

Fostering Alliance Innovation

The Need for an Innovation Concept

Introduction and Background

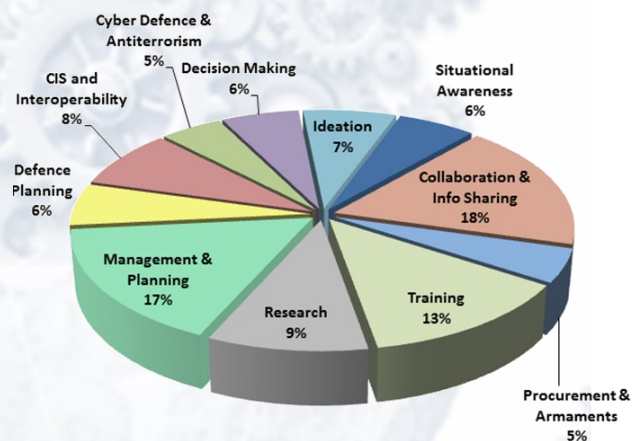
At the Warsaw Summit, the Allies have recognized the importance of identifying advanced and emerging technologies and new ways of thinking, evaluating their applicability, and implementing them through innovative solutions if the Alliance is to remain relevant in the 21st Century and to continue to be capable of conducting its core tasks.

Although NATO Innovation occurs primarily at a national level, a more concerted effort to support innovation within the Alliance could complement national efforts by seeking to increase the breadth, depth, awareness of and access to innovative solutions amongst Allies. An enhanced and broader view of innovation will serve to encourage Allies to share ideas, best practices and Lessons Learned on innovation and innovative ways of working, eventually making the NATO environment more favourable for innovation and leading to the progressive development of ecosystems where innovation can be fostered. As such an NEDP Project Team was tasked to analyse how the Alliance can better foster innovation, the results of the analysis are presented in an NEDP report and a summary in this Factsheet.

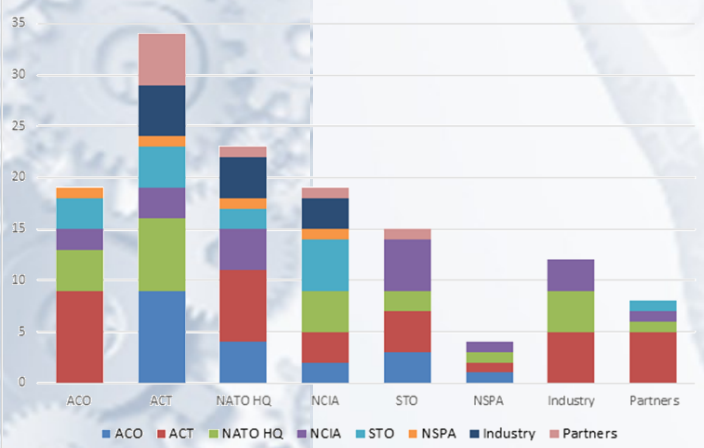
The study focussed in particular on the transformational aspect of NATO Innovation, whereby transformational innovation goes beyond merely meeting operational requirements and allows creativity to expand to other areas. Further, this study has sought to investigate what is already being done to foster innovation efforts by NATO; what is already in place in terms of the key elements to successful innovation: Leadership, Mindset, Communication, Tools, Processes, and Structure. Moreover, this study has sought to investigate what the Alliance's Peers, from both the public and private sectors, have in place in terms of these very same elements.

NATO's Innovation Efforts

A NATO Innovation Compendium, which formed a key data source for this project maps NATO Innovation activities throughout the Alliance, was used in this study to analyse how well the current NATO Innovation Landscape is doing in terms of fostering Alliance Innovation, that is to say, how well NATO Identifies, Implements, and Assesses Innovation Activities and what exactly are we currently focussed on in terms of those Innovation Activities. The figure to the right shows NATO's Innovation Activities grouped by category.



