

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR FOR INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

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Abstract

Background. Innovation partnerships need to be established between public, private and social organisations, hence their nature, scope, and operating conditions should be understood. In discussing this, the following issues were outlined: essence and scope of innovation partnerships in the activities of public organisations; innovation policies and programmes as the determinants of innovation partnerships; and implementation tools for innovation partnerships.

Research aim. To demonstrate that nowadays cooperation for innovation is needed among various organisations, yet the fundamental role in this respect is played by public organisations.

Methodology. The study was prepared based on the relevant literature, documents on the European Union and Polish (including Mazovian) development programmes and the author's own reflections. The foundation for drawing it up were data processing methods, i.e. analysis and synthesis, and logical inference methods, in particular induction.

Key findings. The analysis shows that the basis of innovative activities in Poland are guidelines and programmes prepared in the European Union and support (also financial support) for their implementation. Innovative activities are undertaken in all areas and regard not only technological, but also social and environmental issues. An extensive and varied range of innovative activities requires innovative activities to be conducted jointly by various types of organisations but when publicly supported, innovation partnerships should be coordinated by public organisations.

Keywords: organisations, innovation, partnership, policy, strategies, partnership goals, partnership support tools.

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation and innovativeness are being more and more frequently discussed as sources of economic development and improvement of social and economic conditions. Such an approach is adopted in the European Union countries, where public support for research and innovation is assumed to potentially contribute to boosting innovation and competitiveness of the economy, changing the methods of environment use and production resources management, and improving health and quality of life. These issues are contemporary challenges that public organisations strive to meet by preparing strategies and programmes of changes but also by establishing cooperation in this field with private and social organisations. Such cooperation covers implementation and dissemination of new production and environment use methods, operating procedures of public organisations, new consumption patterns, etc.

Given the complexity of the issues discussed herein, an attempt was made to define the essence, scope, and determinants of innovation partnerships as well as to indicate their importance to the society, environment, and economy. The aim of the study was to demonstrate that nowadays cooperation for innovation is needed among various organisations, yet the fundamental role in this respect is played by public organisations (keeping in mind, for example, the need to protect the environment). Its purpose is primarily cognitive, i.e. to determine the essence and conditions of innovation partnerships, but also applicative – to indicate the need for such partnerships and tools for their implementation.

In line with its aim, this study covers the following points: essence and scope of innovation partnerships in the activities of public organisations; innovation policies and programmes as conditions of innovation partnerships; and implementation tools for innovation partnerships. It was prepared based on the relevant literature, documents on the European Union and Polish (including Mazovian) development programmes, discussions on this topic, and the author's own reflections. The methods employed included primarily data processing methods, i.e. analysis and synthesis, and logical inference methods, in particular induction.

ESSENCE AND SCOPE OF INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS' ACTIVITIES

An organisation is a special-purpose and open system that works relying on resources possessed and conditions defined by the internal and external operating environment. Public organisations pursue a variety of objectives depending on the location and scope of their activities. One of their objectives is to disseminate innovation in different ways according to the nature of a given objective. Innovation may be a goal in its own right or a tool to achieve other goals. A goal in its own right may be to implement new organisational solutions in a public organisation or disseminate certain innovative products. Most often, however, the issue of innovation arises in public organisations when they strive to attain other goals resulting from programmes and socio-economic, environmental policies, etc. Examples of such activities include actions for dissemination of innovations that protect the natural environment and promote green economy or actions related to innovation in occupational safety, food safety, healthy lifestyle, etc. Regardless of whether innovation is the goal in its own right or a tool to achieve other goals, a public organisation, nonetheless, faces a challenge: should it strive for innovation and to what extent, how should it disseminate innovation and what tools should it use to this end, who is expected to meet these challenges, etc.?

