technology Innovation Centres,
- Business and Innovation Centre of Croatia (BICRO).

In addition, the National Foundation for Science, Higher Education and Technological Development (NZZ) launched recently, in September 2005, a new programme *Partnership in Basic Research* to attract investments from industry and entrepreneurship to basic research in Croatia. The programme enables the establishment of collaborative research activities of public higher education institutions and scientific institutes with Private Sector partners (from the country and abroad), in the area of the NZZ strategic priorities for 2004-2008⁶. The programme supports relevant basic research that can accelerate the development of new and existing companies and attract those representatives of industry and entrepreneurship that will significantly improve economic and technological development in the Republic of Croatia. The topic is chosen independently by the researchers. The NZZ will support only those projects in which a partner institution contributes funding to the home institution that is conducting a project. The partner must ensure at least 30% of funds necessary for the conduction of the project. Evaluation of the applications is made according to the Evaluation Procedure Manual that applies for all NZZ programs.

Since the Croatian industry is currently mainly occupied with mere survival and regaining lost markets, scientific research is obviously not its priority. In the Public Sector, R&D institutions, especially universities, are still not prepared to take an active role in economic development and take part in articulating and meeting the needs of industry. Therefore, it seems that cooperation between the scientific community and the Private Sector, with some exceptions, is mainly decreasing instead of increasing.

But the importance of cooperation between science and industry, and Public Private-Partnerships (which are an important element of the European research and innovation policy) is increasingly recognised by the Croatian public administration, especially by MSES as a mechanism for accelerating innovation and the technological capacities of firms. From the mid 1990s, the MSES initiated and supported the development of several technology and

⁶ See <http://www.nzz.hr/en/strategy.php>

research centres in order to help develop technology-based businesses and to serve as a bridge between universities and business.

However, due to the lack of public support and low interest of the Private Sector, some of the centres have not successfully coped with market competition. Consequently, the Centre for Production Processes in Zagreb has closed down while the centres in Split and Dubrovnik are not fully operational. The Research and Development Technology Institute has been also established recently, but it is not fully functioning.

Implementation and assessment/revision stages

In addition to the initiatives of MSES, only the *ZAGREB Technology Park* supports technology-based business initiatives. This Park was founded at the beginning of 1994 and represents today the largest concentration of innovative Private Sector Enterprises. Other incubation centres all over Croatia are focused on the development of other fields of business.

Private Sector involvement in the implementation and assessment stages of research and technology policy in the context of the activities of the HITRA program includes:

- involvement in the evaluation of technology projects either through membership in the Technology Council or through personnel engagement of individual experts from industry in the peer-review process, selected by the Council;
- involvement in joint projects with university research institutes through cooperation on TEST (pre-commercial research) or RAZUM projects (commercial company projects). The participation of the Private Sector in TEST projects could also include co-financing of the projects by companies;

The remaining involvement of the Private Sector focuses on cooperation with the research institutes for establishing spin-off companies ("Ruđer Bošković" Institute, Institute of Physics). However, this type of Public Sector-Private Sector cooperation is more exceptional than regular.

Observations: Possible barriers and current initiatives

An important reason for the current low level of Private Sector involvement is the under-investment of Private Sector in public R&D. The low level of technological capabilities and of industrial research in Croatia resulted in rather weak ties between science and industry. It is estimated that today only about 10% of the revenues of the institutes and 6% of the university revenues come from the research contracted with the Private Sector. (Švarc et al., 1996; Radas 2003).

The economic reasons for this weak Private Sector involvement in research policy making are the low levels of the technology, the innovative and absorptive capabilities of the companies as well as their financial restrictions. During the transition process to a market economy, the industrial R&D sector was largely destroyed. The centres of high technology as well as applied research institutes at large production systems were diminishing or even closed down (e.g. Končar - Electrical institute, Prvomajska - Institute, RIZ - Institute). Some were taken over by foreign companies (Nikola Tesla - Ericsson, ATM - Siemens, Elektronkontakt - Elektrogerate, A.G.), while the remaining have suffered the difficulties of the parent companies (Jedinstvo, INAS, Geofizika, etc.). Only a few like Pliva, pharmaceutical industry or Ericsson, telecommunication industry, are now strong enough to develop in-house research. And presently, only two Private Sector enterprises in Croatia have full-fledged intellectual property departments.

3. Other important examples of policy decisions with Private Sector involvement

Technology Park Zagreb

An important example of Private Sector involvement is the establishment of the Technology Park Zagreb, Ltd. As the first technology park and entrepreneurial incubator for high technology in Croatia, it was founded in 1994 in the framework of the KONČAR concern. After the summer of 1998, it was conveyed to the City of Zagreb with the objective to stimulate entrepreneurship and private initiatives in R&D and high technology areas which are important for businesses in the City of Zagreb.

