

Press Release

Vienna, 25 February 2021

AIT ADVISES GERMAN GOVERNMENT ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION POLICY

Report of the Expert Commission on Research and Innovation, which is based on an AIT study, handed over to Chancellor Merkel

Yesterday, 24 February, the annual expert report on research and innovation was handed over to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. One of the foci this year was the so-called "Agile Research and Innovation Policy" (R&I Policy). The paper includes substantial parts of a background study led by the AIT Center for Innovation Systems & Policy and was conducted together with the FU Berlin. The agility concept shows ways in which the policy could be much more flexible and responsive to current challenges such as digitalization or the COVID crisis.

Why there is a need for an "agile" research and innovation policy

We are facing major challenges such as the advancement of digitalization, climate change or social injustice. "We can only cope with all of this if there is a policy in place that responds quickly and flexibly to changing demands from society and the economy, without losing sight of long-term goals. This is the only way we can prepare the basis for far-reaching change processes," says study author and Head of AIT Center for Innovation Systems & Policy Matthias Weber. So far, however, we have been lacking a comprehensive and implementable concept for this.

A concept with strategies and concrete recommendations for action

One focus of the report by the Expert Commission on Research and Innovation, which was presented to German Chancellor Merkel on Wednesday, is the concept for agile research and innovation policy developed by the AIT. The concept distinguishes between several levels of agile action, ranging from goal definition and strategy to specific options for action and their implementation.

Case studies show how it can be done and what is still needed

The applicability of the concept and its operationalization were demonstrated using three extensive pilot projects from Germany:

- **R&I policy responses to the Corona crisis:** in the medical epidemiological field, research activities could be set up quickly due to existing contingency plans. However, structural changes in the R&I system are needed to make it more robust and adaptable to future crises.
- **Development of the German electricity market in the energy transition:** The case study shows how important it is to involve all stakeholders in order to establish broad support for strategic directional decisions, while also providing options for potential losers in the future.

- **SME innovation support:** In order to counteract declining innovation activities, new support instruments have been developed over several decades, or existing ones have been adapted to new target groups and needs for action. Continuous learning and adaptation processes were important for this.

In addition, 10 international case studies were examined, which provided a number of interesting clues on agile R&I policy practices. "We could see that there are several levers to make the policy system more agile: for example, involving as many stakeholders as possible in the decision-making process at an early stage of the process, creating spaces for experimentation, or establishing higher-level coordination and decision-making functions across several ministries. However, a basic prerequisite for agility in the tension between stability and flexibility is the willingness to learn and change," says Matthias Weber.

About the study

The study "Agility in R&I Policy: Concept, Definition, Operationalization" was issued by the AIT on behalf of the Expert Commission on Research and Innovation and is [available online](#).

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