

A study analyzes the role of universities and technology institutes in firm innovation

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Universities and technology institutes are organisms with distinct objectives with different clients in the business sector. However, the existence of complementarity in their actions for fomenting innovation in firms makes promoting more interaction between universities, technology institutes and firms recommendable. This is the main conclusion of a Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M) study which analyzes the role of these institutions as partners in innovation.

The objective of this research work focuses on analyzing the functioning of the technology centers and evaluating the results obtained in fomenting innovation and competitiveness in companies and universities. In the majority of [developed countries](#), technology institutes are considered an important element of national and regional technology structure; these companies offer a wide array of services, ranging from applied research and technological development to other support services, such as consulting, diagnostic and technical assistance. The Spanish technology institutes are non-profit and their funding is a mixed system with a growing portion of private contracts.

This study, published in the journal *European Planning Studies* by the researchers, Aurelia Modrego and Luis Santamaría from UC3M, and Andrés Barge, from Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), concluded that technology centers and universities have different kinds of clients among the business sector. "But it can't be deduced from this if the role of these institutions is more necessary or more useful in one case or another, because their actions in the firm sector are chiefly

complementary, and not only foment competition between one other, but should also foment and strengthen their interaction," remarked professor Aurelia Modrego, from the UC3M Department of Economics.

The complementarity between these institutions is fundamentally based on two aspects. In the first place, in relation to the type of clients that they collaborate with: while the universities usually do so with larger firms with a greater capacity to carry out R + D activities, the technology institutes frequently collaborate with smaller companies (SME) that are less able to take on research work. In the second place, in relation to the type of service, since the universities focus more on develop R + D projects and the technology centers, in addition, offer services that contribute to firms introducing organizational innovations, marketing, etc.

This line of research forms part of a wider project that until now has been carried out in three large phrases. In the first one, a minuscule analysis was made of the functioning of the technology centers based on information that the researchers asked for through case studies and interviews. "The ample participation of the centers and the quality of their answers allowed us to determine with in-depth detail the vision, strategy and action of this collective of institutions from different perspectives (operative, financial, organizational and relational); this allows us to obtain a characterization and classification of the technology centers," professor Modrego explained. In the second part, with collaboration from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute), the researchers were able to compare actions with other institutions, such as universities. The objective of the third part, in which they are currently working, is to measure the effect of the technology centers on innovative firm activity. "Until now we have focused on observing which organizations serve which type of companies, while at present we are taking the next step, which to try to analyze the impact on companies in relation to universities and the

technology institutes, at the same time analyzing the role that the scientific and technology centers play as energizing forces in these types of relations," the UCM professor, Andrés Barge, pointed out.

Provided by Carlos III University of Madrid

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