Innovative actions in public organisations can address all their objectives and tasks. In practice, however, given the available resources and time needed to fulfil their commitments, such actions are limited to the most important issues that need to be solved. This choice depends on the operating environment of a public organisation and its internal and external stakeholders. It should be emphasised that the distinction between internal and external stakeholders of public organisations is often blurred since they may play both roles simultaneously or their importance changes over the years. Therefore, conflicts may arise both when certain innovation goals and tasks are being chosen in public organisations and when these are being accomplished. This means that special attention should be given to socialising such decisions and resorting to a variety of stakeholders

and their cooperation throughout the innovation process as far as possible (cf. Wiatrak, 2011, pp. 11–22; Wise, Paton & Gegenhuber, 2012, pp. 252–258). A public organisation undertaking innovative actions shows that it strives for and is concerned about the intensification and effectiveness of public service provision and improvement of living and working conditions of the society (cf. Wodecka-Hyjek, 2015, pp. 92–99).

Table 1. Examples of the range of innovative activities within public organisations and in their sphere of influence

Type of innovation	Innovation	
	within a public organisation	in a public organisation's sphere of influence
process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – changes in the services provided by a public organisation, – new or significantly improved operating methods that define the functioning of a public organisation and accomplishment of its objectives and tasks; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promoting implementation of new or significantly improved methods of environment use and environmental assets exploitation, – promoting implementation of new or significantly improved production methods and services and methods of their provision;
product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – new or significantly improved existing products and services of a public organisation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promoting the marketing of new products and services or significantly improving the existing ones;
organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – applying new work organisation and management methods in public organisations, – changes in stakeholder relations in a public organisation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – disseminating new work organisation and management methods in organisations, – affecting changes in stakeholder relations;
marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – disseminating information about operations of a public organisation, changes introduced, new services, opening up to stakeholders, etc., – cooperation with other, including public, organisations in this regard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – popularising process, product, and organisational innovation activities, – promoting new consumption patterns, product applications, leisure activities, healthy lifestyle, etc.

Source: elaborated by the author.

In view of the presented conditions, in particular a wide range of innovative activities pursued by public organisations and their many stakeholders, and given generally limited resources for these purposes, stakeholders need to establish a partnership to specify the directions and scope of activities and to implement them. An essential role in

agreeing and coordinating these aspects in their preparation and implementation stages is played by public organisations that define their own involvement and contribution as well as tools for exerting influence during implementation of innovative projects. The range of activities varies among public organisations and is different as regards their social impact, as shown in Table 1.

As far as a public organisation's sphere of influence is concerned, an innovation partnership promotes creation of innovation networks with an established goal (or goals) (e.g. to develop or implement innovations in food processing), scope and ways to support implementation, etc. "A network is a group of multiple related actors who represent: customers, competitors, suppliers, research organisations, educational institutions, etc. Innovations are now a result of such complex relationships among various actors stimulating one another, which is based on the belief that today the success of innovative activities is conditioned by the ability to gain and use knowledge from all available sources" (Bogdanienko, 2016, p. 24). Therefore, what is vital is coordinating this cooperation and creating conditions for the development and implementation of innovative solutions. Such a role may be played by public organisations that already exist or are set up specifically for that purposes. It should be noted that membership of an innovation network supported by public organisations entails various benefits such as (cf. Koziół-Nadolna, 2013, p. 126; Wyrzykowska, 2016, pp. 170–171):

- organisational, marketing, educational, financial, etc., support for innovative activities;
- facilitated access to funds for innovative activities;
- reduced information asymmetry;
- learning processes leading to more innovative ideas and solutions and technology transfer;
- distribution of costs of innovation activities among cooperating organisations;
- risk sharing in innovative activities;
- synergies – as a result of joint innovative activities in various stages of their development and implementation.

INNOVATIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES AS DETERMINANTS OF INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Socio-economic policy of a country and related implementation programmes set the directions and range of innovative activities undertaken by public organisations. It should be highlighted that in the European Union countries these are based on guidelines, directives, and consecutive financial perspectives which emphasise the importance of knowledge and innovation in the socio-economic development. *EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* specifies the basis for the development of the EU economy as increasing its innovation and creating a single innovation market (EU, 2010a, pp. 11–22). One of its flagship initiatives defining the realisation of these plans is the Innovation Union. In order to achieve it, the following is needed, in particular (EU, 2010b, pp. 2–3):

- investing in education, R&D, and innovation;
- enhancing cooperation between the world of science and the world of business, so that research fosters development and implementation of innovations, including social innovations;
- understanding the concept of public sector innovation, searching for and promoting successful initiatives in this regard and measuring progress in their implementation;
- attracting private sector investments to implement these innovations, with the support from the European Investment Bank.

Implementation of these actions should be facilitated by European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) launched “... to accelerate research, development and market deployment of innovations to tackle major societal challenges, pool expertise and resources and boost the competitiveness of EU industry” (EU, 2010a, p. 12 and EU, 2010b, p. 3). EIP is a tool to promote development and innovation through cooperation of various public, social and private actors undertaken to counteract the negative effects of the so-called global societal challenges such as climate change, scarcity of raw materials, demographic changes, etc. Priority areas to be supported include important socio-economic issues, in particular (Ministerstwo, 2015):

- active ageing and independent living;
- availability of raw materials for the future prosperity of Europe;
- productive and sustainable agriculture;
- efficient water management.

These actions indicate that partnerships should be established to implement various types of innovative programmes and projects that are the foundation for national, regional, and local policies supplemented by their own priorities resulting from the development needs and financial capacities. At the national level in Poland, such actions are defined in different programmes and documents, in particular the *Strategy on Innovation and Efficiency of the Economy “Dynamic Poland 2020”* implemented in line with the following:

1. *Vision*, formulated as: “Open and expansive economy with new jobs on the offer, based on mutual trust and cooperation of the economic life participants, and growing in a sustainable manner based on innovations and highly efficient use of resources, which will ensure improvement of living standards of society and competitiveness of enterprises on the international arena by 2020” (Ministerstwo, 2013, p. 51).
2. *Mission* (the main goal), defined as: “Highly competitive (innovative and efficient) economy, based on knowledge and cooperation” (Ministerstwo, 2013, p. 52).
3. *Horizontal rules* such as (Ministerstwo, 2013, pp. 52–60):
 - creating knowledge – through research, increased investments in human capital, establishing conditions for continuous search of new solutions in the economy, society, and environment, thereby increasing management efficiency, with better satisfaction of socio-economic needs and prudent use of natural resources;
 - *partnership cooperation* – based on trust and social capital, including cooperation of public, social and private (business) organisations, which promotes the discovery of intelligent specialisations in a given area;
 - *social dialogue* – covering a discussion on the principles of socio-economic policy development and efficient communication on public policy, thus reducing social conflicts;
 - *effective allocation of resources/closed loop management* – through production resource efficiency, loss reduction, measures aimed at building a sustainable and low-carbon economy, while maintaining protection and sustainable use of biodiversity;
 - *strategic management/responsible leadership* – based on long-term thinking, including long-term goals for the development

of a given community (the country, region, municipality, enterprise) and their attainment plans that take into account social responsibility in their implementation.

4. *Specific objectives* such as (Ministerstwo, 2013, p. 56):
 - adjustment of the regulatory and financial environment to the needs of innovative and efficient economy;
 - stimulating innovation through increase in knowledge and labour efficiency;
 - increased natural resources and raw materials efficiency;
 - increased internationalisation of the Polish economy.

The programmes described clearly indicate the range of innovative activities pursued by public organisations at the national level, but lower levels where these activities are made more specific must also be taken into account, along with a number of new actions and challenges that are a consequence of regional and local development programmes and their conditions.

TOOLS FOR INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of innovation partnerships by public organisations requires development of supporting tools, including preferential tools. Various instruments are used to do this, with the elementary ones including:

- regional and local development strategies and related programmes and projects;
- institutional support;
- financial support;
- public partnerships with social and private organisations.

