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INSPIRING ERA Policy Brief

Supporting the Uptake of ERA Policy Agenda Outcomes

KNOWLEDGE VALORISATION

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Table of Contents

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Executive Summary

This report provides practice-oriented insights into the implementation of Knowledge Valorisation (KV) across Europe, drawing on qualitative interviews with 24 stakeholders in 13 countries and survey responses from 68 participants. Rather than offering a statistically representative overview, the analysis captures narratives, experiences, recurring patterns, challenges and enabling factors from actors directly involved in translating research into economic and societal value.

Adopting a system-wide perspective, the report examines KV across five interconnected levels: researcher, demand-side, institutional, national, and European.

Key Findings

Overall, awareness of Knowledge Valorisation is relatively widespread, but its consistent strategic and operational integration remains uneven. While over half of surveyed organisations report partial or full strategic integration, only a limited share report consistent implementation across projects. Implementation is hindered by structural barriers including limited staff capacity, insufficient early-stage funding, weak incentives for researchers and administrative complexity. At the same time, there is strong demand for practical support such as proof-of-concept funding, training and hands-on guidance.

At the **researcher level**, a central challenge is a lack of awareness, skills and incentives. Academic career systems remain heavily focused on publications, discouraging engagement in valorisation activities. Training opportunities are fragmented and often not embedded in curricula, leaving researchers insufficiently equipped. Early exposure, stronger career recognition and accessible support structures are identified as key enablers.

At the **demand-side level**, limited capacity among companies, public institutions and civil society actors constrains the uptake of research results. Many potential users lack awareness of research capabilities or resources to engage in collaboration. Intermediaries such as technology transfer offices play a critical role in bridging this gap, particularly in the middle between initial contact and implementation. Co-creation formats, experimentation environments and demand-driven approaches emerge as effective practices.

At the **institutional level**, Knowledge Valorisation is often weakly embedded in strategies and governance structures. Intermediary organisations are widely recognised as essential but frequently under-resourced and overstretched. Effective systems are characterised by strong leadership commitment, professionalised transfer support, proactive scouting functions and robust networks connecting research with external stakeholders.

At the **national level**, fragmented funding landscapes, legal uncertainty (particularly around state aid) and administrative burdens limit effective implementation. A major challenge is the lack of continuity across the valorisation lifecycle, especially in early-stage development. Standardised frameworks for spin-offs and licensing are often missing, increasing complexity and transaction costs. Successful examples highlight the importance of coherent national strategies, stable funding and ecosystem-based approaches.

At the **European level**, existing ERA tools and instruments are valued but underutilised. Stakeholders perceive them as too abstract and insufficiently aligned with practical needs. Low awareness, fragmentation and limited operational relevance reduce their impact. There

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is strong demand for more practical guidance, clearer navigation and better coordination across EU initiatives.

Policy Implications

The findings of this analysis point to the need for more coherent, inclusive and practice-oriented Knowledge Valorisation frameworks across Europe.

At the **European level**, this requires strengthening Knowledge Valorisation by embedding it more systematically in research careers and skills frameworks, expanding low-threshold collaboration and experimentation formats, and reinforcing the role of intermediary organisations. At the same time, improving the usability and uptake of ERA instruments through clearer guidance, better coordination and closer alignment with institutional practice is essential.

At the **level of Member States**, strengthening national Knowledge Valorisation systems involves integrating valorisation into research careers and incentive structures, expanding demand-driven collaboration opportunities and improving access to testing environments. In addition, ensuring coherent and continuous funding across the valorisation lifecycle, simplifying administrative and regulatory conditions, and supporting stronger institutional capacities and ecosystem-based approaches are key to enhancing implementation.

Conclusion

Knowledge Valorisation in Europe is characterised by strong potential but uneven implementation. Addressing structural barriers while scaling proven practices can significantly enhance the societal and economic impact of research. A coordinated approach across all system levels – supported by mindset change, targeted policy measures and stronger collaboration – will be essential to fully realise this potential within the European Research Area.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Report

This report provides practice-oriented insights into how Knowledge Valorisation (KV) is implemented across Europe and how existing framework conditions can be strengthened. Rather than offering a comprehensive or statistically representative assessment of all EU Member States, it focuses on capturing concrete experiences, perspectives and needs from stakeholders directly involved in transferring research results into practical economic and societal use. By bringing together these practice-based insights, the report aims to complement existing policy discussions with grounded evidence from implementation contexts.

The report adopts a system-wide perspective on Knowledge Valorisation, covering the full ecosystem across five key levels: researcher, demand-side, institutional, national and European. This multi-level structure enables a differentiated understanding of where barriers arise and where targeted interventions may be most effective.

Particular attention is given to

- awareness, skills and incentives for researchers (researcher level),
- demand-side engagement and uptake capacity (demand-side level),
- the role and capacity of intermediary organisations (institutional level),
- regulatory and funding conditions (national and European level), and
- policy instruments within the European Research Area (European level).

In addition to identifying structural challenges and gaps, the report highlights stakeholder expectations and practical examples of successful approaches. These include co-creation formats, experimentation and testing environments, intermediary support models, and diverse valorisation pathways across disciplines, including those beyond technological commercialisation. By combining challenges with good practices, the report aims to provide a balanced perspective on both constraints and opportunities within current systems.

The insights presented in this report form the basis for a set of policy recommendations addressed to both the European Commission and Member States. These recommendations aim to support the further development of coherent, inclusive and practice-oriented Knowledge Valorisation frameworks across Europe.

