

Collaboration of Students with the Commercial Sector at Two Selected Czech Regional Universities – A Case Study

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Abstract: In the current 21st century, more and more attention is being focused on so-called technology transfer. Universities and companies are the main actors in this transfer. Forms of cooperation with the commercial sector, i.e., the two-way flow of information and knowledge, are an important component of the modern university, which fulfils the given vision and goals in each region. Each region, in the Czech Republic we call them regions, has different precious resources, and needs at the same time. These needs are reflected by governmental units, including universities and companies, and together they create supply and demand opportunities in the labour market and try to utilise local resources. This article maps the current official forms of cooperation with the commercial sector at two selected Czech universities - the University of Hradec Kralove and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. The article aims to describe these activities, from available official sources, university websites, official social networks, and finally from interviews with staff and students at these universities. Another aim of the article is to compare individual activities and discuss the possibilities of sharing good practices in technology transfer between universities in the two regions of East and West Bohemia.

Keywords: cooperation with commercial sector; student; university; region; business

JEL Classification: M21; M53; M54

1. Introduction

The collaboration with businesses around providing students with practical professional experience is increasing in importance in the university environment at the present time. Companies approach local universities and offer various forms of practical experience, e. g. corporate internships, to their students already during their studies. Universities organise job fairs, invite keynote speakers from the commercial sector, practical courses led by expert professionals and other programmes with the objective to establish a space for successful collaboration between university students and businesses (Carayannis et al., 2018). In the Czech Republic, this extensive issue is very fractionalised and decentralised. Moreover, it is not given much attention by the scientific community, which results in the scarcity of scientific literature dealing with this topic in research databases. The sources of information most often used are the websites of various universities. The collaboration with the commercial sector is organised both by the university as one subject and by its individual

faculties as well as departments. This situation leads to students being unable to find one comprehensive source of information about these activities and thus take part in them. Potential employers of students therefore establish collaboration with individual faculties and even departments. For employers, these procedures are time-consuming and often lead to no results. The natural course of conduct as perceived by the employers would be to communicate on the university level with one centralised point of communication where all activities would be coordinated, and all information gathered and distributed. Such a place would also serve as the single point for contact for the potential employers as well as for the students and university graduates.

For technological companies, and not only for them, the practical skills and knowledge of students is the key criterion. The businesses and industries perceive the graduates from technical schools as overqualified but lacking in professional experience (Widiyanti et al., 2017). The ambition of this article is to map out selected activities at two regional universities stemming from the experience of the authors of this article. The two regional universities chosen for this article are in the two regional cities in the Czech Republic – Hradec Kralove and Plzen. Both cities support entrepreneurship through regional and local incubators and coworking facilities which, unlike in the capital city of Prague, struggle to stay operational and often must defend their significance and importance for the field of innovation and support of knowledge and technology transfer. In recent years, this situation has been improving due to new collaboration created through the support of entrepreneurial spirit in students and general support of entrepreneurship and start-ups by various NGOs, platforms, and the support of the Czech government. The two selected universities organise lectures, job fairs, programmes, practical courses, and other activities such as competitions and public presentations, with the aim to create room for successful collaboration between the university students and companies. The universities also support various possibilities of entrepreneurship and often co-organise such activities with business incubators and local entrepreneurs (University of West Bohemia, 2022). The aim of the universities is to offer students the widest range of possibilities, often as follow-up to their fields of study and accredited courses and programmes of individual faculties. The companies seek any opportunity to motivate the universities to fill their vacant positions, and university programmes are a very popular option to do so. With the increasing possibilities on the job market, transport infrastructure and the development of other industries, the students choosing the school they will study at are increasingly focusing on how the field of study will improve their employability in the respective field in their future career.

The Czech university environment, having been due to several decades of the Communist regime without any connection to private enterprise, which undoubtedly brings innovation and enables creativity, is gradually developing and learning to work on building relationships with employers (Rybnicek & Königsgruber, 2019). At present, unfortunately with a very limited budget and low staffing capacity, universities are trying to embrace all the opportunities the private sector offers and make them available to their students and thus also enhance their profile and attract a higher number of potential students (Studenta, 2019). In Czech conditions, as described above, it is advantageous to seek efficient formats of

collaboration with the commercial sector that are also cost-effective. The ideal solution for universities is to involve their graduates, who are willing to commit their time without seeking standard financial compensation which they normally receive from their employment or business activities (University of Hradec Kralove, 2022). The current university environment and conditions do not yet make it possible to hire managers who should build above-standard relationships with employers and would be responsible for administering this whole agenda (Rajalo & Vadi, 2017).

