

## Summary report

# Debate on 'Bridging universities to industries'

Virtual event held  
on 9 December 2022

joined by 60  
participants from ACP  
and European  
countries

## TOPIC

Unlocking innovation to accelerate sustainable development requires collaboration, between industry, government, academia and civil society. While integrating research and education is generally straightforward, **building partnerships between industry and academia** remains challenging, as well as engaging with civil society organisations. The webinar has explored the topic of university-industry collaboration in the African context, by addressing three questions:

- What do we know about university-industry linkages in Africa?
- How to enhance these links through policy making?
- Which are the best practices for successful collaborations?

## SPEAKERS



**Dr. Maurice  
Ochieng Bolo**

Director of the Scinnovent Center, a policy research and training Centre linking science, innovation and enterprise in Africa.



**Prof. Tom Peter  
Migun Ogada**

Chairman of the Board of the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA).



**Prof. Keolebogile  
Shirley Motaung**

Full Professor, biomedical scientist and Director of Technology, Transfer and Innovation at the Durban University of Technology.

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# STATE OF THE ART

## CHALLENGES

Research-industry linkages in African countries face three main challenges:

- **Inadequate investments** in knowledge production.
- **Weak capacities** for knowledge and technology uptake.
- **Conflicting organizational cultures** and procedures.

## SOLUTIONS

Such challenges can be addressed by:

- **Financing research and innovation** with competitive STI grants and other innovative funding schemes.
- **Coordinating the national science systems** through leadership, mentorship, coaching, commercialisation, dialogue platforms, etc.
- **Strengthening institutional capacity** with skills development.

### Pathways to commercialisation

The report "*Strengthening research-industry collaborations in Africa*" mentions three main pathways to improve commercialisation of research outputs:



**Partnerships** and linkages with the private sector.



**Technology licensing** and sale of Intellectual Property.



**Science parks**, innovation hubs and Incubators.

## AN EXAMPLE OF THE ROLE OF POLICY MAKING

### Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA)

KeNIA facilitates a dynamic national innovation system that boosts market uptake of research outputs. One of the tools used to enable innovations in Kenya to get to the marketplace, and obtain appropriate funding, is the "*Kenya Innovation Bridge*".

### Strengthening the innovation commercialisation process in Kenya

The Policy Support Facility of the OACPS R&I Programme has assisted KeNIA in developing guidelines to enhance commercialisation of R&D outputs in Kenyan universities and research institutes and better link academia to industry.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



**National level** - Kenya should support the development of various policies and strategies (innovation policy, technology transfer strategy, IP policy, etc.), paired with appropriate funding and enhanced coordination of the agencies responsible for innovation and commercialisation.



**Institutional level** - Universities and research centers should:

- Establish **technology transfer offices** (TTO), with a clear commercialisation strategy.
- Allocate funds to support **research projects** with the industry.
- Link research programmes to the **needs of industry and civil society**.
- **Raise awareness** of researchers on **Intellectual Property (IP) and commercialisation**.

# AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICES FROM ACADEMIA

## STRATEGY

The technology transfer unit of the Durban University of Technology (DUT) from South Africa aims to ensure that any invention or technology generated at DUT is appropriately protected and commercialised. It co-ordinates the efforts of all role players- inventors, research institutions, society, practitioners, etc.-, by providing various support (intellectual property rights, licensing, formation of spin-off companies, funding of research activities, etc.).

**TIPS** According to Prof. Motaung, director of the DUT technology transfer unit, institutions looking to enhance their linkages with the industry should:

- Develop a **commercialisation strategy** and a **spin-off policy** to allow students to translate their ideas into market products.
- Identify the **right industry partners** by defining which are the mutual expectations, responsibilities and tasks.
- Encourage **lecturers to spend time in the industry** which is relevant to their discipline,
- Promote **transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research**

### Sholab nutraceuticals - a successful spin off company from DUT

The DUT technology transfer unit has supported the development of Sholab nutraceuticals by negotiating a non-exclusive license agreement for its technologies. Royalties are payable to the university.

- Sholab nutraceuticals is a research company focusing on underutilised food & medicinal plants for the development and commercialisation of nutraceuticals & functional foods.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

- [Towards guidelines for enhancing technology transfer/commercialisation and coordination of Innovation hubs in Kenya](#) - OACPS R&I PROGRAMME, 2022
- [What do we know about university-industry linkages in Africa?](#) - Rabii Outamha, 2020
- [Strengthening research - industry collaborations in Africa](#) - Maurice Bolo, 2020
- [Perspective of industry's engagement with african universities](#) - Creso Sá, 2015
- [Strengthening university-industry linkages in africa: a study on institutional capacities and gaps](#)- John SsebuwufU, 2012

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