Regional and local development strategies define the orientations of their operations and ways of achieving the targets set. They are prepared based on agreed solutions to development problems of a particular area by means of existing and obtainable resources (e.g. through implementation of specific EU programmes) and on existing strategies and programmes at the national and international levels. A development strategy directs actions the implementation of which helps to (Brodziński, 2011, p. 65; Kot, 2003, pp. 157–158):

- reveal the hierarchy of interests of regional and local communities;

- eliminate or mitigate social, economic, environmental, etc., conflicts and problems in a given area;
- find a solution to an unfavourable situation of an area;
- launch development and innovative processes in an area and change its functional structure;
- mobilise internal funds to develop an area or obtain external funding for this purpose;
- encourage investors to invest in an area and to innovate.

Thus, the innovative character of regional and local strategies derives from their very nature as the directions of change and development are manifestations of innovativeness, including a desired activity to be developed by public, social, and business organisations. When considering the innovative character of regional and local development strategies, they should be understood broadly as both searching for change and opening up to new ideas on the one hand and introducing specific innovations on the other (Mazowsze, 2015, p. 4). Strategy provisions mean opening up to the introduction of various types of innovations – from technological to organisational and marketing innovations that are also process and product innovations at the same time (cf. OECD, 2005, pp. 47–52; Hartley, 2005, pp. 28–29). Regardless of the type of innovations implemented, their application, nevertheless, contributes to a change in the existing socio-economic structure.

Innovativeness, and particularly innovation, is a tool to change this structure. Therefore, in addition to regional development strategies, Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) are also prepared that form comprehensive visions of the objectives and activities to support innovation processes in regions, creation of regional innovation systems and integration of socio-economic environments with a view to implementing such systems. They address the issues of innovation more broadly since they are an essential tool for regional innovation policy implementation (Krawczyk-Sokołowska, 2012, p. 107 et seqq.; Nowakowska, 2007, pp. 203–210), as can be seen by analysing development strategies and innovation strategies of Polish provinces.

The vision outlined in the *Development Strategy for Mazovia Region until 2030* includes the following statement: “Mazovia is a region characterised by territorial cohesion, competitiveness, innovativeness, rapid economic growth, and high quality of life” (Mazowsze,

2013, p. 2). The mission (main goal) is specified as follows: “Reducing socio-economic disparities within the Mazovian region, increasing the role of the Warsaw metropolitan area in Europe” (Mazowsze, 2013, p. 2). The following strategic goals are associated with the vision and mission for Mazovia:

- “development of export-oriented production in the fields of medium and high-tech technology and the agri-food sector”;
- “increasing the region’s competitiveness via development of economic activity and transfer and implementation of new technologies”;
- “improving accessibility and territorial cohesion, implementing orderly spatial development”;
- “ensuring a diversified supply of energy and sustainable use of natural resources”;
- “improving the quality of life and building a modern economy through making better use of human and social capital”;
- “making use of the cultural potential, cultural heritage, and environmental assets to enhance economic development and improve the quality of life”(Mazowsze, 2013, p. 2).

The first objective is considered the priority the achievement of which requires actions such as creating conditions that are friendly to investors and entrepreneurs and foster generating and absorbing innovations. Other goals are also (directly or indirectly) related to innovation since they concern new technologies and energy sources, modern economy, economic and spatial development, etc. These innovation issues are more extensively presented in the *Regional Innovation Strategy by 2020*, starting with its vision formulated as follows:

- “a strategic centre for research and development and business services with a European dimension,
- a region marked by a high level of innovation and highly networked economy integrated around defined areas of smart specialisation,
- a source of good practices in social innovation” (Mazowsze, 2015, p. 23).

