

**DIRECTORATE FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION  
COMMITTEE FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL POLICY**

**Working Party on Innovation and Technology Policy**

**What role for Research & Technology Organisations in supporting sustainable transitions?**

**Agenda for a virtual workshop on 19 November 2021**

This workshop is jointly prepared by the Working Party on Innovation and Technology Policy (TIP) and the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO). It aims to gather policy makers and decision makers in Research and Technology Organisations (RTO) to discuss the contribution of the latter to solving societal challenges and supporting transitions toward more sustainable and resilient socio-economic system. Building upon the preliminary results of a dedicated OECD study, it will also address the issue of how policy can strengthen RTOs' contribution in the future.

The workshop's results will feed into the aforementioned study, the TIP's project on 'Supporting Co-creation in Collaborative Transitions: Exploring new tools and approaches' and the CSTP cross-cutting project 'Societies in times of crisis and beyond: developing responsive and resilient science and innovation systems'

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## What role for Research & Technology Organisations in supporting sustainable transitions?

### Draft Agenda TIP-EARTO virtual workshop

#### Background

1. Although it varies significantly with countries, sectors and type of organisations, the role of RTOs in delivering knowledge and innovation that contribute to both strengthening competitiveness and solving mounting societal challenges is clearly evidenced in OECD Reviews of Innovation Policy.<sup>1</sup> However, there is still little insights on how these organisations function in practice, what is their funding and delivery model, and the balance between their different roles. Especially, how these have evolved in line with changes in their funding and governance landscape in recent years, and how these evolutions have affected RTOs ability to develop to mounting societal challenges, remains to a great extent unknown.
2. Understanding RTOs roles is particularly challenging due to their diversity in terms of legal status, internal governance structure and modes of funding (OECD, 2011). RTOs' hybrid nature compounds this diversity as most of them serve different missions for various public and private beneficiaries and partners, financed through multiple funding streams. It is nonetheless this multifaceted and versatile profile that may make RTOs important players in sustainable transitions, even beyond their role of knowledge and innovation providers. They often perform a 'bridging' function between disciplines, between research and industry, between the government and research performers (EARTO, 2020). For instance, RTOs are already active players in various types of mission-oriented policies (Larrue, 2021), taking advantage notably of their ability to act as '*systemic intermediaries*' (Weber, 2020). They also played an important role in contributing to STI solutions during the COVID-19 crisis (Paunov & Planes-Satorra, 2021[1]), particularly as they play important roles in co-creation – the process of the joint production of innovation between industry, research and possibly other stakeholders, such as civil society (Kreiling & Paunov, 2021).
3. The roles of RTOs may well be set to change as science, technology and innovation policy (STI) moves towards a strong focus on transitions towards sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. As identified in the TIP's work 'Supporting Co-creation in Collaborative Transitions: Exploring new tools and approaches', with social needs, public opinion, and policy frameworks evolving, in particular in response to the impact of COVID-19, policy makers are expected to increasingly target sustainability transitions as a goal of STI (Paunov & Planes-Satorra, 2021[2]). This pressing social goal will require innovation actors jointly address the challenging agenda ahead and benefit from improved university-industry links. RTOs have played an important role in providing conditions for spin-offs and other forms knowledge transfer, including in enabling technologies for the sustainability transition (OECD, 2019).
4. This new role of innovation eco-system 'orchestrators' and 'integrators' requires from them important internal changes – for instance to engage more actively with policy making in the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/oecd-reviews-of-innovation-policy.htm>

development of high-level strategic agenda, to perform activities across disciplines and sectors, and to embrace new co-creation practices. The strategic and policy environment in which they are embedded can accompany or on the contrary hinder their ability to perform this shift.

### The aims of the workshop

5. The TIP-EARTO workshop aims to support well-informed discussions on RTOs' contribution to solving societal challenges and supporting transitions toward more sustainable and resilient socio-economic system, and how policy can strengthen the contribution of RTOs in the coming years. Special focus will be set on RTOs' funding and mission delivery models to best contribute to transitions in an exchange between RTOs and policy makers.

