



Analytical Services

**Case study:** Vinnova – Sweden’s Innovation Agency

# *Building strategic intelligence* for international cooperation through co-creation



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Vinnova is Sweden's national innovation agency. Working at the intersection of need-driven research and innovation, policy and society, it supports Sweden's long-term innovative capacity and sustainable growth. As expectations around evidence-based policymaking as well as operational development continue to rise, the agency faces increasing need to ground strategic decisions and funding activities in robust, internationally relevant insight.

## The challenge

Vinnova's ambition was clear: to support policy and funding activities with stronger evidence and a more global perspective. What was less clear was how to do this in practice.

### Key challenges included:

- Navigating complex technology domains where consensus is limited.
- Moving beyond high-level themes toward more precise and actionable strategic insight.
- Understanding Sweden's position in relative, international terms.
- Ensuring that analytical insight could be absorbed and used, not just produced.

At the same time, Vinnova recognised that building this capability required learning. There was a need not only for analytical input, but also for space to explore questions, test assumptions, and better understand what different forms of data could and could not support.



# The turning point: building trust and shared understanding

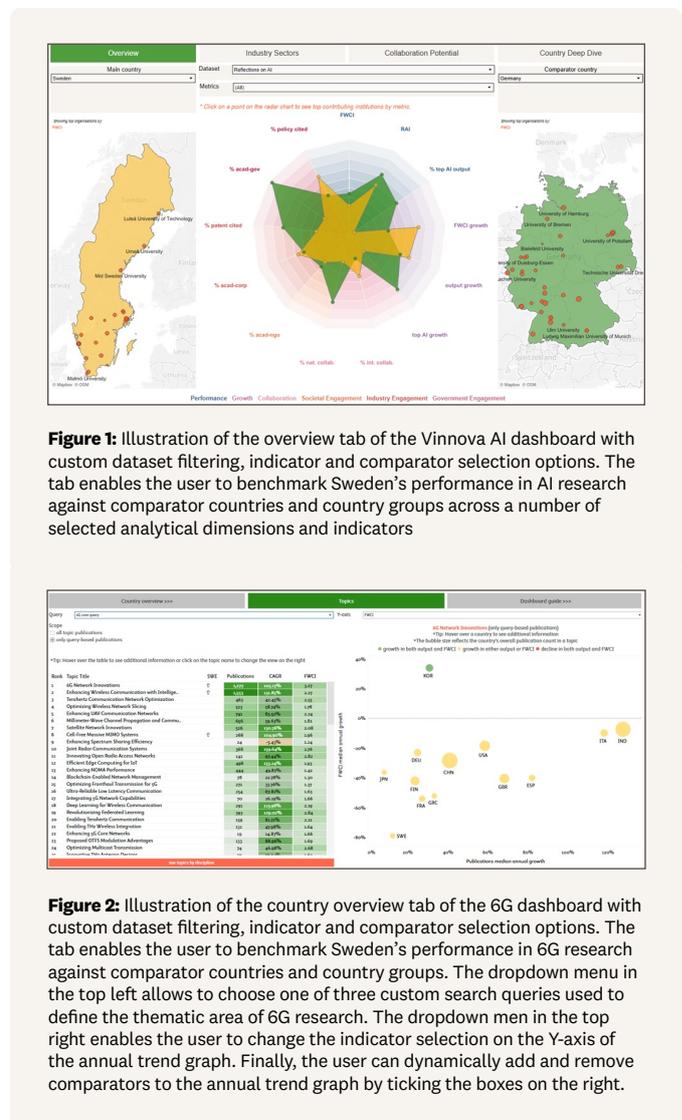
Rather than attempting to address complex strategic questions all at once, Vinnova and Elsevier’s Analytical Services team focused on establishing a shared foundation for collaboration.

The initial work centred on a strategically important emerging technology domain, where international perspectives were still evolving and traditional analytical approaches offered limited guidance. The aim was not to produce definitive answers, but to explore how data and analytical insight could support strategic reflection.

Through this early work, Vinnova was able to engage with evidence in a more granular and comparative way, gaining clearer visibility into relative strengths and areas of uncertainty. The emphasis was on interpretation and dialogue, rather than on predefined conclusions.

This shift proved important internally. Subject-matter experts were able to move beyond abstract discussion and engage more confidently with evidence, developing a shared language around strategy and international positioning.

Crucially, this phase helped establish trust and mutual understanding, creating the conditions for deeper co-creation and more ambitious strategic exploration over time.



**Figure 1:** Illustration of the overview tab of the Vinnova AI dashboard with custom dataset filtering, indicator and comparator selection options. The tab enables the user to benchmark Sweden’s performance in AI research against comparator countries and country groups across a number of selected analytical dimensions and indicators

**Figure 2:** Illustration of the country overview tab of the 6G dashboard with custom dataset filtering, indicator and comparator selection options. The tab enables the user to benchmark Sweden’s performance in 6G research against comparator countries and country groups. The dropdown menu in the top left allows to choose one of three custom search queries used to define the thematic area of 6G research. The dropdown menu in the top right enables the user to change the indicator selection on the Y-axis of the annual trend graph. Finally, the user can dynamically add and remove comparators to the annual trend graph by ticking the boxes on the right.

