



## **Responsible Partnering: Report outlines progress made and challenges facing R+D collaboration in Europe**

**5<sup>th</sup> June 2008.** A new report gives an important insight into the state of collaborative research, knowledge exchange and technology transfer among businesses, universities and research and technology organisations.

The report - "Responsible Partnering between Research and Business" - published jointly by the European University Association (EUA), European Industrial Research Management Association (EIRMA), the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO), and the Public Research Organisations Transfer Offices Network (ProTon Europe) - reveals that considerable progress in research collaboration has been made in recent years. As universities and other public research bodies develop the competencies to manage 'open innovation', the report notes "the value of strategic long-term partnership and co-innovation based on trust and professionalism is widely recognised and more emphasis is being given to delivery and outcomes rather than philosophical issues".

Equally, specific initiatives such as training schemes and Intellectual Property guidelines have been developed to make research collaboration easier and more effective. The four stakeholder organisations also noted that more attention is being paid to opportunities and needs presented by the SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) community.

The report is based on the findings of a recent conference on Responsible Partnering held in Lisbon during the EU Portuguese Presidency, which aimed to analyse trends in R + D collaboration since the launch of the Responsible Partnering Guidelines Initiative by EUA, EIRMA, EARTO and ProTon Europe in 2004. Responsible Partnering is a voluntary code of conduct for enterprises and public research designed to maximise the benefits of collaborative research for all parties in a sustainable way. It is designed to provide consistent guidelines, checklists and tools enable partners to collaborate more effectively, while maintaining their core missions of research, education and innovation.

In launching the report, Dr John Smith (EUA Deputy Secretary General) emphasises that "Universities are seen increasingly as playing a key role in enhancing the economic competitiveness of Europe. A crucial element of their success in this role is meeting the challenge of building mutual trust and lasting relationships in collaborative research with business and other external partners. The Responsible Partnering Guidelines, based on existing good practices across Europe, provide the basic tools which can help universities in developing sound institutional strategies and policies concerning alignment of interests, consortia-building, intellectual property rights management and professional skills and training requirements to meet their defined missions"

The new report also notes, however, that there is still a number of barriers that need to be overcome to improve collaboration. These include harnessing untapped opportunities for partnership and exchange and ensuring that good practice processes are fully implemented in many organisations. It was noted also at the conference that collaboration had been held back by a lack of suitably trained professionals to implement such processes.

Stakeholders agreed the Responsible Partnering initiative was a sound basis for overcoming such barriers to research collaboration, providing that it has sufficient visibility and adoption. The aim is now to revise the handbook guidelines so they include more 'human aspects', recognising the skills that make collaborations work well. The revised guidelines will also emphasise the importance of communication between partners on expectations and assumptions and methods of building trust. They will also look to turn check lists in to genuine assessment tools by formulating clear questions and statements and introducing criteria for being a 'responsible partner'.

The report proposes a series of actions for the Responsible Partnering associations to take forward - of which two priorities are being tackled in the coming months: to investigate ways to address the need for greater clarity about the implications for collaborative research of the new State Aid rules, and to propose simplified procedures for intellectual property management in the present debate on the new EC Recommendation on Management of Intellectual Property in Knowledge Transfer Activities and Code of Practice for Universities and Other Public Research Organisations (published April 2008).

In its conclusion, the report notes that "Europe's future depends on providing the conditions that attract good minds from within Europe and elsewhere to contribute to its success. These conditions include the possibility to carry out top quality research and to benefit from the findings of such research. The conference reconfirmed the importance of durable relationships between research actors, based on good support and management tools."

[www.responsible-partnering.org](http://www.responsible-partnering.org)

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