# Interoperability of Processes for Project Selection Amongst National R&D Funding Organisations:

A Case Study In Learning From Experience

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A Task Force to learn from each other

- **TAFTIE** (The European Network of Innovation Agencies): a group of 29 organisations funding applied R&D from 27 European countries

- The TAFTIE **Task Force On Selection Procedures**: a temporary (2014-2016) organisation of 12 research agencies

  - providing an overview of existing selection procedures of the 12 innovation agencies,

  - analysing and comparing the procedures along a variety of criteria,

  - developing good practices and recommendations on selection procedures helpful to all Taftie member organisations.

The Task Force: a community of practice

Experimentation Space
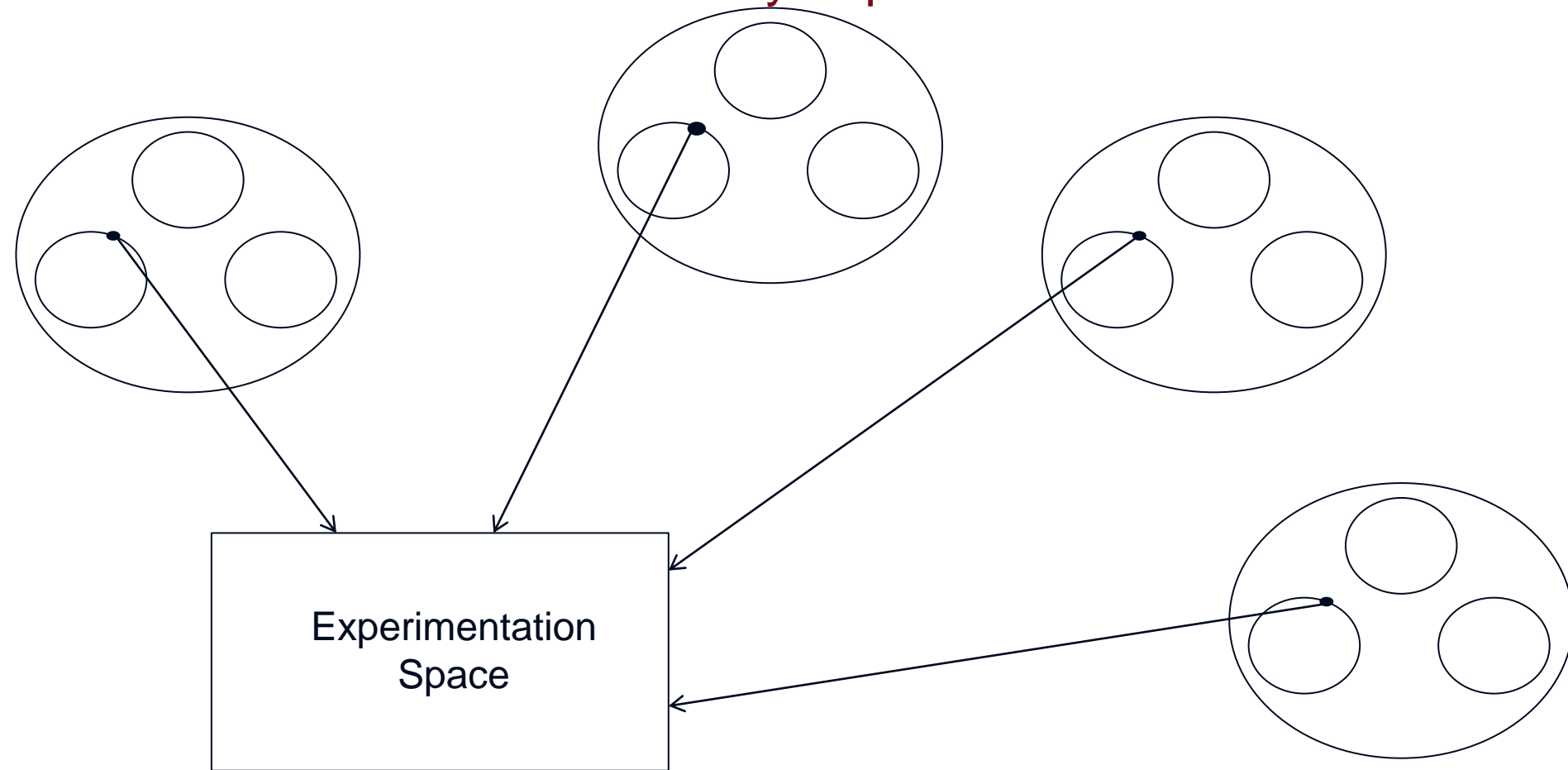
The backbone structure for selection processes

