

## EPWS Reply (27 July 2006)

### **Public consultation on transnational research cooperation and knowledge transfer between public research organisations and industry**

Q1: How important a driver is the exploitation of publicly-funded research results for EU competitiveness? -single choice reply- (optional)

- Very important
- Quite important
- Not important
- Irrelevant

Q2: Should more emphasis be placed on the exploitation of publicly-funded R&D results within PROs? -single choice reply- (optional)

- Much more
- Slightly more
- Less
- No emphasis

Why? (max. 4000 characters) -open reply- (optional)

Universities and research centres focusing on basic research may transfer to publicly exploited research topics as part of their responsibilities to the society and to increase their possibilities of funding. This is already happening and may, in the long run, harm rather than help the EU research development and the creation of a sound knowledge base. Increasing the exploitation of publicly-funded R&D results is important – but only if it does not lead to downgrading basic research, and if incentives keep the reputation of both types of research at an equal level. Basic research needs its space, even if no immediate applied use for society may be evident.

What are the key elements that should be improved within Universities in order to facilitate their cooperation with industry within the same country? (Please note that the following question will look at other types of public research organisations). Please tick no more than 3 elements. -multiple choices reply- (optional)

- a) Exchange of researchers between universities and industry
- b) Clear university strategies and rules relating to research cooperation with industry
- c) Recognition of the value of long-term cooperation with industry, by universities management
- d) Greater understanding by researchers of the needs of industry (especially those of SMEs)
- e) Improved financial resources for technology transfer offices
- f) Access to professional Technology Transfer officers (or similar staff)
- g) Greater understanding by researchers of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and its implications

- h) Better management of IPR produced by researchers (e.g. use of laboratory notebooks, etc.)
- i) Integrate “innovation-related” criteria in the appraisal of researcher careers (i.e. as well as papers published, researchers could be evaluated on other issues such as the number of patents, consultancy work undertaken, etc.)
- j) Realistic expectations by universities regarding the valuation of research results
- k) Financial incentives for staff which create inventions
- l) Other
- Please specify
- Please specify -open reply- (optional)

EPWS welcomes the Commission’s intention to improve transnational cooperation and knowledge transfer between PROs, universities and industry. EPWS would like to emphasise the importance of the exchange of researchers, as raised by the European Commission. The quality of an exchange and its added value depend on the individual researchers and their role in the cooperation. From the perspective of women scientists, but applying to all researchers irrespective of gender, a problem in the relationship between PROs and universities is the lack of researcher mobility between the organizations and openness with respect to different types of careers lacking continuous full-time research work. Good cooperation between universities and PROs needs acceptance and understanding on both sides for the respective kind of research and for the researchers carrying it out. The best way to achieve such acceptance and understanding is to enable researchers to transfer from universities and PROs to industry and vice versa without harming their career.

Universities in particular have difficulties in welcoming people with research backgrounds other than a university background. The careers of many researchers however, and especially those of women, are not necessarily straight and not necessarily restricted to academia or industrial research. As the female Postdoctoral drop-out rates and female senior researcher biographies demonstrate, women often take a reflective approach to their future career in science. They may decide to pursue their careers outside science, only to desire to come back in after re-ascertaining themselves of their qualifications as well as of their ability and willingness to cope with the conditions of the profession, including the decision concerning the compatibility of a successful scientific career and family life. When they seek to re-enter the profession at a later date, they have great difficulties to be re-accepted as scientists – and Europe misses out on an opportunity for innovative thinking.

The European Commission could influence this situation by setting incentives for universities and PROs toward the mobility of researchers between these types of institutions. For instance, transfer programmes for researchers between universities, PROs and industry could be initiated. This would help both sides to understand the different working logics that may lead to difficulties in cooperation otherwise.

A further problem in the cooperation between universities, industry engaged in research and PROs is the issue of competition. Cooperation and communication is difficult because the organisations follow different goals. Many universities traditionally understand themselves as educators, especially in basic research, industries have an applied interest. Apart from the general goals of the institutions as such, this also applies to the individual level and to what is expected of researchers. Researchers at non-university institutes may have more time for research and can advance better, but lack teaching experience, which is a problem for them when applying for jobs at universities. University researchers have to focus on teaching and have difficulties being accepted as equally qualified when applying for a position at PROs or industrial research bodies. Universities, PROs and industry should take into account the specific working conditions of researchers and understand the assets of the respective qualifications as necessary links, helping to facilitate cooperation and understanding, when evaluating applications to enable the mobility of researchers. Long-term cooperation will work better if researchers from different


backgrounds are working on both sides, with an understanding for careers and needs of the cooperating partners. Again, the Commission can set incentives to do so via its funding programmes and regulation.