6. The main aim of the workshop is to support a dialogue between policy makers and RTOs to exchange experience and views on two main questions:

- What roles could RTOs play in sustainable transitions and what changes would that require in terms of strategy, organisation and internal processes?
- What policy and governance conditions would help RTOs best play their role in sustainable transitions?

7. These two questions will be addressed in two panels, each of them informed by study results and gathering policy makers and RTOs.

8. This workshop builds upon an ongoing project conducted by OECD in partnership with the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) on the evolution of the funding, governance, and policy context of RTOs in the last ten years.

9. The workshop's results will feed into the aforementioned study, TIP's project on 'Supporting Co-creation in Collaborative Transitions: Exploring new tools and approaches' and the CSTP cross-cutting project 'Societies in times of crisis and beyond: developing responsive and resilient science and innovation systems'.

**DRAFT WORKSHOP AGENDA**  
**Friday, 19 November 2021, 9.30-12.30**  
*Joint OECD TIP-EARTO workshop*

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**Welcome and introduction**

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9h30-10h00

Welcome by **Alessandra Colecchia**

Opening of the event and introduction of the agenda by the Chair of the TIP Working Party **Göran Marklund**, Deputy Director General, Vinnova, Sweden and the **Antti Vasara**, President & CEO, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and President of EARTO executive Board.

This will be followed by a Secretariat presentation on lessons learned from the OECD in partnership with the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) on the evolution of the funding, governance, and policy context of RTOs in the last ten years and the impact of these changes on their ability to deliver on their missions. An emphasis will be put on their contribution to sustainable transitions. The Secretariat will also ask the first question to the audience on Mentimeter.

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**Panel 1: The role of RTOs in sustainable transitions: towards new opportunities and new challenges**

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10h00-11h00

This panel discussion explores the roles RTOs play in supporting sustainable transitions and how this role is embedded in their mission delivery model. A few RTOs will be invited to present their experience in that matter and how this role creates new opportunities and challenges.

*Key questions*

- What specific role could RTOs play in so-called transformative initiatives (mission-oriented policies, etc.) in the future
- How are RTOs preparing for this role?
- What changes in RTOs' practices, skills and organisational structure do assuming this new role require?
- How RTOs transform themselves to contribute to sustainable transitions?

The moderator will briefly introduce the panel discussion and will present the second question on Mentimeter. Each panellist will make a short presentation/intervention summarising their experience in contributing to sustainable transitions. This will be followed by a moderated Q&A session, with the moderator and the chat.

*Moderator:* **Carthage Smith**, OECD Global Science Forum

*Panellists*

- **Pia Sandvik**, CEO, RISE
- **Juan Farré**, CEO, DTI
- **Piotr Dardzinski**, President, Łukasiewicz Research Network
- **Matthias Weber**, Head of Center, AIT

11h00-11h15: *Coffee break*

## Panel 2: Public policy, funding and governance of RTOs: enabling the transformation

11h15-12h15

This panel will explore the strategic and policy environment in which RTOs unfold their activities and which condition their success in supporting sustainable transitions. It will take account of the practical issues and challenges that have been identified in the first panel.

### *Key questions*

- What type of government intervention would be appropriate to support RTOs in this endeavour?
- What are most effective funding and governance arrangements between RTOs and public authorities?

The moderator will briefly introduce the panel discussion and will present the third question on Mentimeter. Panellists will each make a short introductory intervention (maximum 5 minutes). This will be followed by a moderated Q&A session.

*Moderator:* Caroline Paunov, Working Party on Innovation and Technology Policy

### *Invited panellists*

- **Doris Schroecker**, Head of Unit Industrial Research, Innovation & Investment Agendas, DG R&I, European Commission
- **Pirjo Kutinlahti**, Ministerial Advisor at Ministry of Employment and the Economy of Finland
- **Laurence Piketty**, Deputy CEO, CEA
- **Erik Drop**, Director Knowledge Programmes and Government Relations, TNO

## Takeaways for OECD and EARTO

12h15-12h30

Short interventions from OECD and EARTO on the following questions:

- What are the key takeaway messages?
- What are the specific implications for RTOs (and their associations at national and international levels) and policy makers?
- What are the lessons learned for the OECD cross-cutting project (C2P) on ‘Enabling transitions through science, technology and innovation’?