

Provision of knowledge services for businesses

Services that facilitate the access and diffusion of knowledge form an important policy dimension when it comes to supporting technology transfer and commercialization. The multi-actor nature of the process requires the provision of conditions that allow tapping into external sources of knowledge through effective networks that enable the sharing of ideas, resources and results. In this process, knowledge flows simultaneously at various directions, thus the existence of supporting services that can manage and coordinate such while ensuring maximum transparency and utility flows becomes evident.

Why should governments ensure the provision of knowledge services?

Managing the vast output of publicly produced knowledge and ensuring its useful exploitation bears dangers of coordination and system failures that governments are called to tackle. Coordination failures may arise in the presence of positive externalities (i.e. when agents may not reap all of the benefits of an investment, resulting in an investment level below the socially desirable level) and require public action that increases welfare and may lead to productivity gains.

Knowledge exchange and transfer may also suffer from the existence of system failures that refer to the lack of capabilities in firms to absorb external knowledge (e.g. workforce skills for identifying and collaborating with partners and using external information about promising markets and technologies), lack of complementarity between the knowledge exploration and exploitation sub-systems (e.g. lack of fit between university research and firms' research needs and their capacities to absorb such research inputs), and lack of intellectual property protection leading to a high risk of involuntary knowledge leakage.

Finally, networking and communication problems among the actors involved in technology transfer and commercialization, call for public action that facilitates the exchange of ideas and sharing of objectives through the provision of a common language and space (virtual or physical) for communication to take place.

What are the policy actions contributing to the provision of knowledge services?

Governments assist the sharing, common understanding and diffusion of technological opportunity by fostering the actors' capabilities relevant to the efficient administration of research output, acquiring the resources needed for its commercialization and managing issues of intellectual property (IP). Specific schemes include:

- Technology matching services that connect knowledge intensive organizations and bring together expertise on new product development while increasing the potential of future tangible partnerships.
- Market intelligence services: information collected by organizations to assess market opportunities, develop strategies to access markets, and make marketing decisions.
- Development of technical standards

The effective use of knowledge services can be affected by more general factors that characterize different contexts and refer to:

- The degree of "openness" of access to knowledge that defines the stock of knowledge

available for sharing and the governments' capacity to organize and diffuse it in a constructive manner.

- The degree of awareness of the benefits of co-operation and networking that shapes the demand for such policy schemes.
- The level of ICT skills of actors that facilitates the usage of these services.

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