Source: TAFTIE Task Force: SELECT
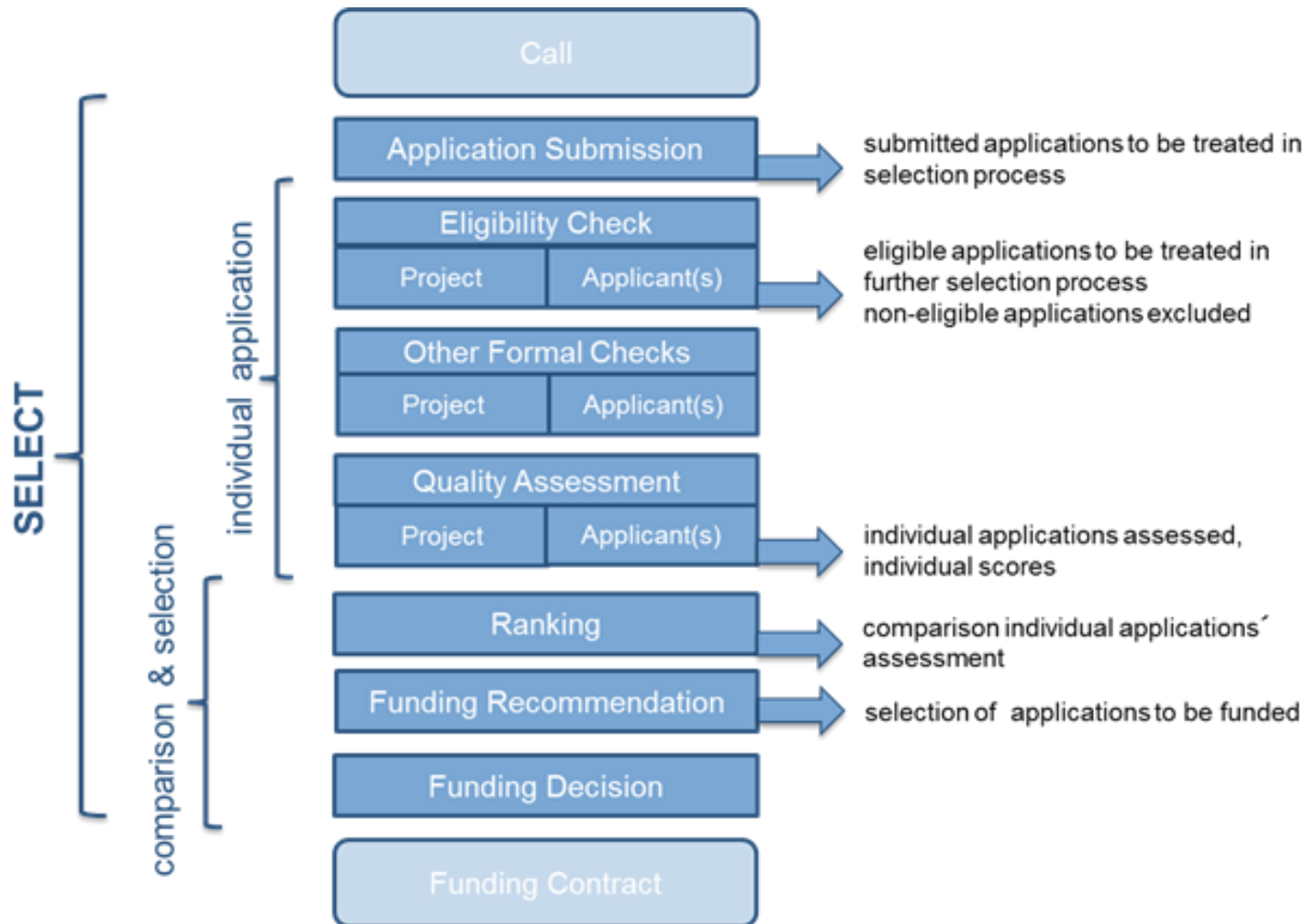
Widely shared characteristics of selection processes for collaborative R&D programmes

- **Call:** Closed calls and calls with thematic focus.

- **Pre-counselling:** Concentration on information events.

- **Submission:** Mostly online tools.

- **Eligibility Check:** Internal evaluation - sometimes applicants are directly contacted.

- **Quality Assessment:** External evaluation and high coordination efforts.

- **Ranking:** Panel of experts, but approaches differ.

- **Funding Recommendation:** Panel (selection committee, expert committee etc.) makes the funding recommendation.

- **Funding decision:** No influence of public ministries in decision making.

- **Communication of funding decision:** Information about reasoning behind decision. Countries with right to appeal against funding decision provide more detailed information than in those countries where an appeal is either very unlikely or impossible.

The experience of being different

- While selection processes follow common routines along the backbone structure, the detailed practices differ considerably from each other:

  - Agencies follow different rationales and objectives ranging from e.g. regional development, provision of (risk) capital and promotion of research excellence and innovative products.

  - Functions of agencies are different in scope: while some provide only direct support for R&D, others e.g. engage in financing venture capital or support exports.

  - Agencies have different capacities in terms of budget (ranging from 21 Mio € to 10.450 Mio €) and personnel (ranging from 70 to 867).

  - Agencies differ in terms of age: youngest agency funded in 2009, oldest in its very first form in 1946.

Example: Integration of individual proposals' evaluation to funding recommendation

- Practices differ considerably from each other along e.g.

  - use of internal & external experts and

  - decision making processes.

- Meeting of external evaluators with team from research promotion agency. Joint compilation of funding recommendation.

- Evaluation of internal expert. Comment by second internal evaluator. In case of disagremment: Query to cluster coordinator. Final ranking done by cluster coordinators.

- Evaluation by at least 2 external experts. Internal expert summaries results and adds own recommendation. Expert panel (rapporteurs included) considers all proposals in the field and produces ranking list with funding recommendation. Programme committee produces final ranking list and takes funding decision.

Good Practices, not Best Practices

- Different ways to deal with critical problems, reflecting varying rationales

- Rationales reflect historical evolution of organisation and organisational environment → at one point a solution for a perceived problem was found in a specific organisation with a specific background and environment

- All agencies try to cross-check and improve their services balancing:

  - policy demands, agency requirements and customer needs

  - transparency/legitimation – confidentiality, trust – control)

- **Best Practices** are difficult to imagine, when the background of the institutions involved is quite different from each other

- Also for the purpose of learning **Good Practices** are sufficient

Learning from being different

- Differences in organisation, processes, goals etc. important for drawing lessons from experience

- Learning from different aproaches

- Keep context in mind when drawing lessons: not every solution fits on all problems, not every environment is conducive to all solutions

- Define and find good practices

- Explicate tacit knowledge for making practices transferable more easily

- As an „importer of practice" make use of tacit knowledge keeping in contact with „exporter"