

# Study “State of the European University-Business Cooperation (UBC)”<sup>1</sup>: Findings related to LLL<sup>1</sup>

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[Summary compiled by the conference organisers as background information for the participants of the 43<sup>rd</sup> EUCEN Conference “Universities’ Engagement in and with Society. The ULLL contribution”, 9-11 May 2012, Graz, Austria]

## **Background and Sample:**

Contracted by the EC 2010, this study – the first of its kind – provides an overview of the current status of UBC development in 33 European countries, as well as identifying the different barriers to and drivers of UBC. It uses a multi-method approach, emphasising subjective perceptions and behavioural issues over pure objective measurements. The sample consisted of 6,280 academics and representatives of Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

## **General Findings:**

This study has revealed an underdeveloped and highly fragmented European University Business Cooperation environment (large variations among countries, types of institutions, etc.).

Eight different ways in which Higher Education Institutions and business co-operate were identified: R&D, mobility of academics, mobility of students, commercialisation of R&D results, curriculum development and delivery, LLL (defined as a “provision of adult education, permanent education and/or continuing education involving the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours at all stages of life by HEIs”, p. 27), Entrepreneurship, and Governance.

Academics state that UBC rarely increases their standing in their HEI or their chances of promotion. The results show that the higher the extent of UBC carried out, the higher the perceived *benefits* of UBC are. The existence of mutual trust, mutual commitment and shared goals are rated as essential *drivers*, whereas a lack of funding and bureaucracy are seen as the most relevant *barriers*. It was also found that the presence of some *structure*, such as a central contact person, a central agency, etc., enhance engagement in various fields of UBC. Successful knowledge transfer is a process of continuous dialogue, a build-up of social networks which is very often based on strong personal relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> T. Davey / Th. Baaken / V. Galan Muros / A. Meerman: The State of European University-Business Cooperation. Final Report – Study on the cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and public and private organisations in Europe, Münster: Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre, University of Applied Sciences 2011 [[http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/studies/munster\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/studies/munster_en.pdf)].

In terms of income, only a small part of third-party funds is derived from co-operation with business. The extent of UBC in HEIs is influenced by (among others) factors such as age and professional experience. The area of knowledge is also important. UBC occurs mostly in technological areas and to a smaller degree in social areas.

**Findings related to LLL:**

The key finding is that LLL is underdeveloped among academics and that an increase of knowledge about LLL is needed. The authors suggest the following action: “Communicating to business the possibilities and benefits that LLL offers, facilitating the accessibility to the different LLL activities” (p. 20 and 56-57).

34.7% of academics stated that they have no cooperation with business in respect to LLL (low = 25.0%; medium = 22.5%; high = 17,8%). The figures for HEI are: no BC at all = 7.4%; low = 21.7%; medium = 39,3%; high = 31.5%). Almost 29% of HEIs have supporting features for LLL in the guise of a central contact person, 26% have either a programme or a central agency for LLL. The results show that those HEIs with such a supporting structure have a significantly higher development of LLL. Interestingly, the percentage of HEIs participating in the LLL programme of the EU seems to be rather high (66,2%). It ranks third after Erasmus Mundus (78,2%) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (71,3%).