



# PRIME FORUM Research

Co-directed by

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## General objectives

The overall objective of this project is to contribute to a better understanding of the discursive structures, processes and dynamics that unfold in and shape R&D policy-making. These discursive structures are labelled 'fora' and defined as *'institutionalised spaces specifically designed for pre-political deliberation or other interaction between heterogeneous actors with the purpose of informing and conditioning the form and direction of strategic social choices in the governance of science and technology'*.

The project focuses on the *role of analysts and of analysis* (strategic intelligence) in such pre-political environments of interaction:

The project develops a uniform template to characterise fora, collects and analysis a set of 13 concrete fora, and draws general conclusions as for the role of fora in the governance of science and technology. In addition to this analytical task, the project also sets up a pilot application of a Forum Thesaurus that may be used in the future to take stock of existing Forum-type activities in a more comprehensive manner –to be used as database as well as analytical tool. For this Thesaurus, a handbook for future users is produced.

Finally, the project shall derive lessons for the PRIME community as regards the setting up of Fora in the future.

## Current state of the project

The project has started in January 2005 and runs until January 2006. It could built upon conceptual work done in the preparatory phase in the first Prime year. On that basis, the project team has worked intensively to design the uniform template to describe and analyze Fora.

In parallel, the project team has collected *13 cases* of Fora from different countries and issue areas and with very different governance function, organizational structures and processes. For 11 cases the template was completed by mid of December. Major events have been two internal project

workshops, one in Karlsruhe, one in Paris. In December, a first draft of a *final conceptual paper* has been produced. This paper will be finalized in a co-operative manner by end of January. Likewise, the *final template* has been constructed to be set up in the internet, *the pilot application* will run early January. The internet version will be available early January. Finally, the *user handbook* has been drafted, a final editing process is running end of December, first half of January.

### **Main Themes and Outcomes**

The major theme is to understand how Forum function, *what governance function they fulfil*, and what role Strategic Intelligence (SI) and the providers of SI play. The analysis of cases has shown a high variety of Fora. However, a preliminary typology of Fora along the governance function they serve could be defined (still subject to revision). Fora thus are set up to contribute to ...

- ✓ general, non-directed policy discourse (ad hoc agendas)
- ✓ policy planning and development (visions, agenda, implementation)
- ✓ conflict resolution / consensus building
- ✓ policy information on specific issues
- ✓ improvement of intelligence provision and application

A second major issue is *the role of Strategic Intelligence* in these Fora, which *differs enormously*. There are instances in which SI providers follow their own agenda (*intelligence entrepreneurs*), i.e. the Forum itself deals with the application and improvement of SI methodology in policy-making. In other Fora SI providers *facilitate* a complex interaction and discourse using their expert methodologies, while sometimes SI providers *insert* – like other experts – their *issue and background knowledge*, thus informing the discourse with expert knowledge.

To apply such a perspective focussing on governance and role of SI sharpens our view to understand Fora. Especially, it enables us to derive good practice lessons for specific Fora purposes and SI roles in a last analytical step of the project. This will be the basis of recommendations for the PRIME community.

As regards technical application of a Thesaurus, the template that has been designed has stood the test of our pilot application well. Moreover, it provides a possibility for a future application in searching for Fora in a very sophisticated way, enabling the combination of criteria and thus a very individual search. With the 15 page handbook the Forum activity within Prime may easily transferred to other contexts.

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