The Role of the EIT in the Educational Landscape

Notes for Plenary Session

'The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda'

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Thank you for inviting me here to participate at this Plenary Session.

1. I am representing EURASHE at this meeting.
2. My professional background is as a research scientist.
3. The Institute I led between 2001 and 2008 is a higher education doctoral awarding institution with a strong remit for knowledge transfer, translational research and regional engagement.
4. I am also a member of the Expert Advisory Board of the Multidimensional Global University Ranking project currently being sponsored by DGEAC.

The briefing documentation for this session noted four proposed elements to the strategic policy document

1. An overview of the planned higher education, research and innovation activities
2. An assessment of its socioeconomic impact and its capacity to generate the best innovation added value
3. An estimate of financial needs and sources in view of the future operation long term development and funding of the EIT
4. An indicative financial plan covering the period of the financial framework

My comments are directed mainly to points 1 and 2 and are under three broad headings

Understanding of the Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Ecosystem

Much thinking around the relationship between research funding and innovation is predicated on the Vannevar Bush perspective (the architect of post war science research funding in the US) that (and I simplify) you put money into basic research and eventually you end up with a flow of new 'things'. It is well to remember that an alternative perspective is that of Donald Stokes when he refers to Pasteurs' Quadrant – i.e. use inspired basic research - after the work of Louis Pasteur. If we do not heed this perspective we risk putting significant resources into modes of research that will not generate a flow of new products and services – we need both elements to be funded and supported. In practical terms this means that an entity such as the EIT must look not just to partnerships and funding opportunities in traditional research groupings (mainly research universities and specialist research institutions) but also in entities such as the Universities of Applied Science, Institutes of Technology and other similar professional higher education institutions as well as obvious entities such as the Fraunhofer Institutes in Germany.

Structural Issues – Meeting Consumer Needs

Research in the area of public administration of public services demonstrates that making it easy for the consumer of services to find out how to get what they want through **'one stop shop'** services is a very effective way of improving the effectiveness of the service delivery. In the area of support for knowledge transfer and innovation services and support this is equally valid. The actual structure of the interaction mechanisms between the EIT and its partners and the beneficiaries of its services should be such that it makes it as easy as possible by operating as a one stop shop that helps to clarify the problem or challenge and find a way to solve it. There are good examples from which to draw experience. **Interface** in Scotland (which provides a research and problem solving brokerage services between companies and HEIs'). **Knowledge House** is a 'one stop shop' operated by universities in the NE of England for people seeking innovation, training and R and D support.

Performance Measurement – 'what gets measured gets done'

Measurement of impact of innovation activities is, at best, poorly developed. It is also clear that innovation and knowledge transfer (of which innovation is in my view a subset) is demeaned if it does not recognise that reliance on traditional measures such as publications, licenses and patents is limiting. Much knowledge transfer is via 'shoe leather' thus, even if impact is difficult to measure, it is possible to quantify and describe the wider range of activities that contribute to knowledge transfer such as

- Evidence of co-curriculum development and delivery
- Student work placements in companies
- Staff placements and sabbaticals in industry and vice versa
- Industry led problem and project based learning activities with specific learning outcomes
- Bespoke education and training and high level skills development

These, generally accepted measures and descriptors of knowledge transfer, are in addition to the following research, development and innovation indicators that are in turn in addition to the traditional measures as noted above;

- Spin out and spin ins
- Material transfer agreements
- Invention disclosure forms
- Cooperative research contracts (e.g. activity in FP 7 programmes such as 'research for the Benefit of SME's)
- Amount of industry funding

I hope the above comments and observations are of some benefit to EIT in the development of their strategic policy document.

Richard Thorn