

## Proposals of The Guild for the EU Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation

The Guild recognises that the European Commission's Recommendation of 10 April 2008 on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities<sup>1</sup> gave a new impetus to the adoption or further development of intellectual property (IP) strategies in higher education institutions. Since then, universities have been striving to carry out their 'third' mission and to increase their contribution to addressing economic and societal challenges.

In September 2020, the European Commission asserted that a new priority for the revamped European Research Area (ERA) is the translation of research and innovation (R&I) results into the economy.<sup>2</sup> Through ERA, researchers are challenged to change how they do research, how they publish, and how they involve stakeholders.<sup>3</sup> For instance, open science practices are becoming the new *modus operandi* of research. In the same context, universities are increasingly engaging with their local innovation systems. Beyond the sole provision of highly skilled human resources and new knowledge, they participate in Open Innovation processes; stimulate entrepreneurship among their researchers, students and non-academic staff; and provide knowledge services to support the development of local companies.

In the light of these new trends and expectations, The Guild welcomes the renewal of the European Commission's 2008 Recommendation through the preparation of new Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation. To ensure that these guiding principles provide appropriate support to research performing organisations in order to valorise their research results, we recommend that they consider: financial support and non-financial support (at both institutional and individual levels) for knowledge transfer activities; new requirements for EU-funded R&I projects; further recognition of knowledge transfer activities in research assessments; promotion of knowledge transfer in all research fields and disciplines; and involvement of industry in higher education.

- **A systemic financial support for knowledge transfer activities.** The Guild highlights that dedicated funding streams for Knowledge Transfer Offices at national level are crucial. They should complement research funding and therefore ensure that the research budget of research performing organisations is not used to finance knowledge transfer activities. Moreover, in order to be relevant, the financial support should be available to any university in Europe and meet their needs at any stage of development of their knowledge transfer strategies and practices. The Guild also calls for Proof-of-Concept funds for individual

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Recommendation of 10 April 2008 on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations. [C\(2008\) 1329](#).

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2020) A new ERA for Research and Innovation. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions [COM\(2020\) 628 final](#).

<sup>3</sup> Baccigotti, A. (2020) Connecting the dots: IPRS, Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Open Science. The Guild blog post: <https://www.the-guild.eu/blog/connecting-the-dots-iprs-knowledge-transfer-innova.html>.

researchers to help them transform their research results into marketable products, services, or processes. This funding should support the development of high-quality prototypes (in order to overcome the “valley of death” and reach the higher technology readiness level [TRL]) and lessen the risk for companies.

- **Non-financial support for knowledge transfers in universities.** The Guild recommends that the Guiding Principles draw on existing initiatives with proven relevance to help universities valorise their research results. Support for capacity building in universities’ Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) should be provided through long-term programmes aimed at enabling their real growth and development, e.g. schemes for cross-border mentorship and coaching for researchers willing to create spin-out companies.<sup>4</sup> The Guild also praises specialised professional IP services, such as the Intellectual Property Booster,<sup>5</sup> which offers public research organisations assistance with IP evaluation and guidance to elaborate their IP strategies. We also call for policy initiatives aimed at providing higher education institutions with appropriate support for innovation capacity building and incentives to act as hubs in their ecosystems and connect those ecosystems. However, The Guild recommends that such support become more systematic, longer term and available to all EU universities. The Guild is similarly calling for services to support the knowledge transfer activities of individual researchers. These may include collaboration spaces, with innovation management tools and co-working options, innovation management templates, and moderation templates. It is also crucial to assist researchers in their relationships with investors, as most universities do not yet have access to investors and lack know-how on venture building. The Guild advocates for a Code of Practice for relationships with investors and for the creation of an investor pool.
- **Recognition of researchers’ knowledge valorisation activities and collaboration with industry and other non-academic sectors.** Individual researchers have little incentive to engage in knowledge valorisation, as they are predominantly evaluated against their publications in (high-impact) journals for their career development. The Guild supports a reform of the research assessment system which would further recognise research-related activities, such as knowledge valorisation and entrepreneurship, while keeping research quality at its core. It is equally important to recognise the diversity of research careers and therefore consider researchers focusing on knowledge transfer activities. The recognition of these activities would give individual researchers further incentives to engage in, for instance, knowledge transfers and the creation of spin-out companies, and would therefore contribute to a change in the research culture.
- **Promotion of knowledge transfer in all research fields.** The objectives of innovation management activities should be to contribute to both economic and social welfare. For

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, the Horizon 2020 project PROGRESS-TT (PROs GRowing Europe through best practice SolutionS for Technology Transfer): <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/643486>.

<sup>5</sup> IP Booster: <https://ipbooster.meta-group.com/>

instance, the valorisation of the results of research in Social Science, Humanities and the Arts is crucial to inducing behavioural changes and stimulating social innovation.

- **Collaboration with industry to better articulate the needs of local ecosystems and provide students with more opportunities to apply knowledge to real-world problems.**<sup>6</sup>

Finally, The Guild highlights the importance of involving further research and innovation stakeholders, including higher education institutions, in the co-design of the EU Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation. While the endorsement and buy-in of the EU Member States is crucial for their adoption, universities are the best placed to identify the challenges facing knowledge valorisation and define appropriate, realistic, ambitious and feasible solutions, while ensuring their concrete implementation.

The Guild's Innovation Working Group contributed to the development of these proposals led by Urša Jerše (University of Ljubljana) and Anette Poulsen Miltoft (Aarhus University).

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<sup>6</sup> Angouri, J. (2021) Reimagining Research-led Education in a Digital Age. The Guild Insight Paper No. 3. The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities and Bern Open Publishing. DOI: 10.48350/156297