*“This was a co-creation process. We needed time to understand each other, and to be honest about what was possible and what was not.”*

**Nannan Lundin**

Chief of Strategic Intelligence, Vinnova

*“The co-creation process has proven highly effective in producing actionable data insights, with significant learning gains for each team member.”*

**Anne-Catherine Rota**

Strategic Engagement EMEA, Elsevier

## Co-creation at the core: From delivery to capability building

The collaboration with Elsevier’s Analytical Services team developed around a shared commitment to **co-creation**.

Rather than treating analysis as a transactional exercise, both teams worked together to explore strategic questions, clarify expectations, and align on how evidence could meaningfully support policy thinking and funding activities. This approach emphasized openness and reflection over predefined outputs.

### **Co-creation in this context meant:**

- Jointly framing strategic questions before seeking answers.
- Being explicit about uncertainty and methodological limits.
- Allowing insight to emerge through dialogue, not prescription.
- Adapting focus as understanding deepened.
- Adapting outputs to specific analytical and operational needs.

This way of working created trust and allowed Vinnova to engage more confidently with complex and sensitive strategic issues as well as new methodologies and analytical tools.

## Supporting international cooperation activities

A central focus of the collaboration was strengthening Vinnova’s approach to international cooperation.

Traditionally, international engagement can be shaped by existing relationships and broad thematic priorities. While valuable, this approach can make it difficult to articulate why certain partnerships matter more than others, or how national strengths compare globally.

### **Through analytical exploration and interpretation, Vinnova was able to:**

- Clarify where Sweden’s strengths are concentrated in specific technology domains.
- Consider international collaboration through a more evidence-informed lens and a higher level of precision.
- Shift discussions from general ambition to more grounded identification and positioning.

This supported a more structured dialogue around identification, mobilisation and financing, helping Vinnova align international cooperation with national strategic priorities and programs.



# From insight to use: Enabling uptake across the organisation

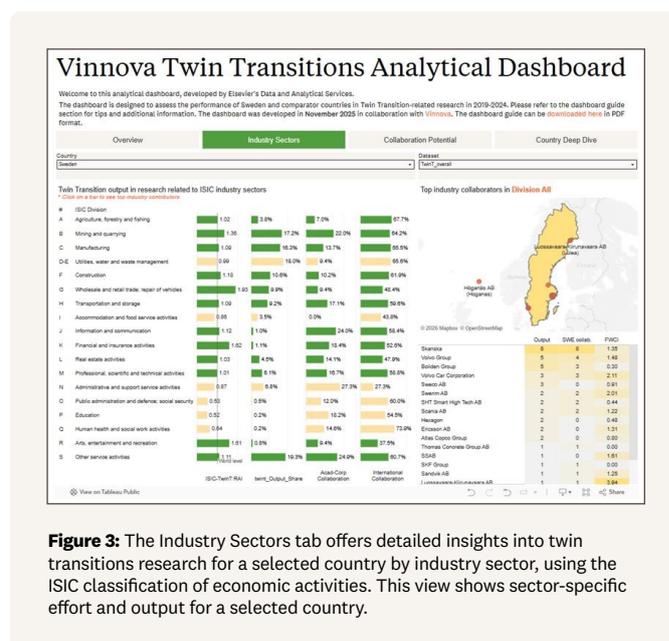
As Nannan Lundin says *“The real challenge is not producing evidence, but learning how to use it in practice.”*

The collaboration therefore placed strong emphasis on usability and internal adoption. Rather than relying solely on static outputs, analytical perspectives were designed to support exploration, discussion, and application by different teams.

## This contributed to:

- Greater confidence in engaging with evidence internally through capacity-building on data-informed approaches.
- Stronger alignment between strategic intelligence and operational roles and activities.
- A growing shared understanding of how data can inform policy dialogue and design of networking and funding for international cooperation.

Over time, this will help embed evidence more naturally into Vinnova’s strategic processes.



**Figure 3:** The Industry Sectors tab offers detailed insights into twin transitions research for a selected country by industry sector, using the ISIC classification of economic activities. This view shows sector-specific effort and output for a selected country.

*“This was not about receiving a report. It was about learning how to ask better questions, how to use evidence properly, and how to become more confident as a strategic intelligence organisation with actionable insights and global perspectives.”*

**Nannan Lundin**

Chief of Strategic Intelligence, Vinnova

*“It’s been incredibly valuable working with Vinnova. Sweden’s approach of tightly integrating technical expertise and policy analysis is a real asset in keeping pace with rapid technological change.”*

**Luigi Rucco**

Head of Analytical Services Europe & Emerging Markets, Elsevier

## Strengthening credibility in external dialogue

The work also influenced how Vinnova engages externally, particularly with industry and other stakeholders.

In discussions with large, research-intensive organisations, public agencies also need a clear strategic vision and understanding from various policy and strategic perspectives. Access to well-grounded analytical insight helped Vinnova engage in these conversations with greater clarity and confidence.

### **This strengthened Vinnova’s ability to:**

- Articulate national priorities in a global context.
- Engage in more balanced, informed dialogue.
- Position public funding as a strategic instrument within the innovation system with more forward-looking and global perspectives.



## Looking ahead

Vinnova sees this way of working as an important step in the continued development of its strategic intelligence capability and international cooperation. The emphasis going forward is not on replicating past outputs, but on continuing to refine how questions are framed, how evidence is interpreted, and how insight is integrated into decision-making and funding activities.

By focusing on co-creation, reflection, and policy relevance, Vinnova aims to further strengthen its role as a credible, evidence-driven actor in international research and innovation cooperation.



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