



# WIOP

*Workshop Intermediaries Organisation and Processes*

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## Objectives

1. To organise a workshop to elaborate and develop a comparative framework for understanding the role, functioning and development of intermediary organisations.
2. To edit a publication based upon the contributions at the workshop.

## Current state of the project

A workshop has been held October 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> 2005 in Enschede, The Netherlands, which shows that in order to understand intermediary organisations it is more effective to focus on likewise organisations.

As a category sui generis the io's display too much variety to be captured by one conceptual framework.

Currently a workshop report has been finished and the organizers assess the possibilities of a publication.

## Main themes and Outcomes

The workshop focussed on three main questions and issues:

1. Understanding the notion of intermediation and its different forms in relation to the governance of science and technology as well as in relation to organisation of research.
2. Dynamics of intermediary processes and their effects on the dynamics of research systems: (a) allocation of resources; (b) priority setting and strategy development; (c) communication between and aggregation of actors

3. Changes of existing intermediary organisations and new intermediary organisations. What kind of institutional changes have occurred and occur within the existing intermediary organizations as a result of new tasks put upon them by governments, as a result of the emergence of new fields of research and as a result of other external pressures, like New Public Management, budget restrictions and the emergence of the European Research Area.

## Conclusions

In a way of conclusions, we present three reflections on the position paper:

1. The position paper gives a structural definition of intermediary organisations. Though as a first step this allows to take into account different configurations, it also obstruct good comparisons between similar intermediary bodies. Instead of trying to understand intermediary bodies as a category sui generis, it seems more fruitful for further research to delineate the kind of intermediary organisations along one or two of the axes of the comparative framework set out in the position paper.

2. The structural definition of intermediary organisations is definitely insufficient to capture their role in research and innovation systems. Often intermediary processes are more important to understand the organisation than their formal structural position. In other words, it are the processes that create the de facto intermediary character.

3. The position paper gave a first model for the emergence, development and change of intermediary bodies. This models can and needs to be refined in several ways. However the original model did not take into account processes like inter-organisational learning and institutional mimesis, that may make actual differences between organisations less prone than the organisational differences suggest. Moreover the model forgets about the political contingencies which may induce changes. Because of the resource dependency towards the political level, intermediary bodies cannot easily avoid such contingencies even if they are well established.

Thirdly more attention should be paid to the internal capacities of intermediary organisations to change, and to de facto changes as a result of failures and successes to fill in the intermediary function. These failures and successes can steer the further evolution of the organisation.