Theme 1. FTA and Innovation Systems

The year 2014 marks the 15 year anniversary of the article ‘Technology Foresight for Wiring Up the National Innovation System’ by Ben Martin and Ron Johnston on technological forecasting and social change. Until then, most foresight work had focused on the exploration of future potentials within science and technology. This article, however, placed emphasis on the role that foresight could play in enhancing the performance of innovation systems. Since 1999, the practice and the theoretical understanding of FTA for innovation policy making have undergone significant changes. It is the intention of this strand to take stock and draw some new perspectives. For this strand of the FTA conference the following developments are of particular interest.

- FTA for innovation policy making has embraced a more systemic and evolutionary understanding of innovation into its conceptual development and its applied practice, which is mirrored in the wider innovation policy literature.

- FTA has adopted bottom-up approaches for co-designing, implementing and evaluating innovation policies through entrepreneurial discovery processes. In some countries more emphasis has been put on the embedding of foresight in science, technology and innovation policy making and thus on establishing it as part of the policy cycle.

- There is a growing concern with impact assessment of FTA as a tool in innovation policies and its impact in general. Also, the wider innovation policy literature has stressed the need for evidence-based policy making.

- FTA has broadened up its interest in policies for national innovation systems to comprise related concepts such as sectoral innovation, innovation systems around emerging developments in technology, regional innovation systems and clusters. The interest in FTA and regional innovation systems is not new, but has received increasing attention in recent years, both from the wider innovation system community and from policy-making. Most recently, smart specialisation has become an important policy concept under the Europe 2020 agenda. FTAs role vis-à-vis regional innovation policies and the smart specialisation agenda are of particular interest.

Martin and Johnston’s article took its theoretical departure from the much larger and wider literature on technology and innovation policy. This literature has also developed significantly since 1999. However, there is still a vast potential for FTA to draw from and contribute to the larger literature on innovation studies, industrial dynamics and technology & innovation policy. A distinction needs to be made between two main ways in which FTA is linked to innovation policy. On the one hand, there is FTA for innovation policy, relating to its advisory and strategic function, where FTA serves as a tool to inform and develop policies. FTA as a policy instrument relates to its role in serving the implementation of budgetary, structural or cultural changes in the domains of science, technology, and

\[1\] Smart Specialisation is a strategic approach to economic development through targeted support to Research and Innovation (R&I). It will be the basis for European Structural and Investment Fund interventions in R&I as part of the future Regional and Cohesion Policy's contribution to the Europe 2020 jobs and growth agenda. More information available at http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/
innovation policy. On the other hand, FTA can focus on both the demand and supply side of innovation, including FTA related to capacities, competencies and skills, as well as innovative public procurement.

Since 1999, several studies have emerged exploring the conceptual interconnection between foresight and wider innovation literature. These studies, however, often focus on how foresight can contribute to innovation system policies, with FTA being regarded as one among a range of other systemic policy instruments. There is a need for better understanding of how FTA experts can influence innovation systems and how recent developments in innovation literature can contribute to the practice and theoretical underpinning of FTA.

We invite both theory-oriented and practice-based contributions for this strand. Contributions could comprise:

- Review papers and conceptual papers on how recent development in the wider innovation literature can contribute to the practice of FTA in the public sector as well as in a business or corporate setting.

- Practice-based papers on individual cases of FTA for shaping national innovation systems, sectoral innovation systems, regional innovation systems, clusters, innovation eco-systems, smart specialisation, etc.

- Synthesis papers on multiple cases of FTA for innovation systems.

- Papers on individual cases of applying FTA for entrepreneurial discovery processes in design, implementation or evaluation of innovation policies.

- Papers dealing with the impact of FTA at all levels including at system level – or particular interest are papers dealing with empirical evidence.

- Papers addressing approaches to achieve the institutional embedding of FTA in systemic science, technology and innovation policies, as well as in the corporate or business context.