The technology park operates as an entrepreneurial incubator with more than 1300 m² of premises. It supports small businesses in the realisation of their entrepreneurial initiatives in the early phase of their development and growth. As a part of its programme, it also provides expert knowledge and links to free production capacity and office facilities as well as access to available sources of financing.

4. Overview: Types and extent of Private Sector involvement

The instruments for Private Sector involvement in research and innovation policy making and implementation are still rather weak in Croatia. There are no official platforms or institutions (e.g. technology foresight, industrial associations) that could serve for general discussions and networks between public and Private Sector of R&D. Therefore the involvement of the Private Sector in science and innovation policy is mainly informal and depends on personal contacts and networking. The main channels of influence of the Private Sector are provided through scientific and professional conferences and through preparation of the strategic documents like *Croatia in the 21st Century* or through annual reports of the Croatian Competitive Council. The Council forms the working groups (task forces) that put together experts from industry, science and public administration to produce various studies and annual reports that concern also science and research.

The most direct involvement of the Private Sector in research-related decision making is through the Technology Council of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, responsible for technology projects. Industry experts are directly involved in the evaluation of the projects through peer-review process. But the Private sector is not directly involved in decision making regarding science policy

5. Selected useful examples of transferable approaches and experiences

Croatia's national research policy and governance system is still in an early development stage. However, the following three projects are good examples of science-industry cooperation (through the implementation of common research) and of developing knowledge in the public research sector which serves companies' technology-based growth and expansion:

- *Production of extruded wheat flour*

The project *Production of extruded wheat flour* started as a TEST project of the Faculty of food technology and biotechnology, Zagreb. Its aim was to improve extruded wheat flour (corn, wheat, rye, etc.) for special kinds of flour in bakery and pasta production. The results of the project were brought to the market by the private company 'Naše klasje' (IŽ, 2004).

- *Submarine oil drilling*

The project *Submarine oil drilling* is a joint TEST project of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Zagreb and the CROSCO company, which aims to develop deep sea submarine oil drilling equipment. The semi-submersible oil rig Zagreb I was refurbished to operate under new conditions (IŽ, 2004).

- *Multimedia CD postcard*

Multimedia CD postcard is a RAZUM project aimed at supporting a company (GIDEON from Split) to develop software and marketing for multimedia CD postcards of Croatia and Dalmatia. The software was developed by the Faculty of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Split. The postcard is a commercial success and GIDEON Company has extended its activities to Italy and Great Britain. (IŽ, 2004)

These projects illustrate that involvement of Private Sector enterprises (in particular SMEs) in research and supporting programmes is a useful tool to identify research and innovation services required from universities and research institutes and to engage them in the business support system and local/regional development. (While on the other hand representatives of the business sector are involved in the evaluation of the project proposals.) For example, the project *Production of extruded wheat flour* helps a small company to expand its production and assortment while *Multimedia CD postcard* enables another small company to enter foreign markets. The third project *Submarine oil drilling* has, as estimated, a broader impact in the area of sub-marine technologies in Croatia. It helps to form a group of domestic experts, capable to compete on an international level in this area. Their future competitiveness depends strongly on the institutional set up that would enable cooperation between researchers and Private Sector companies in the area.

Appendix 1: Overview of identified instruments for Private Sector involvement and their use in Croatia

Instrument		Intensity of use	Initiated by	Used for	Used in				Examples and remarks
					Instigation	Design	Implement.	Review	
General discussion & networks	Informal contact / consultations	Occasional	Public Sector					✓	RAZUM and TEST projects
	Conferences	Occasional	Both sides		✓				PLIVA conference on knowledge management
	Discussion platforms								
	Networks								
	Staff mobility & exchange								
Awareness & influence	Ad hoc studies								
	Position papers	Occasional	Public Sector				✓		Strategy for Croatia for 21st century; annual Croatian Competitive Council reports
	Ad hoc meetings and workshops								
Advice	Formal consultations	Occasional	Public Sector					✓	RAZUM and TEST projects
	Advisory groups & committees	Occasional	Public Sector				✓		
(Co-)design & decision making	Evaluation studies	Growing	Public Sector				✓		RAZUM and TEST projects
	(Steering) committee participation								
	Board memberships	Occasional	Public Sector				✓		Technology centers
	Task force								Working group of the National Competitive Council
	(Co-)funding of research	Occasional	Both sides				✓	✓	TEST projects Programme Partnership in basic research

Table 2: Overview of instruments used for Private Sector involvement

Appendix 2: Selected relevant sources and literature

1. General, country and actor information

Chapter 1

Bajo, A., (2003), *Financing of higher education and research activities*, Institute of Public Finance, Zagreb, 2003 (in Croatian)

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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2. Further information and feedback

This country profile has been prepared by a team of IKU Innovation Research Centre under the leadership of Dr. Annámária Inzelt. For further information and feedback, please contact the responsible authors under iku@uni-corvinus.hu.