The vision is accompanied by the main goal (mission) as follows: “Increasingly innovative Mazovian enterprises, leading to accelerated growth and competitiveness in the EU” (Mazowsze, 2015, p. 25). Implementation of the vision and mission is supported by strategic goals closely linked with innovation issues in the Development Strategy for Mazovia Region, namely:

1. “Increasing and strengthening cooperation in the processes of innovation and innovativeness development;
2. Greater internationalisation focused on the development of Mazovia’s innovativeness;
3. Increased efficiency of support and funding for pro-innovative activities in the region;
4. Developing and promoting pro-innovative and pro-entrepreneurial attitudes conducive to creativity and cooperation;
5. Developing an information society” (Mazowsze 2015, p. 26).

Innovations and their dissemination are also addressed by local Mazovian strategies. *The Local Development Plan for Piaseczno District* sets forth “knowledge- and innovation-based economic development” as one of its strategic goals to be achieved through:

- “Creating investment incentives for high-tech companies;
- Promoting the District as an attractive place for investments;
- Supporting the operation and further development of producer groups” (Powiat, 2013, p. 124).

The above strategies, programmes, goals, and related tasks indicate that development is currently based on implementing and creating conditions for innovations. At the same time, it is pointed out that cooperation in this field is needed among various organisations including those specifically established for this purpose. Therefore, a significant role is played by “institutional support for innovation partnerships” through (cf. Olesiński, 2010, pp. 37–50 and 97–115):

- facilitating the establishment and functioning of (central government, regional and local government and non-government) institutions oriented towards creating a foundation for the development and operation of a given area;
- conducting or supporting research and preparing different expert studies that promote the development of a given area, the use of regional and local resources, the introduction of certain technologies (e.g. environment-compatible, etc.);
- creating development incubators that facilitate the development of investment projects;
- establishing technological and business parks;
- creating development zones (tourism, industry, etc.);
- marketing and informational activities concerning a given area and innovative activities undertaken (such as promotion, publishing a folder, catalogue, etc.);

- providing training and vocational retraining for the population;
- advising on possible actions, activities and conditions for pursuing them, etc.

Institutional support is varied, e.g. promoting Mazovia's innovative potential, supporting SME innovation, supporting commercialisation of innovations, etc., and educational and marketing support in this regard. Such support may be exemplified by Agricultural Advisory Centres which, inter alia, focus on changes in agricultural and non-agricultural management practices in rural areas, implementation of innovations, etc.

The wide and diverse range of innovative activities and tasks of public organisations requires financial resources for implementation and involvement of various types of organisations. This means that a system of incentives to engage in innovation needs to be established. *Innovation partnerships* may be supported financially through the following actions (cf. Olesiński, 2010, pp. 58–72):

- facilities in economic instruments – tax credits, preferential loans, purchase of means of production or land at lower prices, etc. – for entities conducting innovative activity consistent with implementation programmes adopted by the public sector;
- encouraging the establishment and operations of financial guarantee and credit counter-guarantee funds for credit institutions, mutual societies and non-bank financial institutions, etc., that support actions for innovation and innovativeness;
- financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises implementing new technological solutions, including creation of venture capital.

Many innovation-related goals and tasks are accomplished by public organisations through cooperation with private and social organisations that, following competitions and contracts, are to pursue them under public partnerships. When establishing cooperation with other entities, public organisations should be well prepared, starting from the preparation of innovation partnership strategies and programmes, setting goals and standards for implemented innovations, assessment of such cooperation, etc. (Sorrensen & Torfing, 2012, pp. 7–11).

