

National Platforms

National Technological Platforms related to the ETP ManuFuture are created in 12 EU member states and there are new ones in the development phase in further countries. All created ManuFuture National Technological Platforms (MFNTP) have adopted the main development goals developed earlier in both the EPT ManuFuture document (ManuFuture: a vision for 2020 – Report of the HLG, November 2004) and currently developed SRA document. The most advanced in MFNTP are Italy, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland and Romania.

The most important role of the national platforms should be seen in two fundamental configurations:

- ? activities and goals oriented horizontally, directed towards integration, coordination and synchronisation of R&D efforts in UE member states, taking into account the strategic aims and priorities of the ERA and each EPT
- ? activities and goals oriented vertically (product and process-oriented), where the most important are actions directed towards manufacturing of competitive technologies, products, methods and processes applied in enterprises (both OEMs and SMEs), which in the medium term may bring the highest added value and play a key role in the market, global and local or sectoral; important may be multidisciplinary networks coordinating R&D activities in new industrial sectors producing market products (medical technologies, telematics, nanotechnologies, mechatronics)

It is foreseen that very active cooperation will take place at the national level among all ETPs, with activities of regional and sectoral character.

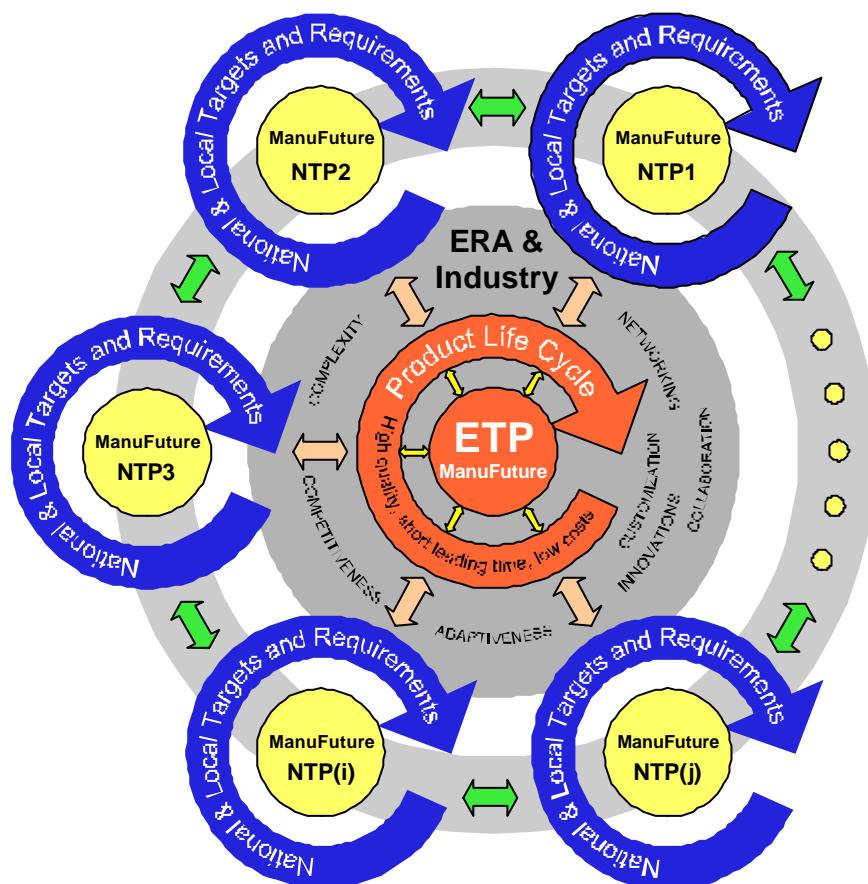


Fig. 6.1. Relationships between ETP ManuFuture and MFNTP

Each MFNTP plays an important role, characteristic for its country. New EU members may influence the balance of manufacturing costs of global market products. Relatively low labour costs (comparable

to 20-30% of that in the old member states) may significantly and for many years (8-10) influence the competitiveness of European products manufactured in the mixed R&D and economy of 15 old and 10 new countries. It may be a key factor of market driven competition against the Far East and keeping the main production volume in Europe. It is therefore crucial to strongly integrate the goals and priorities of the leading 15 members with the goals of development of the new 10 states in order to create a common interest in the close cooperation of production companies and R&D organisations for the expansion into the global market. Initially, the new EU members may play the role of world class suppliers for OEMs. That is why low cost technologies should also be modernised and customised to the current needs.

The special role of the MFNTPs should be seen in the 10 new member countries. After many years of socialist regulations they are building market economies, also in the R&D sector. It is a big mental, organisational, technical and financial challenge. It is therefore expected from the MFNTPs to participate in creating the ERA and realise the goals of their countries, including:

- ? developing own characteristic local initiatives aiming generally at creating new R&D infrastructure for technologically innovative and knowledge management driven economy, which would allow for building competitive local market and entering the global market; it is here that the goals of regional and national development strategies are strongly interconnected with the goals of the ETP ManuFuture
- ? developing regional and sectoral maps of competencies of technological, manufacturing and R&D centres
- ? creating European networks of suppliers, supply chains of standard components and adaptable technological systems, also for low cost technologies in the new countries
- ? creating virtual institutes and linking them with sectoral manufacturing networks generating high added value
- ? establishing multidisciplinary innovative technology and business parks
- ? transferring new business models and best success stories to SMEs of the new EU countries
- ? active participation in pan-European R&D initiatives within different ETPs and EU programmes, especially the 7th Framework Programme
- ? introducing universities and technology centres to the European system of education of highly qualified engineering staff, prepared to work in both SMEs and OEMs; it is also necessary to set up standards in multilevel education systems, including the coverage of innovative technologies, especially in the form of exchange of PhD students