

DRAFT CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

Entrepreneurial Universities: New models

Santiago, March 22 - 23

Around 120 experts come from Europe, Africa, North America, Latin America and Asia were able to meet in Santiago de Compostela, with occasion of the above referred Conference. Based on their own debates and considering the state of the art and recent trends on the subject, the experts agreed on the following conclusions:

- The increasing process of globalization with a growing worldwide economic interdependence, openness and integration, leads on the one hand to a global competition for talent and knowledge-related investments but on the other hand expands the opportunities for transnational cooperation to contribute to the global production and exchange of knowledge. Higher education, research and innovation form a crucial and integral part of these processes.
- There is a need to strengthen the contribution from universities to responsible innovation and entrepreneurship in the process towards a knowledge-based society and economy with a new model of sustainable economic growth, less dependent from cyclical crisis.
- The exchange of knowledge between universities and businesses is a key factor to increase Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. The possible approaches to improve knowledge exchange between academia and firms and the role of universities in the innovation process, needs to be further addressed in the light of the best existent practices and models at EU, national and regional levels.
- Entrepreneurial" universities, which pro-actively engage in knowledge transfer, are engines of economic development. Therefore the effective steering of the university sector is a critical means of improving innovation.
- Business innovation is decidedly a nonlinear process. Instead, innovation is best understood as an interactive, reciprocal process involving different actors and organizations. Universities should be key actors in this process.
- While the tangible outputs of academic research— publications and patents—are important, equally significant to successful innovation is the contribution of highly skilled human capital in the form of new graduates and research doctoral candidates. The quality and the productivity of research doctoral training are critical, not only because research doctorates are an essential input to academic and industrial research, but also because mobile doctoral graduates are an important means of communicating new theoretical insights and emergent research methods to the larger society.

- In Europe policies providing incentives for restructuring research doctoral education are needed. The development of collaborative, cross-institutional doctoral training in selected fields is welcomed. The Finnish National Graduate School, the National Research Schools in the Netherlands, and the joint doctorate networks in the European Union are examples of the efforts by universities and government policy to combine research specialization with sufficient critical mass to make taught doctoral programs more feasible.
- The incorporation of more doctors into businesses and the possibility of making a PhD in businesses is still a pending issue in many parts of the EU.
- The role of linkages among the various actors and organizations that participate in the overall innovation process are important for innovation. These linkages include not only formal knowledge transfer arrangements between universities and industry, such as science parks and joint university-industry research ventures, but also soft linkages -- the many channels of communication such as publications, meetings, and consultants -- by which knowledge is exchanged.
- Recent trends in the valorisation of research results at universities show the importance of a stable regulation framework as well as an adequate system of incentives. A substrate of knowledge generation and transfer activities mobilizing own resources is crucial in addition to good ideas to mobilize public and private funding.
- Innovation activities of academic staff should deserve a better consideration in the evaluation criteria of the development of academic careers.
- At the initial phase of valorisation of research results: detection of innovative or potentially exploitable results, tools like the “proof of concept” can be a useful tool. Publication and protection (the next phase of valorisation) are not mutually exclusive but publication before filing could put into risk the novelty of the potential patent.
- Science and Technology (S&T) Parks are an important part of the Innovation System. Entrepreneurial Universities can drive innovation through S&T Parks. These are increasingly strong sources of knowledge-based entrepreneurship and drivers of economic development.
- There is a need to increase the differentiation and specialization of the S&T parks through: knowledge domains, economic sectors and market niches. The challenges are not only technological. Creativity will be increasingly needed in the post-crisis times.
- Clustering and networking of knowledge-related agents around entrepreneurial universities in S&T parks has demonstrated potential to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the environment.
- Responsible entrepreneurship should be promoted as a transversal competence within academic curricula. As part of the social dimension and responsibility of universities, employability should be a responsibility of universities, in addition to their missions of teaching, research and contribution to innovation.
- In these times of economic crisis the gender issue becomes crucial. Our society can not neglect 50% of the human capital in universities. Female values can add value to leadership and entrepreneurship.

- There is a need to foster a closer link between the R&D public system and businesses. Universities need to go beyond traditional R&D pursuing the transformation of research results into products and services. Businesses need to base more their activities in existent knowledge and technology from the public sector, incorporating more graduates and doctors.
- At policy level, the European Innovation Strategy should consider actions on the 5 strategic axes of the Innovation Pentagon: People, Finance, Markets, Territorial integration, Internationalization.
- The future 'Europe 2020'-strategy can offer a fruitful context to reinforce the contribution of research-intensive universities to innovation. Knowledge and Innovation should be at the heart of it, stimulating both the global competitiveness of Europe and the shift towards a new model of sustainable socioeconomic growth with social integration.
- Building on the announced and much welcomed initiatives like 'Union for Innovation', fostering collaboration among universities, research institutes and businesses, a strategic framework should be further developed to seriously address the common challenges in the process towards a knowledge-based society,
- This EU strategy should support institutions to develop their own strategies as well as would help to improve the coordination and synergies between the national strategies, aligning the national efforts towards a common and shared objective,
- While further developing the strategic framework of international cooperation in innovation, a regional approach should be considered taking into account the specific needs and respecting the diversity of the different regions worldwide, and avoiding supporting schemes that could lead to increasing the asymmetry in the degree of development among different regions of the world.

The experts attending the Spanish Presidency Conference on Entrepreneurial Universities: New Models, asked the Spanish Presidency to elevate these agreed conclusions to the political level, as an input for discussions at the Education Council of the European Union. These conclusions could be considered in relation with the possible adoption of an EU international higher education strategy aimed at improving coherence and complementarity between existing international cooperation initiatives at both EU and national levels.