The figure to the left gives an idea of the degree to which the main Innovation Actors in NATO interact with one another in the context of the above mentioned Innovation Activities. The height of the columns represents the total number of projects led by the relevant organization, while the colours within each column represent the number of projects being executed in collaboration with another organization, according to the legend. For example, it suggests that Allied Command Transformation (ACT) leads 34 projects, while the majority of them are executed in collaboration with Allied Command Operations (ACO) (blue colour in ACT column).

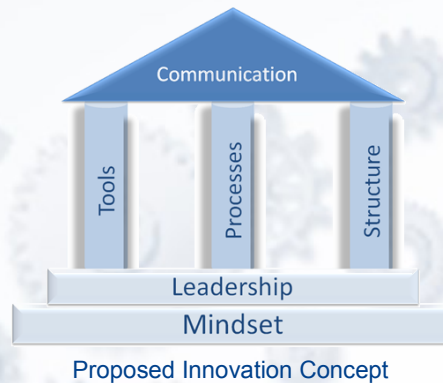


The key findings from analysing NATO's present innovation efforts suggest that, although there are many entities in NATO that have some (or a lot of) innovation responsibility, and although there are certainly innovation activities in NATO that do not require collaboration (i.e. that occur within a single NATO entity or even remain as an individual innovation activity), there seems to be little to no coordination of what is described in the context of the study as *Collective Innovation* in NATO; no coherent concept of what NATO Innovation is; who is doing it in NATO; and transparency as to what projects are being conducted.

Moreover, it appears from analysis of the Innovation Compendium that, although NATO Innovation Efforts cover a wide range of topics, most of NATO's current innovation efforts appear to be focussed on the implementation of such activities and less on identifying the need for innovation and assessing their potential to be implemented.

Conclusions and Proposals

NATO is innovative; it really always has been. However, the analysis results suggest that, compared to our Peers at least, NATO could perhaps be a lot more efficient and effective when it comes to fostering Alliance Innovation. Despite a general consensus within NATO and outside of the Alliance that—at least—the creative part of the innovation process needs to be free and unstructured, it is remarkable that when it comes to implementing and assessing innovation it seems most organizations need some kind of structure in place to ensure that such efforts are successful. This structure usually encompasses certain key elements that fit together to form a concept that, if implemented throughout an organization, enable that organization to foster its innovative efforts. This Proposed Innovation Concept is depicted in the figure to the right.



Moreover, for NATO to be better able to effectively and efficiently identify, implement, and assess its innovation activities, this study suggests that, within the Proposed Innovation Concept there is the need to develop a formal NATO Innovation Process as depicted to the right. Developing such a process could allow innovation to take place in a more structured and coordinated way, preventing gaps and addressing potential duplication of effort. This process could likely be based on NATO's Lessons Learned Process and could be managed by a dedicated Innovation Coordination Entity (the NATO Innovation Hub for example).



An Innovation Culture and Organization

This study also highlighted a number of best practices that, if implemented (as a whole in the context of the Proposed Innovation Concept or individually) could help to foster Alliance Innovation and relate to the need to (better) develop a NATO Innovation Culture and a NATO Innovation Organization. These best practices include proposals to:

- Define Innovation and include in relevant documents, AAP-015, AAP-006, Standardization Agreements (STANAG), etc.;
- Allow NATO staff to devote some of their time to identify and begin to develop new ideas to submit to the Proposed NATO Innovation Process;
- Develop an Innovation Database/Platform where all Innovation requirements can be identified, analysed, their potential implementation monitored, assessed, and validated in accordance with the proposed NATO Innovation Process;
- Establish a NATO Innovation Coordination Entity which would be responsible for synchronizing, coordinating, and managing NATO Innovation Activities; and
- Establish Innovation Officers throughout all NATO entities (particularly those engaged in innovation) who are responsible for the collection and collation of innovation requirements identified in their respective organizations, processing such requirements through the NATO Innovation Process and coordinating innovation efforts between their entity and the Innovation Coordination Entity.

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