Q6: What are the key elements that should be improved within other PROs (not universities etc) in order to facilitate their cooperation with industry within the same country? Please tick no more than 3 elements. -multiple choices reply- (optional)

- a) Exchange of researchers between PROs and industry
- b) Clear PRO strategies and rules relating to research cooperation with industry
- c) Recognition of the value of long-term cooperation with industry, by PRO management
- d) Greater understanding by researchers of the needs of industry (especially those of SMEs)
- e) Improved financial resources for technology transfer offices
- f) Access to professional Technology Transfer officers (or similar staff)
- g) Greater understanding by researchers of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and its implications
- h) Better management of IPR produced by researchers (e.g. use of laboratory notebooks, etc.)
- i) Integrate “innovation-related” criteria in the appraisal of researcher careers (i.e. as well as papers published, researchers could be evaluated on other issues such as the number of patents, consultancy work undertaken, etc.)
- j) Realistic expectations by PROs regarding the valuation of research results
- k) Financial incentives for staff which create inventions
- l) Other
- Please specify
- Please specify -open reply- (optional)

Q8: What are the key elements that should be improved within companies in order to facilitate cooperation with PROs within the same country ? Please tick no more than 3 elements. -multiple choices reply- (optional)

- a) Exchange of researchers between companies and PROs
- b) Clear company strategies and rules relating to research cooperation with PROs
- c) Recognition of value of long-term cooperation with PROs, by company management
- d) Greater understanding by companies of the specific needs of PROs (e.g. to publish)
- e) Increased collaborative research funding (i.e. for joint PRO-industry projects)
- f) For SMEs, access to professional advice/assistance during negotiations
- g) Greater understanding by industrial researchers of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- h) Recognition that IF the PRO cooperation results in a product which exceeds expectations, the PRO partner may need to be compensated further in order for the cooperation to be seen as being equitable by all parties.
- i) Financial incentives for staff which create inventions
- j) Recognition that ownership of IPR doesn't need to lie with the industrial partner in all cases
- k) Other
- Please specify



⋮   Please specify -open reply- (optional)

Q16: Do you believe that any of the issues mentioned in the previous Sections should be addressed by legislation at EU-level? (E.g. through new regulations)? -single choice reply- (optional)

⋮  Yes

⋮ X If so, which and why? Requirements for funding, incentives for exchange, funding of researchers' exchange

⋮  No

⋮   If so, which and why? -open reply- (optional)

Q19: Do you believe that legislation should be introduced requiring PROs to exploit their research results? (i.e. legislation with an objective similar to that of the Bayh-Dole Act in the USA)? -single choice reply- (optional)

No

Q20: Do you have comments on any other aspects which are not covered in the above questions and which you consider to be important? (Note that such comments should be limited to issues which relate directly to PRO-industry relations. Thus, they should not cover general issues such as the need for a Community patent, etc.) -open reply- (optional)

While researcher career mobility and other means of closer cooperation are certainly important, EPWS would like to highlight another crucial aspect: statistics show that women do not take part in technology transfer processes to an equal degree. A very small number of patents, for example, is granted to women: a situation possibly pointing to a gender bias in the process. This situation has to be carefully analysed in order to identify ways to truly include and make use of all knowledge sources in the European research area.

The wording of the consultation gives the impression that the consultation is essentially concentrating on industrial research and collaboration. However, similar problems occur in the services sector where the cooperation predominantly concentrates on socio-economic sciences and humanities. We would therefore like to urge to take into account that similar problems exist with regard to socio-economic sciences and the humanities, where universities, PROs and private consultancies produce research outputs and run into similar problems of cooperation. We understand our above comments as applying to these types of research organizations and their professional relations as well and encourage the Commission to make the relevance of transnational research cooperation and knowledge transfer between public research organizations and industry for the humanities and socio-economic sciences explicit.

Overall, the catalogue of questions does not sufficiently allow for differentiation. EPWS would greatly welcome the opportunity for more detailed discussion.