Overall, the report contributes to ongoing discussions within the European Research Area (ERA) by providing grounded, experience-based input on how Knowledge Valorisation can be more effectively embedded in research systems, strengthened across diverse national and institutional contexts, and supported through more coordinated and user-oriented policy approaches.

1.2 Methodological Approach

The analysis is based on a combination of qualitative interviews and an online survey conducted in early 2026 within the context of the INSPIRING ERA project.

While this analysis does not aim to be a statistically representative assessment of all European research and innovation systems, recurring patterns across interviews and survey responses allow for the identification of common barriers, enabling factors and emerging good

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practices. The findings also provide insights into the use of EU-level instruments and the conditions influencing their practical uptake.

The presentation of this report aims to capture direct, practice-based insights from stakeholders across different national and institutional contexts. Selected contributions are presented in a narrative form, highlighting concrete challenges and successful practices, and thereby making the findings more tangible and relevant for policy and implementation contexts. As interviews were conducted in multiple languages, quotations have in several cases been translated for this report, ensuring consistency while preserving their original meaning.

Interviews

A total of **24 in-depth interviews across 13 European countries** were conducted with representatives from research-performing organisations (RPOs) and intermediary structures such as technology transfer offices, innovation hubs and clusters. The interviews constitute the central source of the report and focus on how research results are translated into practical economic and societal value.

The interviewees were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Organisational background:**
  - *Target Group A:* "RPOs" Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), including research management and knowledge transfer offices
  - *Target Group B:* Intermediary organisations, including technology transfer offices (TTOs), incubators, clusters and innovation hubs
- **Regional diversity:**

  13 countries, with interviewees identified through the INSPIRING ERA consortium and associated partners' country networks to ensure balanced geographic coverage
- **Balanced sample:**

  Variety regarding gender

The following figures provide an overview of the selected interviewees:

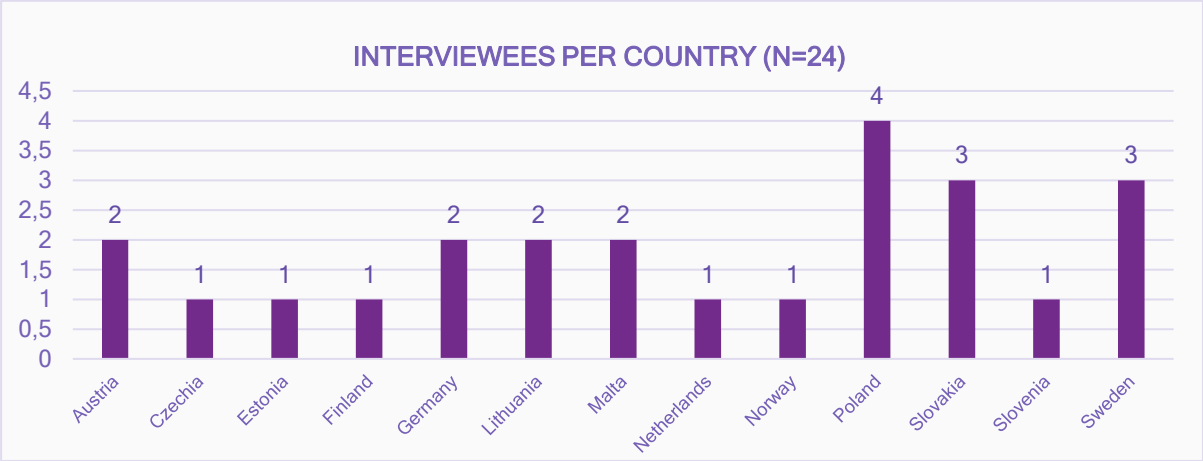

Figure 1: Number of Interviewees per country

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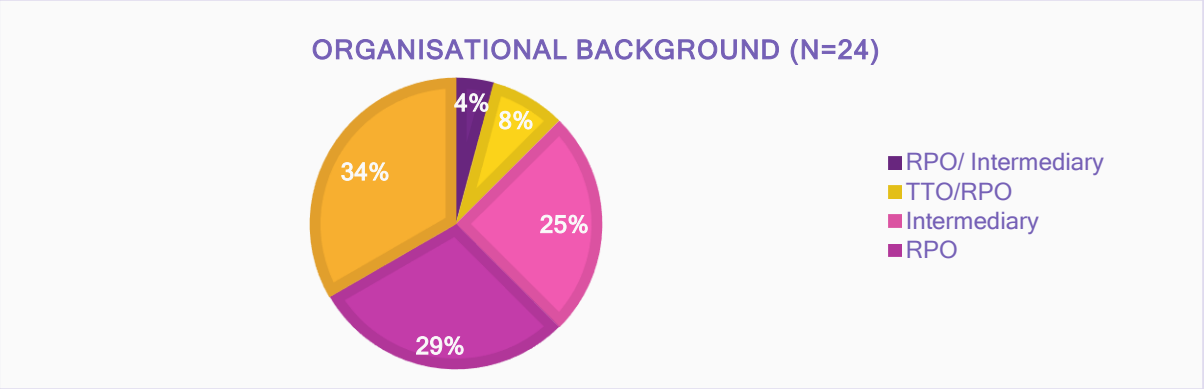

