From Research to Impact: Institutional Support for Research-based Innovation

Webinar Background Note

Community for Educational Innovation - CEI

22/10/2025

European Commission | CEI

From Research to Impact: Institutional Support for Research-based Innovation

Thematic Strand 2 - From Research to Impact: Bridging the innovation gap in higher education

The Community for Educational Innovation (CEI) webinars bring together educators, researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and representatives from civil society to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and engage in discussions on innovation in education. CEI webinars promote the strategic development of skills and competences essential for student success across various sectors, aligning with the objectives of the recent European Commission's communication on the Union of Skills to enhance the EU's competitiveness through advancing its education and training systems.

This document describes the background, focus, and key questions that will guide the presentations and discussions during the webinar 'From Research to Impact: Institutional Support for Research-based Innovation' on 22 October 2025.

This background note synthesises recent evidence on how higher education institutions support researchers to enhance knowledge valorisation. Knowledge valorisation is "the process of creating social and economic value from knowledge by linking different areas and sectors and by transforming data, know-how and research results into sustainable products, services, solutions and knowledge-based policies that benefit society."[1] Effective transfer of research results to society and industry is crucial for economic growth, employment, and the overall progress of society, driving industrial competitiveness, green transition, and digital transformation.

European Union policies supporting knowledge valorisation

The European Union has established a robust policy framework to support research and innovation. A cornerstone of this framework is the European Research Area (ERA),[2] which aims to create a single, borderless European market for research, innovation, and technology. Launched in 2000, the ERA goals are to make research policies more effective by coordinating them across countries, strengthening Europe's scientific and technological base, and helping to solve societal challenges such as digital and green transitions.

[1] Council Recommendation on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation, 2022/2415, p. 143, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H2415

[2] European Research Area (ERA), https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/

The *ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024*[3] established 20 priority actions to strengthen the European research and innovation landscape. These actions include open science, attractive research careers, brain circulation, gender equality, intellectual property, research infrastructure, knowledge valorisation, and EU-wide access to excellence. Building on this work, the European Commission adopted the *ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027*[4] in February 2025. It introduced new actions focused on equity in open science, the European Science for Policy (S4P) ecosystem, the responsible use of AI in science, and research security.

As a part of a new ERA for research and innovation, the Council of the European Union adopted the Recommendation on *EU Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation.*[5] It updates the 2008 Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and the Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations.[6] The principles aim to maximise the transformation of research and innovation results into solutions that benefit society. They emphasise co-creation between stakeholders, entrepreneurial skills, peer learning, systems of incentives, and monitoring and evaluation.

The EU Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation are implemented through a set of four codes of practice. These codes serve as practical guides for researchers and innovators, offering more detailed, hands-on recommendations to help implement the broader principles in daily practice:

> **Code of practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation**:[7] Addresses challenges such as the efficient management of intellectual assets in joint research activities and the development of research and innovation activities in open science and open innovation contexts.

[3] European Commission, European Research Area Policy Agenda – Overview of actions for the period 2022-2024, 2021, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf

[4] Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025-2027, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0062

[5] Council Recommendation on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation, 2022/2415, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H2415

[6] Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations, 2008/416/EC, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008H0416&qid=1675945628993

[7] Commission Recommendation on a Code of Practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation in the European Research Area, 2023/499, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0499&qid=1678171231088

- **Code of practice on industry-academia co-creation for knowledge valorisation**:[8] Facilitates the creation of thriving conditions for industry-academia co-creation for improved knowledge valorisation.
- **Code of practice on citizen-engagement**:[9] Facilitates the creation of participatory processes and practices of sustainable citizen engagement for improved knowledge valorisation.
- **Code of practice on standardisation in the European Research Area**:[10] Contribute to successfully integrating research and innovation with standardisation by providing guidance for researchers and innovators.

Furthermore, the *Council Conclusions on Strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area and overcoming its fragmentation*[11] advocates for increased investment in research and innovation to meet the target of 3% of gross domestic product and incentivises private investment. It stresses the need to improve skills and foster a culture of entrepreneurship and risk-taking among research and innovation actors. It also calls for strengthening research and technology infrastructures and unleashing growth and investment by simplifying funding instruments and promoting flexible, investor-friendly business conditions for startups.

