

# THE UK SHOULD BE PROUD TO BE GREAT AT KEC



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Numerous studies have shown how the transfer of publicly funded research outcomes can improve business productivity, sales, and performance in product, service and process innovation<sup>1</sup>, across sectors as well as across geographies. Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation (KEC) is an umbrella term which describes a very broad range of activities to support mutually beneficial relationships between universities, businesses and the public sector. KEC professionals play an important role in enabling the realisation of social

and economic impact, and their expertise in overcoming obstacles and finding creative solutions to practical problems delivers significant value to collaborative work between academia and industry.

PraxisUnico is a world-leading national professional association for public sector knowledge exchange and commercialisation practitioners. Nessa Carey, International Director, travels across the world to deliver training to Knowledge Exchange & Commercialisation practitioners, to share the UK's expertise, build links and bring back learning to inform best practice. She describes the importance of knowledge exchange and commercialisation in supporting and developing the new industries of the future, delivering social benefits and helping to drive the growth of the economy and keep a competitive edge in global markets through research and innovation.

"The UK is ranked #2 in the Global Innovation Index, and 3 of the top 10 universities worldwide are based in the UK. As James Wilsdon, professor of



The Innovate2015 event shed a global spotlight on UK innovation in November

Science and Democracy in the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of Sussex and chair of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management, said recently, *'On any reading of the international data, the UK [research] system is highly efficient and delivers superb results.'*

Central government funding in the UK, and in particular HEIF (the Higher Education Innovation Fund) has delivered a national level of support that allows public sector research

organisations to embed and enable engagement with external partners. As University Alliance note "HEIF funding is given to the universities, but the overall impact is felt across all collaborative partners and beneficiaries<sup>2</sup>", and this was demonstrated clearly in the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, where 30% of submissions were deemed to be *'world leading'*<sup>3</sup>.

Further examples of excellence were identified in the recent Impact Awards for KEC professionals, from PraxisUnico and Research Councils UK, highlighting the vital role played by KEC professionals working alongside academic colleagues. The finalists all provided outstanding examples of how KEC teams work to support relationships between businesses and the UK's world-leading publicly funded researchers – on a national and international basis, demonstrating a global reach of impact achieved across all areas of business and society from investment in research.



Amanda Brooks, Director of Innovation at Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, speaking at Innovate2015 about building on UK strengths in commercialising innovation

Public Health England's KEC activity received several awards for its leadership and contribution to the development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. They won the Impact Award for Contribution to Society for "Knowledge Exchange on the Frontline: responding to the Ebola outbreak", in which KEC professionals enabled UK and international collaboration, co-ordinating work on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics and bringing the knowledge community together to develop an effective response.



2 seater electric powered automated vehicle pod equipped with sensor and navigation technology from the University of Oxford - part of the LUTZ Pathfinder project from Coventry based company RDM.

The UK can lead such initiatives because of the strong KEC community. At PraxisUnico we bring together the best people in knowledge exchange and commercialisation (KEC) to enable knowledge sharing



Innovate2015 showcased many technologies which have been developed in collaboration with UK Universities

around the world. We want to create vibrant, highly trained entrepreneurial technology transfer, knowledge exchange and commercialisation ecosystems. We've worked

across the world, in Brazil, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Columbia, and other regions which are seeking to develop their KEC activity.

Through training, we can help international KEC practitioners to



projects delegates were working on were technologies related to water treatment, and the production of clean drinking water. Water availability is a major issue in China and is a consequence of many factors,

only the UK, but make a real difference in solving global problems."

#### References

1 UK-Innovation Research Centre (2014) The economic significance of the UK science base, a report for the Campaign for Science and Engineering; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) Estimating the effect of UK direct public support for Innovation; Howells J; Ramlogan R; Cheng S (2012) Universities in an open innovation system: a UK perspective, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, Vol. 18 Iss: 4, pp.440-456; Swann, 2009, cited in Schmucke K; Cook W (2009) Beyond bricks and mortar boards: universities' role in building regional economies, a report for Universities UK and the Institute for Public Policy Research IPPR, 2009

2 <http://www.unialliance.ac.uk/blog/2015/03/17/why-is-it-important-that-universities-and-businesses-collaborate/>

3 <http://www.ref.ac.uk/>

#### Fast facts about KEC in the UK

- 47%: growth in KEC income to universities over ten years to 2013-14
- 6.3 fold economic leverage : Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) leverages at least £6.30 from users for every £1 of public money invested: more if student enterprise and spin-outs are included.
- 2nd: The UK ranks 2nd in the Global Innovation Index (2015) and 4th internationally for university-industry collaboration in R&D
- 150,000: The number of consultancy, contract research, and IP-related transactions handled by university research offices and KEC offices in 2013-14
- £3.6bn: Universities contributed £3.6 billion to the economy in 2013-14 through services to business including research commercialisation, delivery of professional training, and consultancy.



Public Health England Category Winner

solve the challenges they face. While the challenges are unique to each country, skills like landscaping the business environment and identifying the potential customer base for the technologies they are trying to

ranging from the rapid increase in high population densities, to the toxic by-products resulting from the generation of traditional Chinese medicines. Water technologies and expertise are in high demand in

#### ... KEC teams work to support relationships ...

commercialise are eminently transferable.

We were recently delivering training in Shanghai, where it was striking that two of the three

China, creating potential opportunities for partnerships with UK organisations.

By working together, we can achieve impacts that benefit not



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