Figure 2: Organisational Background of Interviewees

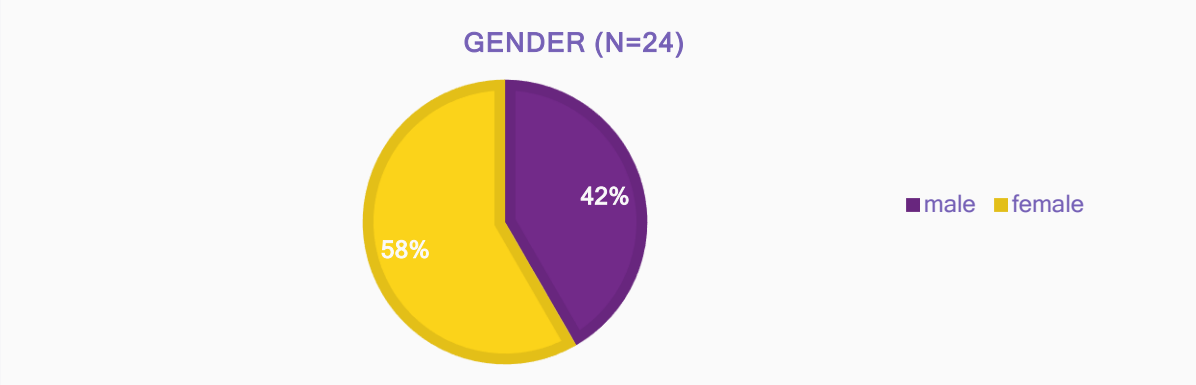

Figure 3: Gender breakdown of Interviewees

Online Survey

Qualitative insights from the interviews are complemented by **68 responses to an online survey** distributed in connection with a stakeholder event ("Turning knowledge into value: European tools and valorisation practices", March 11th 2026) as well as via the INSPIRING ERA webpage and on social media. The survey provides additional quantitative indications on key challenges, needs and priorities related to Knowledge Valorisation.

The respondents were composed as follows:

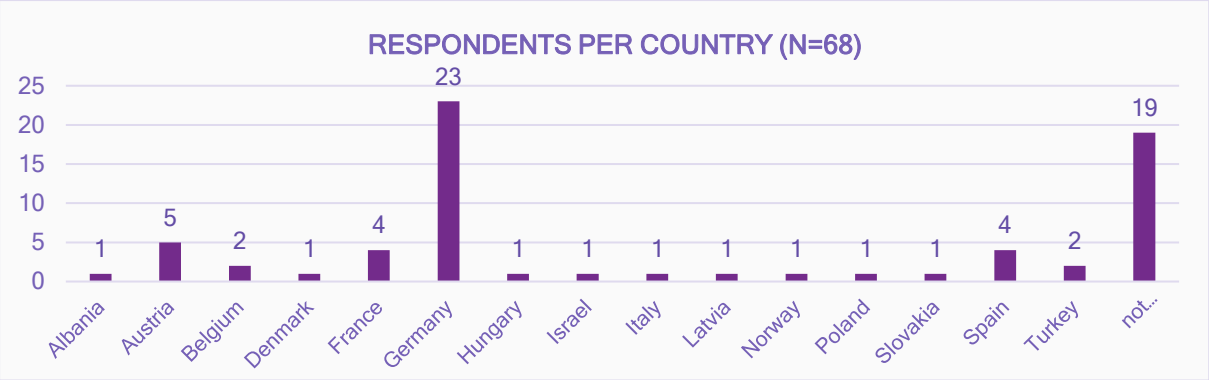

Figure 4: Number of survey respondents per country

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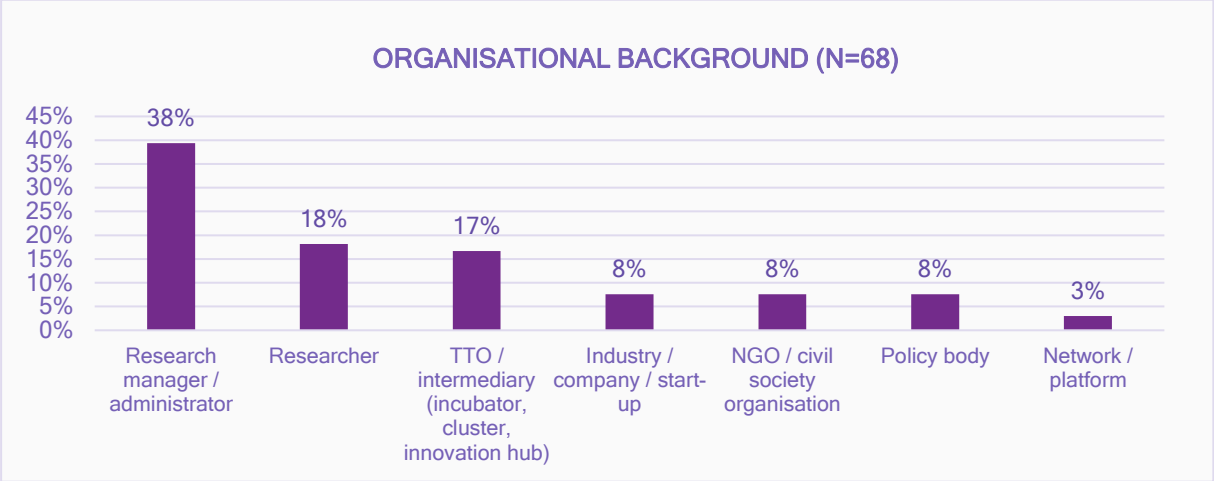

Figure 5: Organisational Background of Survey Respondents

Please note:

Percentages reported in this section refer to the total number of survey respondents (N=68), unless otherwise indicated. Detailed results (see annex) are based on valid responses per question and may therefore show slight variations.