In January 2025, the Commission presented the *Competitiveness Compass for the EU*,[12] a new roadmap to boost economic growth. The compass focuses on three core necessities: closing the innovation gap, decarbonising the economy, and reducing dependencies. It outlines strategies such as creating a friendly environment for startups, simplifying rules, and supporting the development of key technologies. The compass also introduces five 'horizontal enablers' to increase competitiveness, including cutting red tape, removing single market barriers, enabling more efficient financing, promoting skills and quality jobs, and ensuring better coordination of policies.

[8] Commission Recommendation on a Code of Practice on industry-academia co-creation for knowledge valorisation, 2024/774, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024H0774&qid=1709626992959

[9] Commission Recommendation on a Code of Practice on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation, 2024/736, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024H0736&qid=1709626992959

[10] Commission Recommendation on a Code of Practice on standardisation in the European Research Area, 2023/498, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0498&qid=1678171117168

[11] Council Conclusions on Strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area and overcoming its fragmentation, 16179/2024, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16179-2024-INIT/en/pdf

[12] Communication on a Competitiveness Compass for the EU, COM(2025) 30 final, 2025, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0030

Knowledge valorisation support services

Support services for knowledge valorisation are the programmes, mechanisms and functions bridging the gap between academic research and its practical application. These services facilitate and ensure that research is not confined to academic publications but is actively transformed into tangible solutions. Their role is multifaceted, encompassing strategic guidance to entrepreneurship support. Key functions of support services for knowledge valorisation include:

- **Intellectual asset management**:[13] Providing expert guidance on IP protection, including patent filing, licensing negotiations, and developing IP strategies that protect shared interests and maximise innovation potential.
- **Commercialisation and academic entrepreneurship support**: Guiding researchers and industry partners "commercialisation strategies, like presenting technology offers to companies and visiting them."[14]
- **Facilitating partnerships and international collaboration**:[15] Promoting the creation of new partnerships at different levels between researchers, enterprises, investors and non-profit organisations.
- **Talent development**: "Promote the development of the competences, skills and capacities needed to support knowledge valorisation operations involving all stakeholders, from students, researchers and inventors to entrepreneurs and professional intermediaries, and from knowledge users to policymakers."[16]
- **Resource and infrastructure sharing**:[17] Promoting the pooling of knowledge, infrastructure, and expertise across networks of collaborating entities, fostering researcher mobility, developing joint training opportunities, and promoting synergies among diverse innovation ecosystems.

[13] Council Recommendation on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation, 2022/2415, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H2415

[14] Džajić Uršič, E., and Besednjak Valič, T., *Technology Transfer Offices for better management of the university-industry collaboration: Comparison of Slovenia, Italy, and Malta*, Journal of Technology Management and Innovation | Innovation for Social and Sustainable Progress, 19(2), 2024, p. 48, https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-27242024000200043

[15] National Research Council of Italy, PROMO-TT: Matching research, industry and investors, 2023, https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/kvp/files/kvp-promo-tt.pdf

[16] Council Recommendation on the guiding principles for knowledge valorisation, 2022/2415, p. 146, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H2415

[17] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, PPMI, Grumbinaitė, I., Colus, F. and Buitrago, H., *Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, p. 235, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/32313

- **Knowledge dissemination and policy uptake**:[18] Making research results, data, and methodologies accessible to inform data-driven policymaking and address societal challenges.

Support services for knowledge valorisation are usually provided through several support mechanisms. Inside higher education institutions, they are housed in knowledge transfer offices (KTOs) and/or technology transfer offices (TTOs), industry liaison teams, incubators, entrepreneurship centres and living labs, which handle intellectual asset management, commercialisation guidance, partnership brokerage, talent development, shared access to research infrastructures and data, and policy-facing dissemination. At the regional/national level, they are organised through public intermediaries and networks that align institutions with Smart Specialisation Strategies, such as regional development agencies, cluster organisations and knowledge brokers, which pool facilities, run joint training and mobility, and connect firms to university expertise.

