Chapter 29

Innovative Entrepreneurship in Poland within Cooperation of the Universities with Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

The main impetus of entrepreneurship development comes undoubtedly at present from innovation based on knowledge, education as well as research and development activities. In Poland, as in all other countries of the European Union, the development and uptake of innovation is one of the pillars of the knowledge-based economy and an essential element of the socio-economic cohesion policy. Despite the fact that Poland shows in recent years, strong economic performance, it ranks in the statistics among the countries with the lowest innovation in the European Union and the process of transferring innovative solutions from science to enterprise still faces many barriers and limitations. On the other hand the increasing awareness of the importance of science and knowledge is to be observed not only in academic field but in practice too. More often different forms of cooperation between universities and entrepreneurs are undertaken. Based on innovative projects the chapter is intended to analyze and evaluate the development of innovative entrepreneurship in Poland, taking into account the factors shaping it as well as the mechanism of science and business cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The development of effective innovation and commercialization of knowledge processes are complex and multidimensional. The level of innovations implementation depends on many external factors like the degree of relationship between science and business and funding opportunities for modern solutions as well as internal factors which relate primarily to the preparation and the involvement of the supplier and the recipient of the implemented technology. Commercialization of knowledge which is transferred from universities to business and its effectiveness is therefore
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the result of the capacity and activity of scientific institutions and their research teams, openness to the development and competitiveness of enterprises and properly constructed institutional and legal system affecting the shape of the innovations transfer.

Polish entrepreneurs admit that they feel the market pressure but argue that they need to keep up and not to set trends. So it is more an attempt to keep pace, and not an innovative approach to products, services or processes (Zadura–Lichota, 2013). The problem however is not only the attitude of entrepreneurs but also and perhaps above all the organizational culture, prevailing in companies, institutions, and even universities. In most of the dimensions, whether in the area of entrepreneurship and the efficiency of the research system Polish results are well below the EU average (Innovation Union Scoreboard, 2014) The process of innovation transfer from science to enterprises still faces many barriers and limitations in Poland. Basic barriers are the lack of sufficient funding for research and development at universities, too low R&D expenditures in private sector, insufficient level of cooperation and information exchange between suppliers and recipients of technology. Low consolidation and synergy of knowledge commercialization system in Poland, which is more due to the closed nature of the functioning of the different actors of the system should also be indicated. In practice, this results in the under-developed level of collaboration between universities, enterprises and business institutions that support the development and implementation of innovations.

One of the basic and key instruments of initiating and supporting cooperation between science and business in Poland was the Operational Program “Innovative Economy” (OP IE) which ended in 2013. Acting as a tool for the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007-2013, the program was aimed at creating conditions for increasing the competitiveness of the Polish economy based on innovative enterprises. The main specific objectives of the OP IE included: increased activity and competitiveness of the study, an increase in the number of companies operating on the basis of innovation, stimulating the development of new technologies in companies, increasing access to finance for the commercialization process and pro-innovation services, including the provision of adequate infrastructure and resources assets (OP IE). These objectives are continued in the current programming period 2014-2020, within the framework of the Operational Program “Intelligent Development” (OP ID).

The highest level of innovation transfer from science to enterprises is to be observed in the largest Polish universities, mainly the technical universities functioning in economically developed regions of the country. These are among others AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow and Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice.

The aim of the chapter is to analyze the implementation level of pro-innovation projects in Poland. The chapter attempts to assess their effectiveness, the main barriers and constraints. The point of reference will be in this field the implementation of various actions undertaken within the Operational Program “Innovative Economy 2007-2013”. The research objective will be carried out on the basis of case studies, which will provide examples of innovative projects in the field of strengthening cooperation between universities and businesses carried out by selected Polish universities.

After this introduction in the first section a short overview of the innovation concept in general was presented. In the next sections innovation of Poland in comparison to other EU Member States is presented as well as a general overview of the universities cooperation with business. After these previous theoretical and contextual frameworks, two selected projects are presented as case study. The aim is to show how universities can get engaged in effective cooperation with enterprises
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