Key Findings from the Survey

The survey results (N=68) indicate that while awareness of Knowledge Valorisation (KV) is relatively widespread among respondents, its consistent strategic and operational integration within organisations remains uneven.

A majority of respondents (69%) report being at least somewhat familiar with activities that bring research results into practical use.

At the strategic level, 53% of respondents indicate that Knowledge Valorisation is partly (26,5%) or fully (26,5%) integrated in their organisation's strategy.

At the operational level, 41% of respondents report that Knowledge Valorisation practice models are either fully embedded and strategically supported (17.6%) or implemented across several projects (23.5%), while 15% indicate that such activities are only used occasionally and remain limited to single projects.

Although a majority of participants report some level of familiarity with KV and partial embedding in institutional strategies, practical implementation is still constrained.

In particular, the survey highlights persistent challenges related to limited staff capacity, insufficient early-stage funding, weak incentives for researchers and administrative complexity. These factors hinder active engagement in valorisation activities and delay or prevent the translation of research results into practical use. At the same time, respondents express a strong demand for more accessible support mechanisms, including proof-of-concept funding, hands-on guidance and targeted training opportunities.

Strengthening implementation therefore requires stronger strategic commitment, as well as improvements in operational support services, incentive frameworks and funding structures.

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Breakdown of Survey Results

The key results of the survey (N=68) are summarised below. Detailed results and response rates are provided in the annex.

Key Barriers in Practice

Respondents identify several factors that limit Knowledge Valorisation in everyday practice. The most frequently mentioned barriers include lack of time and staff capacity (25%), limited funding for early-stage development (25%) and low incentives for researchers (25%).

Additional constraints include administrative barriers and complexity (22%) as well as limited skills and awareness (22%). Further factors mentioned by respondents include legal uncertainty, including compliance with state aid rules (13%), low demand from industry or society (13%), and missing institutional strategies for Knowledge Valorisation (13%).

Support Needs for Earlier Engagement in Knowledge Valorisation

When asked about support needs, respondents most frequently highlight the importance of dedicated early-stage or proof-of-concept funding (41%). This is followed by the need for practical guidance (step-by-step support) (21%) and incentives for focused training and career development (16%).

Additional support needs include better matchmaking with industry and society (13%), stronger intermediary support structures such as technology transfer offices and innovation hubs (12%), and clear contact points within institutions (10%).

Most Valuable Practice Models

In terms of practice models, co-creation approaches such as living labs (28%) and applied research for clients (28%) are most frequently identified as valuable. Spin-offs and startups are mentioned by 24% of respondents, while test-before-invest pilot formats are selected by 16%, followed by public-private partnerships (9%).

Ecosystem Assessment

The responses indicate challenges related to the capacity of the Knowledge Valorisation support ecosystem. Nearly half of respondents (49%) describe intermediary structures such as technology transfer offices, hubs and clusters as either weak and under-resourced (23,5%) or working but overloaded (25,0%). In contrast, only 9% consider these structures to be strong and well supported.

Key Priorities for Improvement

Respondents identify several priorities for improving Knowledge Valorisation in Europe. Increasing funding for early-stage development is most frequently mentioned (28%), followed by improving skills and incentives for researchers (19%), reducing administrative barriers (16%) and stimulating demand for research-based innovation (15%).

Further priorities include strengthening technology transfer offices and intermediary structures (12%) as well as supporting cross-sector partnerships (12%).

In addition, respondents highlight improvements related to intermediary support. The most frequently mentioned measure is increasing capacity in terms of staff and skills (32%), followed by better coordination across institutions (22%) and more hands-on support in early-

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stage or proof-of-concept phases (21%). Access to EU-level networks and learning opportunities is mentioned by 13% of respondents.

Key Enablers for Knowledge Valorisation

Across system and policy levels, respondents suggest a range of measures to improve the transfer of research results into practical use. These include stronger alignment with real-world problems, cultural and mindset changes among researchers and research management, and the development of cross-stakeholder valorisation networks.

Additional suggestions include more strategic use of EU-funded valorisation opportunities, improved coordination among Member States, stronger engagement with European industry, and the reduction of administrative barriers alongside the wider use of best practices.

Further measures include the introduction of dedicated funding instruments such as innovation transfer vouchers, stronger incentives for researchers and institutions to engage in knowledge transfer, and more structured collaboration processes between research organisations and external partners. Respondents also highlight the importance of strengthening early-stage funding mechanisms, such as proof-of-concept or innovation funds, and increasing the availability of skilled support staff and transfer professionals.

European Tools on Knowledge Valorisation

Awareness and use of European tools related to Knowledge Valorisation vary among respondents, with no single instrument reaching a majority.

In terms of awareness, the Knowledge Valorisation Platform is the most widely recognised tool among the respondents (34%), followed by the Codes of Practice for Knowledge Valorisation (24%). Knowledge Valorisation Week is known to a smaller share of respondents (13%), while other tools are mentioned only marginally (4%).

Among respondents who report having used any of these tools in their work (N=21), a large majority (86%) consider them to be either very useful (42.9%) or somewhat useful (42.9%).

When asked how ERA tools could be improved, respondents most frequently mention the need for step-by-step guidance (19%), more concrete examples and templates (16%), and tools tailored to early-stage valorisation or proof-of-concept activities (15%).