To provide an example of how it works abroad, the authors briefly mention Cambridge University. At prestigious British universities, it is common for career centres to have consultants who build high-quality relationships with employers through regular contact and a well-designed system. Cambridge University, for example, has a well-designed website of their career centre, which provides their students with valuable information in a very comprehensive manner. The students are guided by questions (see picture Figure 1). At each phase of their studies the students require a different kind of support as their needs also develop and change. This simple map helps the students to get oriented and find the solutions to their issues or answers to their questions and quickly and efficiently deal with them and it also caters to their specific needs (University of Cambridge, 2022).



Figure 1. Offer for students at the University of Cambridge Career Center

Another good example of collaboration not only between a local university and local businesses but also with the municipality can be found in Tallinn, Estonia. Estonia has become famous for their start-up environment and e-government success. The Tallinn University of Technology also known as TalTech not only provides students with career guidance but mainly supports the entrepreneurial spirit in their students, especially by focusing on innovative business and start-ups. For this purpose, and based on the collaboration between the university, local and national government the Taltech Innovation

and Business Centre Mektory was established and still serves as the ideal meeting point for potential employers and investors. Mektory is composed of a larger building where organisations interested in working with talented students can provide not only financial support to those students who wish to develop their business ideas. The Mektory building is located near several administrative buildings that are prepared to subsequently house the businesses born in Mektory and serve as a source of income as mostly technological companies rent their office there to be closer to the innovative students from TalTech and Mektory (Tallinn University of Technology, 2022).

2. Methodology

This article uses mostly qualitative research. The authors drew data and information from in-person interviews with stakeholders (employees of selected universities, students at selected universities, business owners from selected regions). The main source of material and information for the research part of this article were the official websites and social media sites of the respective universities, which are except for interviews with stakeholders the most relevant sources of information providing insight into the current activities this article is investigating. The interviews with business owners and managers various respondents across the business communities were approached. These communities feature business owners and managers across all fields of industry and markets. For the region of West Bohemia these communities were the Pilsen Business Network and in the East Bohemia Region it was Business Friends East Bohemia. The authors of the article founded these communities and have led them since their commencement which has enabled them to interview more than 50 business owners and managers about their ways of collaborating with students and universities. The methods used in the research phase are analysis, induction, generalisation, comparison, and analogy. The research questions that the authors asked are. Q1: Do the selected universities have a sufficient variety of opportunities to work with the commercial sector? Q2: Can regional universities operating in different demographics, geographic locations and seeking other scarce resources share good practices, and if they can, how and under what conditions can this exchange occur?

3. Results

The University of Hradec Králové is a regional university located in a regional city of 92,000 inhabitants. The university was founded in 1992. It belongs to the category of regional universities. The university has 4 faculties, the Faculty of Education, from which all the other faculties were created, the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Informatics and Management and the Faculty of Science. The university has a career centre (Kariérní centrum, 2022), which is part of the Information and Career Counselling Centre. The Centre provides a full range of support services: information services for students, social counselling, psychological and therapeutic support, support for students with special needs and last not least also activities towards collaboration with the commercial sector. These investigated activities include individual counselling, preparing the student for the selection process, coaching for personal development, workshops, talks and lectures by guest speakers, facilitating contact with

