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[Suddenly everyone loves a think tank](#)

Posted by [Alice Thomson](#) on 05 Dec 2007 at 19:19

Tags: [Policy Exchange](#), [Conservative thinks tanks](#), [Stockholm Network](#), [Golden Umbrella Think Tank Awards](#)

Conservative thinks tanks have been out of fashion for so long they're like rubik's cubes, shoulder pads and leg warmers, we're suddenly interested in them again. When the [Stockholm Network](#) set up to link together market orientated think tanks across the world it only managed five members. Now it has over 130, stretching from Iceland to Azerbaijan. Everyone in Europe under 30 wants to join not a band, but a think tank.



The 1980s favourite has become popular again in recent years

They have helped a Conservative revival that has seen the recent election of centre right Governments in Denmark, Sweden, France and Germany. In central Europe, the young have turned their backs on the centralised, pro-state approach and gone further than Britain - with education vouchers and new healthcare systems - to test the limits of the market.

Only this week [Policy Exchange](#) had its [Christmas party](#). When the think tank was set up five years ago, it started with a drink with a few people on a snowy night. Now 300 people crammed into The Museum of Garden History, politicians of all persuasions, journalists including Emily Maitlis and Nick Robinson, even Tony Blair's old spin doctor John Kelly. David Cameron announced that Nick Boles - Policy Exchange's former director and now candidate for Grantham - would run his new implementation unit. Good to see a think tanker being asked to implement something, rather than just sitting in an ivory tower.

In fact, the right of centre think tank community in Britain has become far more pro-active, better at reaching out to politicians, donors, the press and each other. They understand it's no good generating wonderful ideas if no one knows about them.

Tonight sees the launch of The Stockholm Network's 'Golden Umbrella' Think Tank Awards. There is even an award for the think tank personality of the year, which I'm giving away. Tune in to [Three Line Whip](#) at 8.30pm for an exclusive update on the results, and an explanation of why they decided on umbrellas.

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