In addition, respondents point to the value of training formats such as webinars (13%) and better alignment of ERA tools with institutional strategies and workflows (13%). Further suggestions include more practical cases from similar institutions (7%) and improved outreach and awareness-raising activities (7%) to increase relevance in day-to-day practice.

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2. National Experiences: Knowledge Valorisation across Europe

This chapter summarises the main findings emerging from the interviews and the analysis of stakeholder perspectives. The insights reflect recurring challenges, needs and expectations related to Knowledge Valorisation across different levels of the research and innovation system.

The findings are structured along key policy levels – researcher, demand-side, institutional, national and European – to highlight where barriers arise and where enabling conditions for effective Knowledge Valorisation can be strengthened.

2.1 Researcher Level – Research Careers, Skills and Incentives

Awareness raising and mindset change amongst researchers

A key theme that arose in most interviews was the lack of awareness regarding the potential of and need for Knowledge Valorisation. Thus, **mindset change among researchers and research managers was identified as a key challenge** across interviews from all over Europe.

Interviews revealed that this challenge is partially rooted in the broader divide between scientific and economic value, which needs to be addressed to create a change in mindset. The key issue that emerged is the contrast between the Humboldtian ideal of higher education, focused on the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and a more practice-oriented approach that emphasises job training and the market valorisation of knowledge. The interviews reflected that those countries traditionally leaning towards the latter model, such as the Netherlands and the UK[1], tend to have more developed structures and greater experience in supporting practical application and commercialisation. Secondly, within countries, a similar divide in priorities could often be observed between research universities and technical universities.

Lukas Fuchs, leading researcher at EuroTeQ, argues that any meaningful discussion around Knowledge Valorisation must take these two opposing ends into account. Addressing this tension does not require choosing one model over the other, but rather creating a productive balance: On the one hand, there is a need to preserve academia's unique character, academic independence, and the inherent values of science, such as open-ended curiosity, long-term thinking, and scientific judgement. All of these play an important role in Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness. On the other hand, this needs to be complemented by a recognition of the importance of leveraging researchers' skills and knowledge for the benefit of society. From his perspective, Knowledge Valorisation is not about forcing relevance onto science, but about creating shared spaces where different social systems can communicate, align expectations, and jointly define (and then address) problems. According to him, effective Knowledge Valorisation in Europe depends on **all members of the academic and scientific cosmos becoming aware of these contending needs**, and recognising that both fulfil important societal roles. This approach helps avoid two extremes: universities becoming mere consultancies on the one hand, or remaining isolated ivory towers on the other. For Lukas

[1] Though the UK is not a EU member state anymore, various interviewees had personal and academic ties to England and Scotland, which led to some cross-references in this regard.

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Fuchs, co-creation with the goal of valorising is a way to keep science intellectually vibrant, socially embedded, and normatively protected.

Based in this foundation, **fostering a mindset change among researchers becomes a central priority**. A recurring theme across interviews is the widespread lack of awareness and familiarity with Knowledge Valorisation among academic personnel. As one technology transfer officer (TTO) from Masaryk University noted: "*We still lack sufficient awareness and education among scientists, post-docs, and PhD students in technology transfer, or in applying science in practice. For many of them it is still an area they do not really want to throw themselves into, even if many also know they should.*" Kornelia Mikuła, Head of the TTO at the International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IIMCB) in Warsaw, highlights the importance of promoting a shift in perception among scientists. According to her, **researchers need to see science and innovation as interconnected rather than mutually exclusive**, and should not fear patents or collaboration with industry.

To address this gap, interviews indicated several good practices. One important element is **embedding Knowledge Valorisation early in academic training** – not as the dominant, but as one essential element among others. Awareness of valorisation opportunities should be understood as one puzzle piece in academic education and development, ensuring that researchers become familiar with the concepts, tools, and opportunities related to it early on. To support this shift, IIMCB Warsaw, for instance, has implemented a range of targeted measures: "*We started our activities by organising seminars and lectures to familiarise the research community with the concept of technology transfer. We also showcase success stories of fruitful collaborations with industrial partners that can inspire others. In addition, we run intensive, hands-on training courses on technology transfer for PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers and interested group leaders, demonstrating how to look at research results from a different angle and how to combine scientific excellence with innovation activities."*

Similarly, Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, Deputy Head of the Centre for Research Programmes at Institute of Fundamental Technological Research Polish Academy of Sciences (IPPT PAN), underlines the importance of awareness raising combined with visible examples of success to encourage researchers from the get-go: *"We are putting a lot of effort to build the awareness, but also to provide services and to show success stories and role models, because these are really a missing link. People don't believe that it can work or that this is important."* This highlights a crucial success factor: the need for systemic, long-term support structures that not only build capacity but also **foster researchers' trust in the value and feasibility of Knowledge Valorisation**.

Overall, it can be concluded that for interviewees across Europe, a fundamental mindset change to shape attitudes, build competencies, and normalise engagement with Knowledge Valorisation is a key first step. As a representative from the Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation emphasised: *"If research culture and mindset do not change, even the best legislation will not help much."*

Education, training and accessibility of support

Closely linked to the need for greater awareness and mindset change is the question of how well researchers are equipped to engage in Knowledge Valorisation in practice. Across interviews, stakeholders emphasise that beyond willingness, Knowledge Valorisation is a matter of ability.