potential employers and sharing job offers, as well as temporary jobs and job placements. These activities have their own projects, and they often have their own website. The career website is a sub-site that offers job opportunities advertised by companies in the region and beyond. The career web is also currently serving as an intermediary for the employment of war refugees from the Russian-Ukrainian war that started in February 2022. The career web is also the latest tool for collaboration with the commercial sector and technology transfer between the university and the commercial sector. Another significant activity is the Job Start job fair. A format that connects employers and university students. Employers present themselves in booths or by giving presentations for university students. There is always an accompanying programme, which aims to attract and invite as many students as possible to participate in the fair and obtain useful information about the various temporary jobs and other opportunities to gain professional work experience and how to later apply themselves on the job market. In addition to these activities the centre also offers the option to combine writing theses with internships in various companies and the university also features an alumni club. The alumni club is a database of thousands of alumni who work in a wide variety of fields of industry, positions in companies or manage their own business. This year, there are different types of meetings and networking for alumni, from online meetings to breakfasts or roundtables. Finally, the stakeholders can benefit from a new project run by an external company, Vzdělávačka s.r.o. which was created in 2021. The name of this activity is Student Business Breakfast, and it is often described as a "mobile two-way technology transfer". It brings together students interested in running their own businesses and regional business owners who give the students their experience and knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and general business environment and practices. To conclude the list of activities it is necessary to also mention the activities of various societies within the university and the activities of the Academic Senate itself. In 2021 the six societies operating at the university presented how they can help students collaborate with the commercial sector. The finally interesting activity with a lot of potential for the future is called Hradec Economics Days which will in 2022 bring a whole panel on technology transfer and will connect academics, businesses in biomedicine and students.

The University of West Bohemia in Pilsen was founded in 1991 and currently has nine faculties, 62 departments and 275 study programmes and is one of the larger and high-ranking universities in the Czech Republic. The population of the city of Pilsen at the beginning of 2022 was approximately 168,000 inhabitants and the population of the Pilsen Region was 579,000. There are currently approximately 11,000 students studying at the UWB, who can use the services of the Information and Consulting Centre, which also include career counselling. In the past few years, this service was provided by the central Career Centre, whose activity was unfortunately terminated in 2021 and the activities were moved to the already mentioned Information and Consulting Centre. At the same time there is also a parallel centralised activity which was created at the same time as the Career Centre but continues to exist – the BoostUp UWB Entrepreneurial Innovation Club. Both the Career Centre and the BoostUp club were founded in 2018 and BoostUp remains until today the part of the department of Technology Transfer. The purpose of BoostUp is to support students in

their journey to start and build their own business through mentoring and workshops with experts from the commercial sector. These activities are largely organised in collaboration with Pilsen Business Network (Dare2, s.r.o., 2022). In addition to these centralised activities, there are also other projects and collaborations with companies at the UWB, for example, the Faculty of Economics has its own Centre for Entrepreneurship and Sustainability (Centrum podnikání a udržitelnosti, 2022), which offers services to all students at the UWB but is managed by the Faculty of Economics and students from other faculties have very little awareness of it. Similarly, unless there is active promotion of these services directly by faculties and departments among students during classes, in most cases students at the UWB are not aware of the various consulting and support services offered by the Information and Consulting Centre of the UWB or the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Sustainability. Furthermore, individual faculties and departments have their own cooperation agreements with individuals and organisations from the commercial sphere. In terms of staffing and focusing on the centralised activities, BoostUp ZČU is led by Mgr. Šárka Trapp Cajthamlová, who stated in an interview that she has only one quarter of her working time allocated for the development of these activities which is not sufficient at all. Regarding career counselling for future employees a person dedicated to this work who would devote and develop this area on a full-time basis is also missing.

The authors are aware that there are other individual efforts and activities to promote collaboration between the university, the students and the commercial sector organised by individual faculties and departments, nevertheless the aim of this article is to map out the activities and services that can be accessed by and can benefit all students. The following Table 1 presents the list of the activities mentioned by the authors.

Table 1. Overview of cooperation with the commercial sector

University of Hradec Kralove	University of West Bohemia
JobStart	BoostUp
Alumni club	Ceupecko
Seslost	Technology transfer
Hradec Economic Days	Veletrh pracovních příležitostí (Job fair) - organised at university but not by the UWB
Student business breakfast	Partnership with Pilsen Business Network and Junior Chamber International

Within the university setting, we approached one member of staff from each university with whom we had a short interview on the topic of collaboration with the commercial sector. The following research findings emerged from the interviews with the university employees responsible for this area. In general, staff would like to be given more authority and competence to innovate and implement programmes of activities for collaboration with the commercial sector. This would accelerate the possibility of responding more flexibly to suggestions from the student as well as the companies interested or already included in collaboration. Of course, they would very much welcome it if this university priority could be better supported and a larger budget could be made available for these activities in the future, thus creating a larger team of people who could nurture relationships with students

and companies. We can see concrete examples and best practices already today at the leading European and world universities, for example the above-mentioned University of Cambridge and TallTech. This article aims to only investigate the situation at the selected universities, therefore other universities are not mentioned here in a more extensive way, however, they will be the subject of further future research into this topic.

