

2. TARGETING NEW GROWTH AREAS

2.15. Collaboration by innovating firms

Collaboration is an important part of the innovation activities of many firms. It involves “active participation in joint innovation projects with other organisations” (Oslo Manual, 2005), but excludes pure contracting out of work. Collaboration can involve the joint development of new products, processes or other innovations with customers and suppliers, as well as horizontal work with other enterprises or public research bodies.

During 2004-06, large firms were significantly more likely to collaborate on innovation than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Among SMEs, the rate of collaboration is fairly similar across countries (between 10% and 20% of all firms in two-thirds of the countries surveyed), but it varies widely for large firms. More than half of all large firms collaborated on innovation in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland and Slovenia, while less than one in four did so in Australia, Italy, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Collaboration with public research organisations (higher education or government research institutes) can be an important source of knowledge transfer for the innovation activities of firms. Here again, large firms are much more active than SMEs, and show much more cross-country variation. However, this indicates only the existence of some sort of collaboration, not its type or intensity.

In almost all countries, there is more collaboration with higher education institutions than with government research centres. For large firms, co-operation with the former is most prevalent in Austria, Finland, Greece and Slovenia (over 35%), and with the latter in Austria, Belgium, Finland and Slovenia (over 20%).

Among SMEs, collaboration on innovation with both higher education and government institutions was below 10% in all countries, except Finland.

Measuring innovation in firms

Innovation surveys are increasingly used to better understand the role of innovation in economic growth as well as its determinants and the characteristics of innovative firms. Since 1992, the Oslo Manual has provided a harmonised framework – including coherent concepts and tools – for undertaking comparable large-scale surveys of this type. While previous editions of the Manual emphasised technological product and process (TPP) innovation, the latest (3rd) edition (OECD/Eurostat, 2005) extends the scope of such surveys to marketing and organisational innovations and places new emphasis on the role of linkages (including collaboration) in innovation. Although cross-country comparability of innovation surveys based on the Oslo Manual is generally good and improving, certain differences may affect comparisons between CIS (Community Innovation Survey) and non-CIS countries, such as sectoral coverage, size thresholds, sampling methods and the unit of analysis. In addition, countries differ in terms of filtering innovators/non-innovators, i.e. whether firms identified as non-innovators early in the questionnaire are asked to answer subsequent questions.

Sources

Eurostat, CIS-2006 (NewCronos), June 2009.
National data sources.

Going further

OECD and Eurostat (2005), *Oslo Manual: Guidelines for Collecting and Interpreting Innovation Data*, 3rd edition, OECD, Paris, www.oecd.org/sti/oslomanual.

Figure notes

France: manufacturing only.

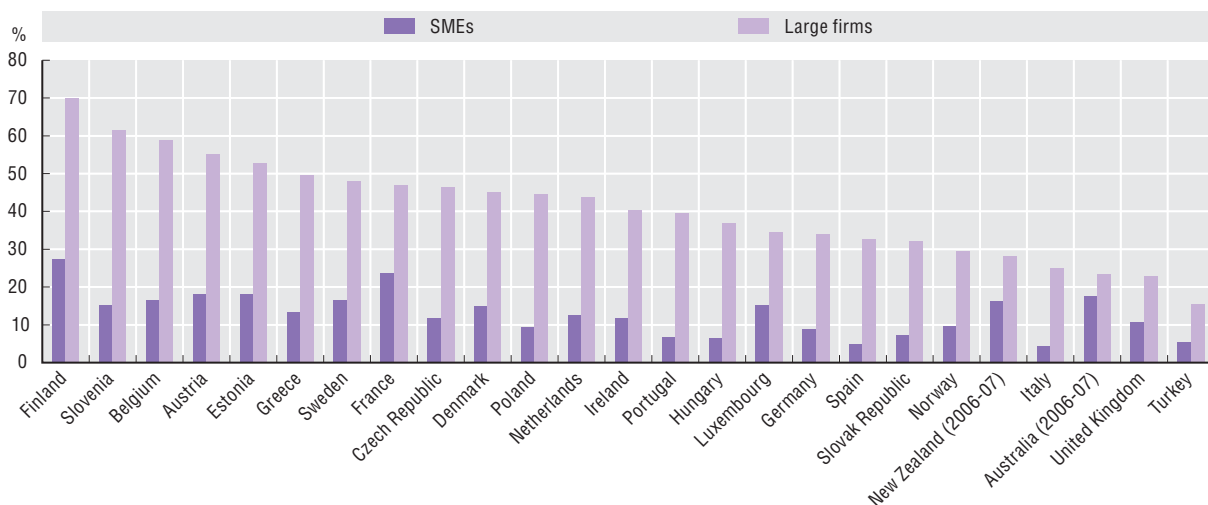
New Zealand: SMEs are firms with 10-99 employees.