At present, **existing training and guidance offers across Europe are often voluntary, unevenly visible, and not sufficiently embedded in academic career pathways** or formal education programmes. As a result, many researchers across Europe lack the skills and guidance that

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would enable them to act. As Tatjana Chircop, Deputy Principal at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, points out, researchers are often highly capable within their scientific domains and possess high levels of skill and expertise in their research. However, this does not automatically translate into competencies in areas such as business development, entrepreneurship, or marketing.

As a first step, the suggestions made in various interviews allow the assumption that **including transfer and valorisation as one fixed element of academic curricula** could provide a significant boost in this area (see also section on Awareness raising and mindset change).

Secondly, the next step after embedding valorisation in academic training should be providing suitable additional resources for students and researchers who show an interest in valorisation. Gaps in structured support and accessible guidance can make it difficult for researchers to navigate and engage effectively with Knowledge Valorisation processes. At Salzburg Research in Austria, for example, it was noted that *"many research institutions are still developing the structures and processes needed to effectively connect research and industry."* As a result, multiple interviewees from all over the continent stressed the need for **practical, easily accessible, and low-threshold support that fits researchers' everyday realities**. This includes clear first-contact points, concise and targeted guidance materials, and support structures that reduce (rather than increase) complexity.

Several good practices illustrate how such support structures can be implemented. At the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, efforts focus on empowering researchers through dedicated research contact hours, workshops, proposal-writing training, and other capacity-building activities designed to strengthen both staff and students' ability to produce high-quality research with external impact. Importantly, these initiatives are open to researchers across disciplines and career stages, ensuring broad accessibility.

Similarly, the Technology Transfer Office at Tallinn University of Technology provides structured, hands-on support through a range of services, including matchmaking platforms, intellectual property advice, and administrative assistance to guide researchers through application processes. In addition, the institution runs pre-incubation programmes tailored to different target groups: one for students developing business ideas, another for research staff, offering training, coaching, and mentoring to prepare teams for subsequent acceleration programmes.

Both of these examples underline that effective support for Knowledge Valorisation must go beyond isolated initiatives. They require **coordinated, institution-wide efforts that combine awareness raising, skills development, and practical guidance**.

Andras Havasi, Manager at the Knowledge Transfer Office at the University of Malta argues that taking the leap into commercialisation is very often precarious and challenging for researchers, and that this challenge can be made easier by a **supportive institutional environment**, including entrepreneurship-oriented training, technology transfer offices, and business incubators. Commercialisation processes are often time-consuming and risky, and sustained support can make the key difference in encouraging researchers to hang on. The RE-STONE project in Malta may serve as an example of a successful process: As described by Andras Havasi, the initiative began with the challenge of construction waste and developed a patented process to reconstitute limestone waste into masonry products. After more than a decade of research, development, and scaling, the project is nearing commercial launch. Havasi noted that sustained support from the Knowledge Transfer Office was crucial in keeping the initiative alive and securing an industrial partner willing to invest.

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As Havasi also argues, **experiential learning** can also play an important role: "*One of the most effective learning experiences for researchers is direct involvement in commercialisation. Attempting to bring a technology to market exposes numerous non-technical challenges and provides insights that no training programme can fully replicate."* According to him, once researchers have gone through this process, they tend to approach innovation differently and are better prepared to develop solutions with genuine market potential.

An important lesson is that support mechanisms must be aligned with researchers' existing motivations and interests. The Director of a large German University's Transfer Centre emphasises that transfer support activities are most effective when researchers are *"**met where their interests and transfer preferences already lie**,"* rather than being pushed towards a single, uniform model of valorisation. This points to the importance of flexible support that recognise the diversity of research practices, disciplines, and individual career goals.

As a whole, it can be concluded that making Knowledge Valorisation truly accessible to researchers depends on fully embedding these elements into the fabric of academic systems to ensure that researchers are encouraged, equipped, and actively supported when it comes to translating their knowledge into practical value.

Student and doctoral pathways

Doctoral candidates and students can play an important role in early-stage valorisation through thesis-based collaboration, entrepreneurship formats and startup-related activities. However, these pathways often remain dependent on individual initiative and lack continuity, supervision and sufficient institutional embedding in most European regions. Stakeholders call for more **institutional embedding, stronger recognition, and support for student and doctoral pathways as entryways into Knowledge Valorisation**.

Drawing from experience in multiple European research systems, Lukas Fuchs points to nationally supported, **systematic schemes for work placements** to boost the structured integration of valorisation into academic pathways. This may include internships with companies or project-based collaboration. Magdalena Sikorska, EUNICE Alliance explains that student-focused projects and programmes allow students to expand the scope of their training, while enabling universities to *"use ideas, resources and instruments… including in cooperation with business."* Michał Młynarczyk from SOLARIS (Poland) indicates that at his institution, **collaboration formats** include *"industrial PhD schemes where company problems become the starting point for doctoral research."* František Duchoň from the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava added: *"We also use tools to increase the engagement of active students and involve them in projects."*

Fuchs also sees particular value in UK-style PhD internships and placements in government, which help align research relevance and policy needs: *"In the UK, there is a great tradition of work placements and PhD internships. Researchers get to work in government for a certain number of months, or part time, to interact with public agencies. And that usually has the advantage that the research that it's connected to, for example as part of a PhD, has greater relevance to what is actually being done on a governmental level. There's much less of that in Austria and Germany. At least in the Netherlands, there are some such placement schemes, but I think the UK state governments are very open to that. More such collaborations would be good."* This theme also touches on the idea of **co-creation formats embedded at the educational level** that allow students to combine their studies with real-life experience and practice from an early point (see also chapter 2.2).