Financial support for innovations, whether direct or under a public-private partnership, requires an assessment of its efficiency and desirability. The reason is a very large scale of public funding for investment activities of medium-sized and large enterprises, and hence for innovative activity. Public support is used by: 85% of these

companies for investments, 69% – for research and development, 15% – for operations in special economic zones and 8% of them benefit from tax credits for new technologies (Romanowska, 2016, p. 31). It should be emphasised that direct financing of innovation usually affects the flow of knowledge and learning, cooperation with other organisations, increases innovativeness, leads to the development of the innovation infrastructure and culture, etc., but not always. Everything depends on the coordination of individual innovation support tools and a systemic approach to their use. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the fact that innovation infrastructure financed and supported by public organisations encourages pro-innovation behaviour only when companies have creative and entrepreneurial staff, particularly managers (Romanowska, 2015, pp. 6–7). Hence, there is a need for stimulating the labour force and creating human capital simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The observations herein suggest, *inter alia*, that:

1. The basis of innovative activities in Poland are guidelines and programmes prepared in the European Union and support (also financial support) for their implementation.
2. Innovative activities are undertaken in all areas and regard not only technological issues in the economy but also in the social and environmental spheres, addressing social and environmental aspects of the economy as well.
3. Increased social and environmental innovations are observed.
4. An extensive and varied range of innovative activities requires innovative activities to be conducted jointly by various types of organisations, but when publicly supported, innovation partnerships should be coordinated by public organisations.
5. EU guidelines on innovation partnerships are transposed to Polish national programmes that form the basis for such programmes at the regional and local levels.
6. Development strategies and related programmes at the national, regional, and local levels are the main tool for the preparation and implementation of innovation partnerships, whereas other tools – especially institutional support and public-private partnerships – are less important.

7. Strategies and related programmes play a dominant role in preparing innovation partnerships since their implementation is connected with receiving financial support.
8. There is no systemic approach to the preparation of innovation partnerships that takes into account various factors ranging from preparation of staff and their involvement in the innovation process, through linking various types of innovation, to rules of cooperation in a partnership.
9. In Poland, universities and research institutes are still only slightly involved in innovation partnerships.
10. Likewise, in Poland, innovations in the management of public organisations are of little importance, which further inhibits innovation implementation and the functioning of innovation partnerships.

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ROLA ORGANIZACJI PUBLICZNYCH W REALIZACJI PARTNERSTWA NA RZECZ INNOWACJI

Abstrakt

Tło badań. Założono, że istnieje potrzeba istnienia partnerstwa na rzecz innowacji, zawiązywanego między organizacjami publicznymi, prywatnymi i społecznymi, a wraz z tym poznania istoty, zakresu i uwarunkowań jego funkcjonowania. Omawiając tę problematykę, ukazano kolejno następujące zagadnienia: istotę i zakres partnerstwa dla innowacji w działaniach organizacji publicznych, politykę i programy innowacyjne jako wyznaczniki partnerstwa innowacyjnego oraz narzędzia wdrażania partnerstwa innowacyjnego.

Cel badań. Wykazanie, że współcześnie istnieje potrzeba współpracy na rzecz innowacji przez różne organizacje, ale podstawową funkcję w tym zakresie spełniają organizacje publiczne.

Metodologia. Opracowanie zostało przygotowane na podstawie literatury przedmiotu, dokumentów programów rozwojowych Unii Europejskiej i Polski (w tym Mazowsza) oraz własnych przemyśleń autora. Podstawą wykonania były metody przetwarzania danych, tj. analiza i synteza oraz metody wnioskowania logicznego, a zwłaszcza indukcja.

Kluczowe wnioski. Przeprowadzona analiza wskazuje, że podstawą działań innowacyjnych w Polsce są wytyczne i programy przygotowywane w Unii Europejskiej oraz wsparcie (w tym finansowe) kierowane dla ich realizacji. Działania innowacyjne dotyczą wszystkich sfer, nie tylko zagadnień technologicznych, ale także społecznych i środowiskowych. Duży i zróżnicowany zakres działań innowacyjnych wymaga, aby działania innowacyjne były prowadzone wspólnie przez różne rodzaje organizacji, ale przy wsparciu publicznym. Partnerstwo na rzecz innowacji powinno być koordynowane przez organizacje publiczne.

Słowa kluczowe: organizacje, innowacje, partnerstwo, polityka, strategie, cele działania partnerstwa, narzędzia wspomagania partnerstwa.