The total of 30 students were randomly selected across all faculties and invited to answer questions about the collaboration with the commercial sector. The research yielded the following results. The questioned students perceive some processes and mechanisms at the university as slow, complicated, and often very rigid. When commenting on the website and that especially the one of the University of Hradec Kralove the students would appreciate a more comprehensive presentation and overview of the various possibilities of collaboration with the commercial sector. At the present day the website is their main source of information when they for example work on their master's or bachelor's thesis and their thesis supervisor could collaborate with the commercial sector. Other sources of information could be the faculty itself or the thesis supervisor. This article aims to analyse, compare, and contrast the umbrella collaboration with the commercial sector and the possibilities provided to all students regardless of their faculty or study programme, therefore individual activities and efforts organised by individual departments and faculties are not investigated, analysed, and included in the article. The students at the University of Hradec Kralove provided positive feedback to practical activities such as the above-mentioned Student Business Breakfast, a format of collaboration that allows them to meet with potential employers or mentors and acquire information about entrepreneurship on neutral grounds and in a very friendly atmosphere. In the interviews the students appreciated the practical skills they developed: *"it was real, I had to present myself the best I could, work with information I had at my disposal and also present the relevant information"* , *"you need to be ready to step out of your comfort zone"* , *"I was very nervous talking in front of real entrepreneurs"* , *"it is different when you talk to people who have done business for many years, totally different from talking to my classmates or teachers"*. The students mostly appreciated the real-life experience of getting to a meeting on time and being prepared and then presenting in real time to real people their real ideas, requests and really testing their nerves and skills. Further the students also provided positive feedback on the atmosphere and were surprised by being treated by these entrepreneurs as equals. This can be easily explained by the fact that the University of Hradec Kralove offers only one subject on entrepreneurship which is taught using the standard teaching methods and frontal teaching when one teacher shares information towards students who mostly passively absorb it. If we look for similar practices abroad, this is no longer the case at the top institutions. Leading universities encourage their students to get involved in real projects with university partners or work on their own practical projects.

The research also included interviews with 50 business owners across the industry spectrum. These owners were approached through regional networking platforms that connect local business owners, entrepreneurs, and managers. For Pilsen, respondents were from the Pilsen Business Network platform and their community organised by Dare2 s.r.o., and for East Bohemia it was Business Friends East Bohemia operated by Vzdelavacka s.r.o.

Respondents answered a set of six following questions: 1. Do you know exactly where to go to find cooperation options at your local university? 2. Can you name 2 activities that the university offers regarding collaboration with the commercial sector in 2022? 3. What source of information or marketing channel do you prefer for learning about the possibilities to collaborate with the regional university? 4. Are you familiar with the concept of technology transfer? 5. What type of collaboration with the university do you perceive is now missing? 6. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on this topic? The results of this survey are as follows. 90% of respondents do not know where exactly they would go to look for information or to start collaboration, at the same time they would reach out to the already existing contacts they have in their contact network and ask them for suggestions and help. 10% of respondents have met designated university staff in the past and can reach out to them directly. 50% of respondents could not name 2 activities that the local university organises to promote collaboration with the commercial sector. 20% of respondents listed 2 or more activities and 30% knew about 2 activities. The channels preferred by respondents are within the online platforms of email, telephone, and website. Within offline platforms, it is face-to-face contact at various networking events or opportunities where it is appropriate to meet university representatives and students. Only 5% of respondents are familiar with the concept of technology transfer. In the last question, the respondents gave similar answers, namely that they would like to get a more regular overview of the activities that the university is planning for the year, so that they have sufficient time and space to engage in activities within their own companies' agendas and plans.

4. Discussion

The research shows that universities, if they want to be modern educational institutions lucrative for future students, must not ignore trends on the job market. Universities should look for opportunities and forms of collaboration in their environment to establish interesting partnerships with interesting employers and to bring employers closer to students through various programmes such as connecting theory and practice. From the possibilities to write bachelor's theses to various internships, practical study subjects and classes and the most diverse collaboration to promote entrepreneurship. The student is a valued client for the university on this level and, students are also important for the future of the given society and country and therefore, it is necessary to make sure the students have access to the widest possible range of opportunities so that they can best decide on their career path that is at the same time aligned with their life goals and dreams (Orazbayeva et al., 2019).