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Firms collaborating on innovation activities by size, 2004-06

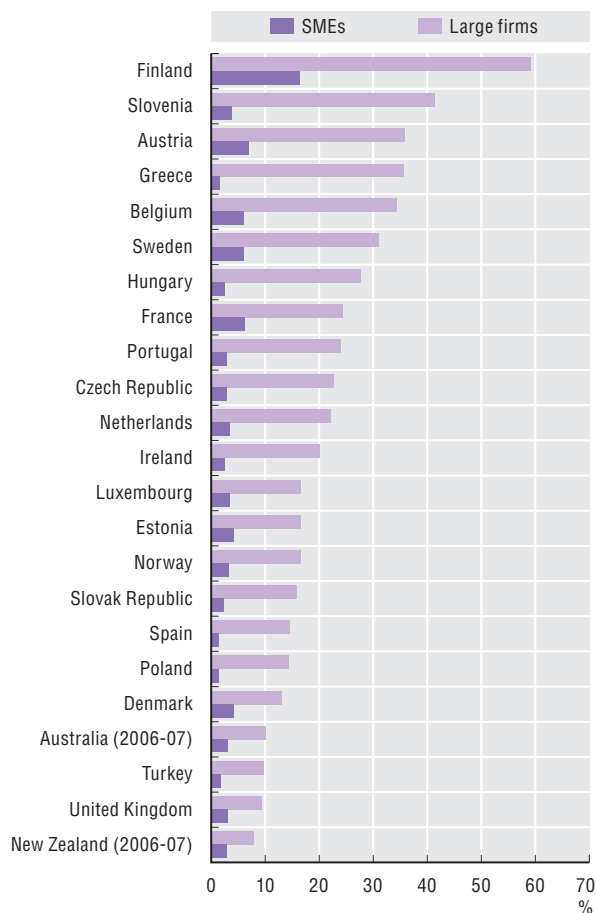
As a percentage of all firms



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/744255302518>

Firms collaborating on innovation with higher education institutions by size, 2004-06

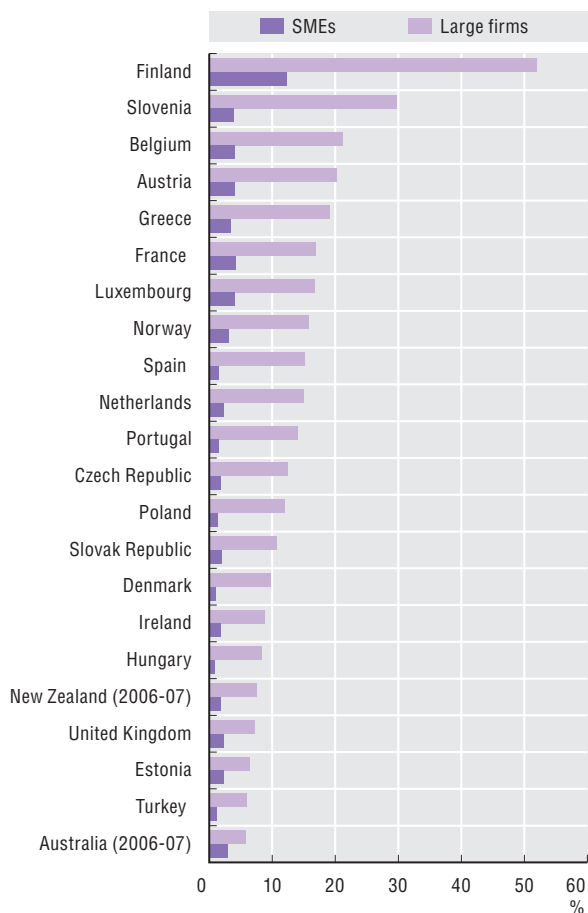
As a percentage of all firms



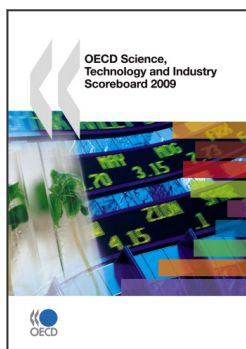
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/744256247635>

Firms collaborating on innovation with government research institutes by size, 2004-06

As a percentage of all firms



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/744317448007>



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