

# **The main concepts of productivity centres in Europe and overseas, and the scope of their activities**

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Of the new leisured class

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# Looking back: The origins of Centres

- Centres as managers of public money—European and national → networkers
- US insistence on bi-partite management → consensus finding → best practice learning & propaganda
- Building up new actions from scratch in a barren environment
- The overall goal: socio-economic progress
- Spreading concept: Europe → Asia (1950s) → Anglo-Saxonia (1960s) CA, AU, NZ, ... USA: 1973-75

# 1954 compared with 2004

- Founding basis: war-time labour-management cooperation—buddies
- Solemn joint productivity declarations
- Very few business schools
- Little consulting
- Little information provision
- Demand outstrips supply
- Trade unions and employer groupings as dinosaurs
- Entrepreneurship reigns
- The big business of Business Schools etc
- Management consulting goliaths
- Internet
- Supply outstrips demand

# Current environmental tendencies

- Continuous reduction in government money
- «Jointness» no longer seen as competitive advantage (outside Scandinavia, Ireland)
- Continuing relative weakness of HR concern in **companies** (but FT *Best workplaces 2004*: are high on respect & trust, good work-life balance, advancement & new skills development, pride—all “productivity dimensions”)
- Defensive versus offensive stance to Productivity—don’t promote it too loudly (“job killer”). But periodic national reviews

# 'Centres' today

- Europe: PC in name cf. in reality: CY, LU, IT, IR. DE? All shrinking. Exceptional case of FI
- Failure of Central European experiences under Japanese nurturing: only SK flourishes (entrepreneurial, without public money, Law)
- Asia: JPC-SED made the transition (but earns less) focusing on re-creating a trust-creating society, *Spring* Singapore focus on VA & quality. Others.
- Anglo-Saxonia disappeared: NPI?

# Strategic options

- Maintain “independent” status, but earn more on the open market: DE, LU, (NL)
- Integration/merger with other old/new bodies: IT, FI, BE, CY, HU
- Privatisation: IPC (IR) based on “neutrality” in the eyes of the social partners
- Die/euthanasia

# Future scope

- Balance between public & private sectors → body for community benefit—not for profit, but profitable
- Specialised functions (training & consultancy) according to market niches
- Sunset options → specific actions
- Neutral project managers: national/EU/international funds
- No (outside Asia) involvement in national policies → government is not influenced by small outsiders