

10 Increasing higher education impact on innovation: Entrepreneurial Universities

Type of support / service available

JRC is researching the conditions that affect the success of European universities to become more entrepreneurial: budget size, autonomy, research performance, specialization, entrepreneurship education, teaching/ research ratio, among others. A first case study of Aalto University and its innovation ecosystem has been published already¹. A combined qualitative and quantitative analysis will result in the publication of a report planned for 2018².

Relevance for regional authorities

National and regional governments are increasingly looking to universities to play a role in supporting regional development and growth. A central way to do this is by promoting Entrepreneurial Universities. Such universities take a strategic approach to attain a high degree of interaction with their innovation ecosystem. Developing a more entrepreneurial role can strengthen universities' capacity to orchestrate their domestic innovation ecosystem and their contribution in the entrepreneurial discovery process informing Smart Specialisation strategies. A greater insight in the internal and external factors that make universities succeed in becoming more entrepreneurial can help regional and national policy makers to promote this development.

Policy context

Several Communications from the European Commission underpin the increasing importance of an Entrepreneurial focus within Universities. The Communication on a "Renewed EU agenda for Higher Education" (COM (2017) 247) gives central place to the promotion of Entrepreneurial universities.

Likewise, the Communication on the "Entrepreneurship 2020 action plan" (COM (2012) 0795) states: *"Universities should become more entrepreneurial.....the European Commission in collaboration with OECD has developed a framework for entrepreneurial universities to assess themselves"*. The Communication "Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems" (COM (2011) 567) reads: *"Encourage partnership and cooperation with business as a core activity of higher education institutions, through reward structures, incentives for multidisciplinary and cross-organisational cooperation, and the reduction of regulatory and administrative barriers to partnerships between institutions and other public and private actors"*.

Research on success factors of Entrepreneurial Universities will support efforts such as HEInnovate, an initiative of the European Commission and the OECD to assess and develop entrepreneurial activities in higher education institutions.

How to use

The first published outcome of the project is a case study identifying key factors in the Espoo (Finland) innovation ecosystem, focusing on the role of Aalto University as an example of an entrepreneurial university.

The results of the project will feed into the Knowledge Hub for Higher Education developed by JRC and EAC and build on the experience of DG EAC's HEInnovate³.

1. Available at: <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/place-based-innovation-ecosystems-espoo-innovation-garden-and-aalto-university-finland>

2. The JRC Publications Repository is the online service giving access to all research publications produced by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.

3. <https://heinnovate.eu/en>

Impact

The impact of the policy is threefold: firstly universities contribute to the development of human resources for their regional and national innovation ecosystems. A greater involvement in entrepreneurship education and greater interaction of universities with private sector actors can result in graduates that better match national and regional economic development needs. Secondly, while the greatest contribution to knowledge transfer is the training of graduates, universities also play a direct role in diffusing scientific and technological knowledge to domestic private sector actors. Such knowledge transfer can take many forms. It occurs, among others, through contract research, joint research and the mobility of university staff to private sector firms. Thirdly, a greater entrepreneurial role of universities places them in a better position to actively contribute to regional developments processes. As orchestrating actors of their domestic innovation ecosystem, they can also have a greater role in smart specialisation processes.