Challenges in support services for knowledge valorisation

Recent literature has identified several challenges to support knowledge valorisation across various levels, from institutional strategies to the broader ecosystem. These barriers can be categorised as follows:

- **Aligning goals and strategies for knowledge valorisation across diverse units and stakeholder groups:** Knowledge transfer managers face the challenge of aligning strategies across diverse departments and fields**.** "This requires the use of various knowledge transfer mechanisms and capabilities which can be difficult to coordinate and manage."[19] Additionally, aligning the interests of non-academic partners with local and national policies and support systems can be difficult, requiring institutions to develop cohesive approaches and models.
- **Standardising processes for knowledge valorisation in research and innovation**: "There is a need to educate and advise the research community on understanding and thinking about standardisation from the early stages

[18] Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Valorisation Channels and Tools: Boosting the Transformation of knowledge into new sustainable solutions*, 2020, p. 33, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/480584

[19] Alexander, A., Martin, D., Malolchev, C., & Miller, K., University – Industry Collaboration: Using Meta-Rules to Overcome Barriers to Knowledge Transfer. Journal of Technology Transfer, 45, 371-392. 2018, p. 376, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-018-9685-1

of the research."[20] This is crucial to protect intellectual property, disseminate, and facilitate the valorisation of research results.

- **Promoting awareness and training of researchers in navigating knowledge valorisation**: "Most academics do not have previous connection with the TTO or have not even approached the TTO to explore the possibilities for collaboration with industry."[21] This lack of awareness and insufficient knowledge in project management and university-industry collaboration can hinder the valorisation process.
- **Aligning incentives to promote knowledge valorisation among academics**: In most cases, "researchers' performance is generally measured by their scientific productivity publishing in internationally peer-reviewed journals, participation in research projects and networks."[22] These metrics can de-incentivise activities related to knowledge valorisation.
- **Navigating a complex system of knowledge valorisation intermediaries**: The emergence of numerous "new intermediary organisations for knowledge transfer (KTOs in universities, regional KTOs, private organisations, etc.) may create an overly complex system."[23] A coherent information and organisational system is required to streamline the process for all stakeholders and prevent coordination failures.
- **Adapting to local absorptive capacity**: A region's capacity to absorb and utilise new knowledge depends on the number and type of firms it contains. "Those most able to absorb knowledge are usually based in more advanced core cities, making it more difficult for universities to have an impact on innovation in less developed regions."[24]

Focus and key questions for the webinar

The webinar, *From Research to Impact: Institutional Support for Research-based Innovation*, will explore how higher education institutions organise and professionalise support services for knowledge valorisation. Key questions guiding the discussion will include:

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[20] Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Valorisation Channels and Tools: Boosting the Transformation of knowledge into new sustainable solutions*, 2020, p. 32, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/480584

[21] Bilić, I., Škokić, V. & Lovrinčević, M. Academic Entrepreneurship in Post-transition Country—Case Study of Croatia. J Knowl Econ 12, 2021, p. 30, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-017-0452-6

[22] Edwards, J., Arregui-Pabollet, E., Biagi, F., Jonkers, K., *Factors influencing the potential of European Higher Education Institutions to contribute to innovation and regional development*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, p. 16, https://doi.org/10.2760/586266, JRC119771

[23] Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2020, p. 22.

[24] Edwards, et al., 2020, p. 8.

- What are the most persistent institutional and regional challenges in promoting and supporting knowledge valorisation?
- Which enablers are required to promote knowledge valorisation — pooled services, demand-side instruments such as innovation procurement, or incentive reforms in assessment and careers?
- How can higher education institutions strengthen their support services for knowledge valorisation?

Share your good practices regarding 'Bridging the Innovation Gap in Higher Education' to enrich the final report for this thematic strand of the CEI community. The call focuses on:

- **Partnerships** between higher education institutions and non-academic stakeholders.
- **Support services** for research-based innovation.
- **Capacity-building** for researchers, innovators, and support staff.

Contribute your experience in the CEI community's call for good practices here!

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