An unknown variable remains the improvement of the financial capacity and staffing of university career teams so that they can cover all the employer and student relations agenda well. This work requires senior HR, management, and leadership skills. Given that we are currently in a post-covid and Russia-Ukraine war crisis, with inflation reaching record averages of 11% and the national budget deficit increasing, funding and state support will be decreased, which may make it more important in the coming years to build cooperation with the commercial sector, which can bring funding in various forms of cooperation. University centralisation versus decentralisation also remains a question. Bearing in mind the various

cooperation stakeholders of the tripartite relationship student, university, entrepreneur, is it advantageous for the stakeholders to have all possibilities centralised under one roof and in one place? Is it more advantageous and efficient to have forms of cooperation distributed across individual faculties and departments? What kind of information should be readily available to students and where? Can university staff work together to solve the funding issues and to agree on effective collaboration and support in a fully decentralised system? In the future, will internships be part of the studies and at what percentage the timetable will it form? Will universities also be evaluated by the success criteria of graduates and the established relationships with the commercial sector? Can the student business breakfast drive networking between these stakeholders and become part of the regular agenda of university semesters?

Technology transfer is becoming almost a buzzword. The application and commercialisation of the results of scientific research and their application in business practice is gaining importance as well. Technology transfer is gaining more and more importance and is getting into the focus within the scientific community in the Czech Republic. Technology transfer is dealt with by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, referred to as TACR (Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, 2022). There is a consultancy and advisory firm in the field of technology transfer called Transfera (Transfera, 2022). An interesting platform is the so-called spinoff companies. These are in their infancy in the Czech Republic and in the environment of our two selected universities. The first truly successful spin-off companies are yet to be created in the future. From the interviews we have conducted with academics, students and business owners and managers, many questions remain unanswered. These questions concern linking the ownership structure and management setup of a company through the spinoff format. Our interviewees, mainly from private companies, have the experience and bias that joining in on projects with a stakeholder such as a university, a large colossus that has its own lengthy processes, is a hindrance for businesses in terms of development and innovation. Within academia, the know-how acquired by graduates is more likely to be diverted to the private market rather than remain in and benefit the university itself. Respondents also point to the change of leadership every 4 years, which they consider risky in the context of long-term collaboration. Our research suggests that for technology transfer and collaboration with the commercial sector, there still remain many unknowns for the stakeholders which will need to be answered, anchored and described in order to expand further opportunities and space for successful collaboration.

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Work-life balance and working on meaningful projects which students enjoy and are further developed by and which lead to a fulfilled and high-quality life are currently the topic of many expert discussions, articles, and books. Universities have vast human resources in their own students who they can involve in these activities. Nowadays, not only the two selected universities have various university associations and interest groups, as well as the student senate, which reflect and protect the students' interests when dealing with the academia and the university management. For example, at the University of Hradec Kralove, the student senate succeeded in running projects in the field of digitalisation and communication. The projects sped up internal as well as external communication. It is important to point out that the student' senate at this university is not paid and everything was done by students in their free time as they sought to improve the situation with their actions and feedback for their successors.

The motivation and positive relationship to the alma mater is often based on the highest values of self-realisation and helping social causes. It is also a way to work together in an environment that is limited in generating its own financial means. The University of Hradec Kralove has also managed to solve the problem of lack of finances through external collaboration with university alumni who are top managers, HR directors, business owners and event's organisers. The joint synergy has brought about tremendous and dynamic development in the collaboration with the commercial sector, as proven by student business breakfasts, JobStart festivals, active communication, and nurturing alumni relations. To this article, two examples of European universities that have a well-developed system of cooperation with the commercial sector for their students have been selected. Tallinn University shows the future of university campuses that resemble Silicon Valley and incubation environments. Cambridge University shows a modern way of presenting and communicating towards students. A clear signpost of Cambridge University is recorded in Figure 1 at the beginning of the article. Universities have different approaches to careers centres, some standing alone and others being part of other departments. The University of Hradec Kralove has a university career centre linked to psychological support activities and statutory support for specific student needs. The University of West Bohemia had a centralised career hower centre, its activities have since been incorporated into similar student support activities. In Pilsen, the programme for supporting the entrepreneurial spirit in students BoostUp ZČU remains operational as part of the Department of Technology Transfer (BoostUP, 2022). BoostUp is like the activities in Hradec Králové linked to the local business breakfast networking club Pilsen Business Network (run by a private company Dare2, s.r.o.). At the same time individual faculties and departments run their own projects and the Faculty of Economics even have their own Centre for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship (Cepeucko, 2022).

