

## **The EIC must better recognise the role of technology transfer offices in enabling breakthrough and game-changing innovations**

**The Guild contributed to the report prepared by Christian Ehler, Member of the European Parliament, on the implementation of the European Innovation Council (EIC). It shared its overall positive experience and its recommendations to ensure that the EIC creates the conditions for the emergence of more breakthrough and game-changing innovations in Europe: develop further and extend the Transition scheme, and better acknowledge and support the roles of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) in innovation ecosystems.**

The Guild has an overall positive experience with the European Innovation Council (EIC). Our member universities participated in 64 EIC pilot projects under Horizon 2020 and captured around 10% of the total allocations to Higher Education Institutes through this funding scheme. They also coordinate six EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects awarded in 2021. No public information is available yet on their total participation.

The Guild particularly praises the low administrative burden induced by the EIC projects and the allowed small size of EIC project consortia (which eases their management). The EIC Transition funding scheme especially has a high potential to be a game-changing instrument in the EU innovation policy toolbox, as it provides universities and their spin-offs with appropriate financial support for their proof-of-concept projects and the development of business plans. Therefore, we call for the further development of the EIC Transition instrument by increasing its financing (allowing for awarding a larger number of proposals) and making relevant research projects (other than those funded by EIC Pathfinder or European Research Council grants) eligible. While the synergies between ERC and EIC are important, many other research projects could deliver breakthrough innovations if they had better access to funding for proof of concept and the development of their (business) models.

However, The Guild voices the concern that the EIC somehow overlooks and unnecessarily duplicates or even circumvents the activities of universities' Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs). It is crucial that the EIC better acknowledges and supports TTOs' role as intermediaries in innovation ecosystems to facilitate knowledge valorisation and enable the emergence of breakthrough innovations.

The Portfolio Management by EIC Programme Managers may enable the implementation of a common vision and strategic approach but runs the risk of managing projects without taking enough into consideration the particularities of the research and innovation ecosystems in which these projects are carried out. Therefore, it is crucial that the EIC Portfolio managers recognize that the TTOs are better placed to maximise the exploitation of research results, and therefore interact closely with them.

The EIC provides granted projects with innovation support services. The Guild fully acknowledges the importance for inventors to have access to such services to exploit their research results. However, universities already provide, through their TTOs, such services. Therefore, it would be more effective

and efficient if the EIC ensures that the TTOs have the resources and capacities to offer high-quality innovation support services to the researchers who are willing to exploit their research outcomes.

In [a statement recently published](#), The Guild expressed similar concerns about the provisions that give EIC inventors indefinite royalty-free access rights. These provisions, as they currently stand, will negatively affect the functioning of already well-performing TTOs without strengthening the capacities of weaker TTOs. Therefore, The Guild urges the European Commission to amend these provisions so that they are not by default, and to support further capacity-building actions for TTOs. The EIC should ensure that EIC inventors have access to well-functioning TTOs and high-quality innovation support services. It will thereby contribute to the emergence and development of strengthened pan-European innovation ecosystems which could underpin the competitiveness and strategic autonomy of Europe.

For further information, please contact Julien Chicot, Senior Policy Officer at The Guild ([julien.chicot@the-guild.eu](mailto:julien.chicot@the-guild.eu)).