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**Are policy niches better than co-ordinated strategies? A comparison of horizontal policy making in Austrian environment, transport and innovation policy.**

Co-ordinated and coherent policy making is growing in importance as policy makers become aware of the limitations of single goal policy making. As a result, the number and variety of co-ordination mechanisms has grown considerably over the last decade. Coordination and coherence within innovation policy has been the focus of many of these initiatives. This is due to the fact that innovation policy is a horizontal policy area with a large number of interfaces with different policy areas. In 2000, the OECD decided to organise a working group to look at the way in which different countries deal with co-ordination in and between innovation policy making and to analyse the successes and failures in moving towards greater coherence.

This paper analyses and assesses the conclusions from the Austrian case studies on transport and the environment undertaken with the framework of the working group. These two case studies look in detail at the ways in which the policy areas of transport and environment interact with innovation policy.

The case studies follow the same methodology and start by describing the policy making structures and the main actors involved in the policy areas. They also take a look at the main interests and topics that are driving policy making within the policy area as a backdrop to understanding how the interactions between different policy areas occur. The case studies then take an in depth look at the formal coordination mechanisms that exist between the two policy areas. These can be anything from interdepartmental working groups to R&D programmes where the cooperation of different policy areas is a necessity in defining their goals. The case studies then look at the informal interactions and how these support the aim of coherent policy making. The conclusions focus on the main barriers and success stories to coherent policy making in Austria.

Austrian policy making system is comprised of many separate, but highly competent, policy niches. The main argument of this paper is that coherent policy making should involve increasing their interaction, not developing top-down strategies, as is often suggested.