



University – industry collaboration

e-workshop, 11 March 2021

Key learnings

University-Industry Collaboration is emerging as a critical component of the innovation process. There are many benefits to enhancing collaborative innovation activities between universities (public laboratories, research institutes and higher education institutions) and industry (private companies). The benefits include to achieve a critical mass in research activities, to overcome fragmentation caused by distance and a smaller resource base, to bring together different perspectives, experience, skills and knowledge, to break down specialist silos and restrictive organisational boundaries, to foster cross-disciplinary interactions, to encourage skills and knowledge transfer, to promote mutual understandings, and to manage risks associated with R&D.

Victoria Galán-Muros, CEO of Innovative Futures Institute, presented ten examples to promote university-industry collaboration such as innovation agencies to align university-industry collaboration, competitiveness clusters in France, intersectoral mobility across research centres or private companies, tax incentives for R&D, intermediaries such as knowledge transfer offices, industrial PhDs programmes, evaluation and promotion of researchers, and lifelong learning strategies to upskill and reskill researchers. **Victoria Galán-Muros** gave some key takeaways such as the importance to simplify bureaucracy and to focus on SMEs.

José Guimón, Professor, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, presented some findings from the **OECD Report on University-Industry Collaboration** regarding financial and regulatory policy tools for promoting University-Industry Collaboration. As pointed out, financial tools can address different modes of university-industry collaboration (see Figure 1 below).

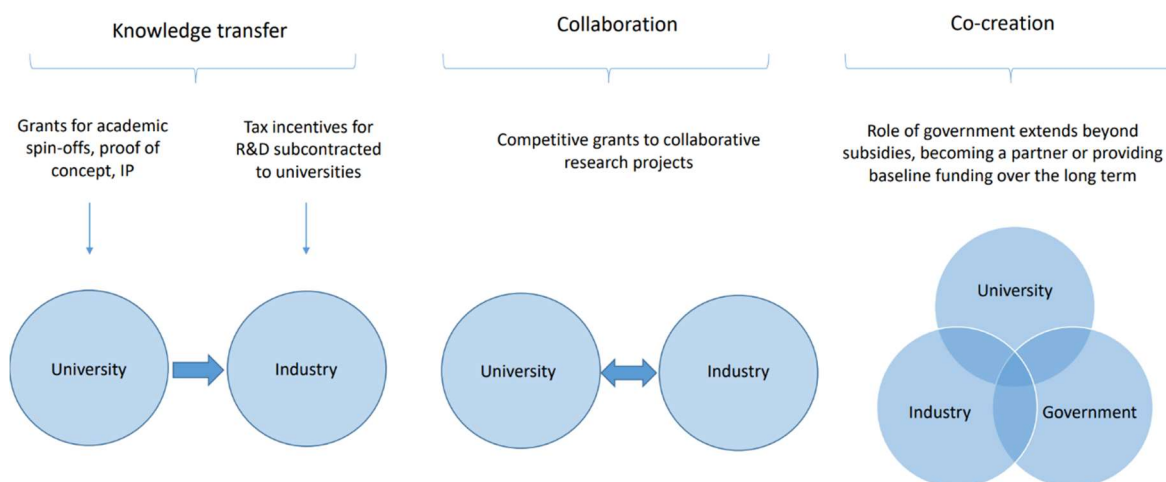


Figure 1. Financial tools can address different modes of university-industry collaboration. Source: **José Guimón**.



Some insights from the workshop

- The keynote speakers emphasised that regions with **weak university-industry collaboration** must first **focus on soft policy tools and map research groups** that could potentially be linked to industry and **the companies** that could be interested in research. To do so, policymakers should work as facilitators through networking events, matchmaking, seminars, expert groups around specific technologies and sectors deliberately bringing industry and research together. Additionally, regional policymakers could also assess SMEs' needs and promote the use of innovation vouchers.
- **Public-private partnerships** can be a successful tool to foster university-industry collaboration. From [INNO INFRA SHARE](#), **Valeria Pignedoli** presented the [MISTER Lab](#)—a public-private partnership (PPP) in Emilia-Romagna region in Italy. [MISTER Lab](#) includes the National Research Council (CNR), the Universities of Ferrara and Parma and regional manufacturing companies, to foster university-industry collaboration and develop technological innovations, namely in promoting Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), in regional S3 priorities. It offers supports for developing R&D activities on all Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) through diverse R&D services and the access to advanced manufacturing equipment and facilities. The turnover comes from publicly funded projects (65%) and privately funded projects (35%).
- In **moderate innovators regions**, the public bodies in charge of innovation policies play an important role in **setting the framework for knowledge transfer**. From [P-IRIS](#), **Susana Cámara Decimavilla**, presented the [University-Business Knowledge Transfer Plan](#)—a project in the Spanish region of Castilla y León to promote science-industry collaboration. The project aims to foster a dynamic university ecosystem that is closer to industry, to promote open innovation between research and industry, and to favour the creation of spin-offs. The actions adopted are to hire experts to create university knowledge transfer offices, to increase joint science-industry projects, to foster the adoption of patents and licensing in universities, and to promote the creation of university spin-offs.
- **Spanning boundary agents** that offer networking opportunities and raise capabilities in research and SMEs. [Balzhan Orazbayeva](#), Manager Strategic Initiatives, [University Industry Innovation Network](#), elaborated on the role of the University of Twente and their **venture capital funds** for entrepreneurship in [Twente's economic transformation into a high-tech hub](#).
- University-industry collaboration emerges very differently **depending on their regional contexts**: regulations in place, institutional framework, and leadership within the universities, as highlighted by [Liliana Fonseca](#), Researcher, [European Policies Research Centre](#).
- Participants discussed initiatives to foster stronger university-industry collaboration led from national and regional initiatives such as reflecting from the challenges related to the design and implementation of [Centres of Excellence in Bulgaria](#), the [Ambition Research Development](#) in Centre-Val de Loire region in France that aims to structure a research ecosystem around S3 priorities, setting-up joint labs from public-private partnerships, and highlighting the difficulties in developing appropriate funding models, especially as regards **State Aid Rules**.
- **The role of technology brokers** is essential to create long term linkages with SMEs, notably in rural and less developed regions where access to technology platforms can be difficult.
- **The scope for implementing an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP)** can help regions and universities identify suitable areas for reinforcing cooperation.
- **Intellectual Property (IP) policies and practices at a university level**, notably how to integrate long standing researcher/company cooperation practices, are perceived as a challenge, especially for new member states.

Future Policy Learning Platform activities

Several follow-up activities were discussed with the participants:

- Regions that are interested to learn from peers to strengthen policies regarding university-industry collaboration can consider applying for a [Peer Review](#) from the Policy Learning Platform.



- The Policy Learning Platform offers an on-demand expert support through the Policy Helpdesk. Please do not hesitate [to reach out to us](#) if you have further questions regarding university-industry collaboration.
- Please do not hesitate [to contact the Policy Learning Platform](#) to share ideas for policy briefs, stories, topics for online discussions and online workshops.

Other useful materials

- Policy Learning Platform Webinar on [Centres of Competence \(CoCs\)](#)
- Policy Brief on [University-Industry Collaboration](#)
- Policy Brief on [Skills for Innovation](#)
- OECD Report on [University-Industry Collaboration](#)
- [University-business collaboration case-studies](#)
- Studies and report from the [University Industry Innovation Network](#)
- Academic article on [Entrepreneurial Universities and Regional Innovation: Matching Smart Specialisation Strategies to Regional Needs?](#)
- Academic article on [The Role of Universities in Building Dense Triple Helix Ecosystems in Sparse Regional Environment.](#)