From our research observation, there is a need for synergy and cooperation among the teaching supervisors of the courses. Practice often overlaps with courses because practice is not yet foreseen in the timetable. In the best case, it is usually an elective subject that the student can incorporate into his/her timetable. A format that is not yet applied at selected by Czech universities is the spin-off company. The interviews show that a balance has not yet been found between the joint shareholding of a private company and a university. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the technology vouchers announced by the Czech national agency are an interesting opportunity for postdoctoral students to collaborate with the commercial sector. Unfortunately, the setup of vouchers and the subsidy issue rather increases the administrative and economic burden on companies. In our interviews, we encountered opinions from company owners that it is easier for them to pay for technology developments directly from their own resources. After two pilot projects in two regional cities and the immediate results of the cooperation, the Student Business Breakfast certainly ranks as a very simple and at the same time very successful and effective format. Each of the stakeholders as described in Table 1 gains many opportunities. The students get to see a different environment, get to know each other and at the same time get to know the business owners. Students can validate their business plan in practice well before they start their business and invest time and money. The university establishes and strengthens relationships with potential partners or deepens relationships with existing partners, also the credit of the university itself rises in the eyes of the students. Business owners gain the opportunity to fill their staffing needs and establish a relationship with the local university.

We believe that there is a large amount of high-quality collaboration with the commercial sector on the market that universities can also include in their activities. Also, there are already several inspiring ideas and best practice formats that can be outsourced for the specific needs and disciplines of individual universities. There certainly also are many formats that are yet to be developed and applied in the fields. The Czech Republic can strive to be inspired by European as well as global best practices and already existing examples of collaboration. Some of them are not applicable on the global scale but can be adopted in versions and forms adapted to the conditions of the Czech Republic. This topic will be further developed and discussed in future articles, and, at the same time, further applied in practice.

When comparing the websites of both universities, it appears that the University of West Bohemia has a much faster and clearer way to access information about cooperation with the commercial sector. Both from the side of students, companies, and the public. At the University of West Bohemia, right on the homepage you can click on cooperation and the options will expand. The University of Hradec Kralove has these activities available on a triple click from the main menu. So, collaboration is very hidden and difficult to find. Collaborations such as the student breakfast have proven to be a two-way innovative technology transfer.

As can be seen from the research, each university develops a more different area of collaboration with practice. The University of West Bohemia focuses more on entrepreneurship and business opportunities such as the already mentioned BoostUp operated by the rectorate, or the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Sustainability operated by

the Faculty of Economics. University of Hradec Kralove connects students more with potential employers through activities such as the already mentioned JobStart. The University of West Bohemia also offers this opportunity for students to meet with potential employers – Veletrh pracovních příležitostí (Job opportunities trade fair), however, after interviewing both the university employee and a former student of the university it was discovered that this activity is not listed on the university website and is in fact organised by a separate legal entity, another private company, in collaboration with the student organisation IAESTE. Šárka Trapp from BoostUP explains: "The job opportunities trade fair is not in fact organised by us, we only provide our premises and visibility to the event, however companies are not aware of this and often expect more support on our part, yet we are also only involved as one of the exhibitors." The research shows that it is certainly possible to share these activities between universities through best practice, which answers one of our research questions. These activities could be shared through simple online conference calls. Alternatively, in-person visits to universities by specific members of staff, which is the answer to research question number two. We want to return to the selected universities with the research over time and see the evolution of these activities over time. The ideal situation would be a one-day conference of the universities that would be dedicated specifically to good practice in collaboration with the commercial sector. It would be beneficial to also invite representatives from a foreign university and thus share best practices and know-how from abroad and at the same time this would ensure that the participants from different regions do not perceive each other as competitors when attracting potential students and their future employers as well as looking for commercial partners for their research and technology transfer.

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Conflict of interest: none

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