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Career incentives and recognition

Beyond individual awareness and skill building, lacking or unclear signals about the role of Knowledge Valorisation in academic careers continue to discourage researchers' engagement in many member states. As various interviewees indicated, publication-oriented reward structures, limited protected time and missing career incentives reduce researchers' willingness to participate in transfer-related activities. Thus, one theme that arose in various interviews was the need to boost **recognition of valorisation in academic careers, institutional communication and discussions around research assessment**.

Andras Havasi, Manager at the Knowledge Transfer Office at the University of Malta argues that from a systemic perspective, **valorisation efforts need to be reflected and considered when evaluating academic achievements** in order to encourage valorisation efforts among researchers. According to him, non-academic output such as spin-outs, patents, external projects, and more broadly commercialisation efforts should also be counted towards promotion. Following this same train of thought, František Duchoň, Director of the Institute of Robotics and Cybernetics at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava (SK) reports a successful practice at his institution that entails encouraging commercialisation efforts among PhD students through dedicated incentives: *"PhD students are the real carriers of research. Our faculty's PhD school* ***rewards students not just for high-quality publications, but equally for patents and utility models****. We also use tools to increase the stipends of active students and involve them in projects."*

As an example of a good practice to support this aim, Masaryk University is currently piloting, so far at one faculty, **dedicated transfer groups** to strengthen early-stage valorisation: If researchers obtain external funding for applied research, they can be temporarily exempted from publication requirements and focus on applied work with the aim of enabling transfer or reaching a significant transfer milestone for up to two years.

Timing of engagement

Across Europe, stakeholders report that researchers often engage with Knowledge Valorisation only at a late stage of the research process, or when a concrete challenge or opportunity arises. This rather reactive approach limits the potential impact of research results and reduces the range of possible application pathways. Many interviewees therefore emphasised the importance of **integrating knowledge transfer much earlier and more systematically, beginning at the outset of research projects**.

Particularly in regions and universities that do not traditionally focus on the practical application of knowledge, interviews suggest that in many cases, earlier engagement with possible entryways into Knowledge Valorisation may strengthen the relevance, readiness, and long-term impact of research across Europe.

Several stakeholders highlighted that timing is a decisive factor for successful transfer, indicating that **early integration of valorisation considerations may accelerate implementation and improve alignment between research activities and potential future application**.

The Director of the Transfer Center at a large German university emphasised that knowledge transfer must be embedded early and pragmatically into research processes, rather than treated as an afterthought. She noted that engaging doctoral candidates at an early stage is particularly important, as many are unaware that their research may hold transfer and commercialisation potential at all. Thus, she stressed that *"the earlier transfer is considered and built into research projects, the faster it can be implemented."* As such, according to her,

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Knowledge Valorisation should be one (naturally among multiple) consideration right from the start.

Claudia Kitzmüller, Knowledge Transfer Manager at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, similarly argued that in her experience, **early hands-on support for researchers** (combined with clear institutional frameworks) increases the likelihood that excellent research can be successfully transferred into practice.

High-potential transfer activities and spin-offs

Across interviews, stakeholders frequently pointed to patents and spin-offs as some of the most well-known, effective and visible pathways for knowledge transfer, particularly in fields such as life sciences, quantum technologies, and other research areas related to natural sciences and tech. In these sectors, results can often be translated into concrete products and services fairly immediately through spin-offs, industrial partnerships, creating a company, patents, or licensing – particularly when properly supported through effective training, institutional support, and co-creative formats that allow researchers to assess practical needs.

An officer from the Lithuanian Science and Innovation Liaison and Competence Office supported the frequently made point that **spin-offs can be a relatively direct and effective pathway for transferring research into practice**, often providing scalable results. As such, the need for structured support for these more "typical" and often very productive types of valorisation remains high. According to Magdalena Sikorska, Secretary General of EUNICE, some types of research and knowledge outputs with particularly high valorisation potential include practice-oriented student projects that address concrete industrial problems, entrepreneurial ideas with clear applications such as WoundWise (a hydrogel that accelerates wound-healing), and the joint use of unique research infrastructures through the "joint open lab" mechanism.

Claudia Kitzmüller, Knowledge Transfer Manager at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, highlighted ParityQC and Proxygen as examples of a successful process for research-based spin-offs. ParityQC, active in quantum technologies, develops an operating system for quantum computers. Founded around 2020, the company became profitable in 2024 and has established strong international industrial partnerships that contribute to its success. Proxygen GmbH, operating in the life sciences sector, was noted as an example of a funded spin-off that professionalised at an early stage by appointing an external CEO, recognising that researchers are not always best suited to carry out all roles in companies through later growth phases.

Overall, the interviews left little doubt that spin-offs remain a highly important and effective transfer route for research-conducting institutions across Europe, particularly for technology-intensive sectors, but should be understood as one pathway within a broader valorisation ecosystem.

Widening the scope of valorisation: Beyond patents and technology

A theme that arose in multiple interviews was the need to widen the understanding of Knowledge Valorisation beyond the common focus on patents, spin-offs, and traditional technology transfer. Valorisation and transfer are still frequently associated mainly with patenting or spin-offs. However, **all disciplines, including the humanities, theology, social sciences, arts, and education hold the potential for knowledge transfer** – and yet, these fields are often overlooked in institutional strategies and support structures. These pathways often involve **policy advice, consulting, digital tools, service development or collaboration with public-sector**

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and civil-society actors. Stakeholders highlight the need for more recognition and support for these non-technical forms of valorisation within institutional strategies and funding schemes.

