

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES WITH KNOWLEDGE

STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN
RESEARCHERS AND ENTREPRENEURS





The Dutch Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI) publishes solicited and unsolicited advisory reports to the Dutch government. Its independent reports are strategic in nature and focus on the contours of government science, technology and innovation policy. Council members are drawn from knowledge institutes and the business world. AWTI's work is founded on the principle that knowledge, science and innovation are vital for the economy and society, and will become more important in the future.

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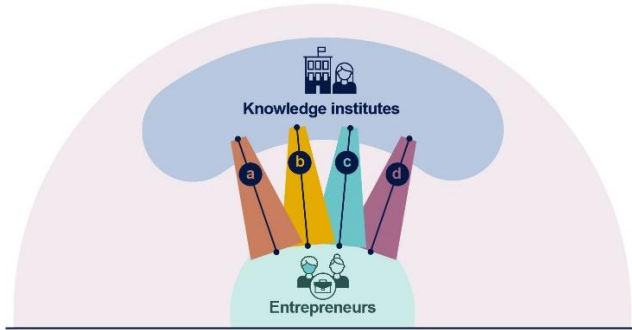
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Seizing opportunities with knowledge

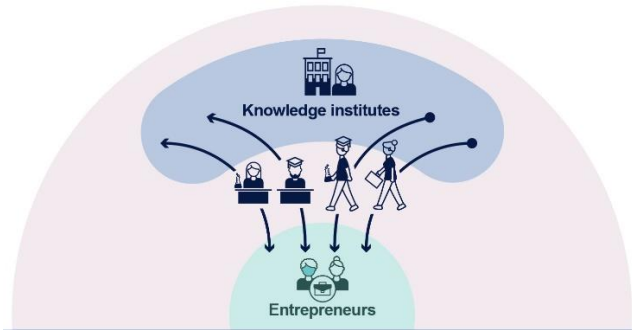
Strengthening the links between researchers and entrepreneurs

October 2021

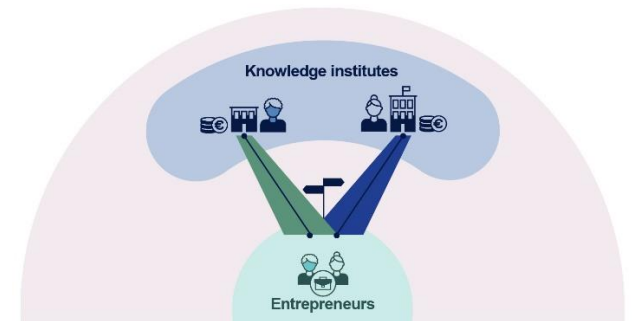
Seizing opportunities with knowledge *Main recommendations*



1. Strengthen the links between researchers and entrepreneurs



2. Facilitate the sharing of knowledge by people



3. Encourage customised valorisation with professional support

Summary

New knowledge is vital to keep the economy healthy and resolve societal challenges. Key here is that businesses can benefit from the knowledge developed by knowledge institutes. Whilst that does happen at present, it is not yet optimal. The government would therefore do well to take specific measures to strengthen the links between researchers and entrepreneurs, enabling opportunities to be grasped from a basis of knowledge.

Strengthen the links and collaboration between researchers and business

Government policy needs to focus on making it easier for entrepreneurs and knowledge institutes to come into contact with each other and work together more effectively. By doing so, the government will be creating the right conditions for knowledge-sharing. Present policy does this insufficiently, partly because it is too little geared to the different needs of businesses, especially in the SME sector. In this report, the Dutch Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI) looks principally at the forms of knowledge-sharing which have the potential to deliver much better results.

Businesses and researchers operate in very different cultures, and as a result come into contact with each other too little, and when they do, their collaboration is not always effective. Knowledge from research also continues to be difficult for businesses to access. Targeted measures are therefore needed to bridge the gap, particularly for smaller and less innovative companies. While it certainly helps to locate businesses and knowledge institutes in close proximity, more is needed to realise genuine knowledge-sharing.

Moreover, the policy on knowledge transfer to businesses devotes too little attention to the crucial role played by people as carriers/purveyors of knowledge. Here again, there is a great deal of untapped potential, especially for less innovative businesses.

Recommendations

To improve the knowledge-sharing with businesses, AWTI makes the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen the links between researchers and entrepreneurs.

- ▶ Make knowledge more accessible, easier to find and understandable for non-scientists, such as entrepreneurs, both through open access and by strengthening the 'knowledge desk' function.
- ▶ Bridge the gap between research and business through close collaboration right along the 'chain' from fundamental to applied and practical research.

- ▶ Ensure that questions from companies go to the right researchers. Smaller and less innovative companies have a particular need for help here. Create more 'knowledge brokers' targeting these companies, who can bring together companies and researchers. Support small companies in working together to formulate a knowledge demand by making seed money available.
- ▶ Promote collaboration between knowledge institutes and companies. This can be done first through joint research and development agendas, ensuring that smaller companies and 'newcomers' are included, and secondly, by bringing researchers and entrepreneurs together and enabling them to work alongside each other (co-location and co-creation).

2. Stimulate knowledge transfer via people. There is lots of untapped potential here. People make the difference.

- ▶ Foster cross-fertilisation via dual roles, with one and the same person working at a knowledge institute and a company. There is potential for this to grow, especially between SMEs and universities of applied sciences. Also make it more attractive to switch temporarily between a knowledge institute and a company.
- ▶ Make more effective use of student (graduation) internships as a means of knowledge-sharing between knowledge institutes and companies. Ensure that the 'broker function' between companies and higher education institutes works well.
- ▶ Ensure that policy reflects the key role that graduates or researchers play in knowledge transfer if they go on to work at a company. Stimulate this, for example through 'innovation traineeships', a combination of an internship followed by a job within the company.

3. Encourage knowledge institutes to treat valorisation as customisation with professional support and provide them with sufficient means for that.

- ▶ Customised valorisation and professional support can substantially boost the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer to entrepreneurs. Focus on valorisation within knowledge institutes where it leads to social impact. Ensure that government and parliament contribute to strengthening the position of valorisation within knowledge institutes.
- ▶ Ensure that knowledge institutes set out their long-term valorisation goals in their strategic plans and (as part of that) their goals regarding knowledge transfer to entrepreneurs. Support knowledge institutes in the further development of a professional organisation and flourishing ecosystem for knowledge transfer to business.