The Director of a large German university's Transfer Center strongly argued that traditional universities in particular need to broaden their perspective in order to tap into unused potential among students and researchers: *"In terms of economic exploitability, we often start from the premise that we are talking about natural sciences, hard sciences, and classic industrial utilisation. But actually, it goes much further. [...] Transfer is much more than commonly assumed. Other types of scientific knowledge can also be economically exploited in many ways."*

She advocated **actively approaching and addressing researchers from faculties beyond technology and life sciences, many of whom do not have the topic of economic valorisation on their agenda at all**. In many cases, this may result in forms of transfer that are less scalable, but nonetheless economically socially and valuable.

As she explained, *"the situation is quite different in the life sciences sector or with all the new AI startups when it comes to potential growth… and, naturally, revenue figures and job creation. […] These may be well-established consulting firms, but they're unlikely to grow from five to 500 employees."* As for good practices, she further explained: "*This may entail something like supporting a solo self-employment that arises from it. But it could also grow into a small specialized consulting company. Exactly [these types of questions] can be researched, strategically developed and planned [with the support of transfer offices in universities], business plans can be created. And something like that is advised for all departments."* One example she cited was a theologian providing consulting services to municipalities on the repurposing of church spaces.

Several stakeholders noted that **Knowledge Valorisation in the Social Sciences and Humanities often takes forms such as policy advice, consulting, digital tools, service development, or collaboration with public entities and civil society actors**. Vilma Purienė of Vilnius Tech said that *"valorisation includes cooperation with ministries, municipalities and public-sector actors, not only industry."* A representative of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in Slovenia stressed that *"Knowledge Valorisation is much more than patents … it is about what research gives back to society."*

The head of the Research and Transfer unit at a large German University of Applied Sciences described a broad portfolio of transfer activities: *"We have strong activities in social work, early childhood education, inclusion and disability studies. We also conduct research on right-wing extremism and nationalism, which is highly visible in the public sphere. In addition, we have focus areas such as energy, digitalisation, and digital transformation. There are also activities in cultural and creative industries, media, and related fields. Our research transfer activities therefore go far beyond purely technological cooperation with industry. We work with a wide range of stakeholders, including companies, public institutions, and civil society actors."*

What all of these examples point to is a need to more strategically expand existing approaches to valorisation in many institutions and regions. Current strategies often focus on identifying and supporting technology spin-offs, patents, or research activities with the potential to scale rapidly and become major economic success stories. To be sure, the importance of this model, particularly in life sciences, AI, and deep tech, remains indisputable. At the same time, interviewees from Germany and Lithuania suggested that universities and research-supporting organisations should place greater emphasis on enabling a much larger number of smaller, specialised initiatives that cannot always be scaled up, but nonetheless

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create meaningful value: If large numbers of researchers across Europe are better empowered to valorise their individual skills and expertise through consultancies, freelance advisory work, niche services, local innovation, or discipline-specific enterprises, the cumulative effect could also be substantial. Rather than focusing only on a relatively small number of scalable (often tech-based) projects, **empowering a much broader base of researchers by deliberately targeting researchers from other fields** could strengthen competitiveness and economic resilience across Europe.

Interviews suggest that many institutions still lack transfer support, awareness-raising and institutional guidance for researchers from these disciplines in particular. As a TTO at a German University of Applied Sciences pointed out, *"depending on the field, processes and timelines differ significantly."* Overall, interviews point to a major untapped opportunity: **by recognising that individual needs and transfer formats differ significantly depending on disciplinary context**, and by **placing a much greater emphasis on disciplines beyond tech, natural sciences, and life sciences**, Europe may be able to mobilise a far larger share of its research and innovation potential.

2.2 Demand-Side Level – Innovation Uptake and User Engagement

Awareness and translation between sectors

Interviews revealed that beyond the supply of applicable research results, one important bottleneck for broader Knowledge Transfer in Europe is a lack of awareness, ability and capacity of companies, public actors, and societal organisations – in short, possible users and partners – to engage with and absorb them.

Multiple interviewees noted that companies and other potential users often lack clarity about how researchers and research-performing organisations such as universities could potentially help solve existing practical challenges. This reduces the likelihood of early contact and makes collaboration less likely and more difficult. Various stakeholders from all across Europe therefore pointed to the need for **stronger and comprehensive brokerage mechanisms through intermediaries and accessible entry points** that make research results or capabilities more understandable and usable for potential external partners.

An officer from the Lithuanian Science and Innovation Liaison and Competence Office summarised a key lesson learned: successful collaboration depends on both researchers and businesses or other users recognising the value of cooperation and being motivated to engage. Research outcomes are far more likely to be translated into practice when both sides understand the benefits of collaboration.

In this context, Andras Havasi, Manager at the Knowledge Transfer Office at the University of Malta, highlighted the value of intermediaries such as Transfer Offices: *"Facilitating direct dialogue between researchers and industry is one of the most powerful interventions we can make. Simply creating opportunities for structured exchange significantly improves mutual understanding of needs, constraints, and expectations."* According to him, the core function of intermediaries lies precisely here: in bridging the gap between research and practice by *"acting as a guiding hand that helps research navigate the pathway from knowledge creation to practical application."*

As such, he argues that effective Knowledge Valorisation ecosystems require stronger, broadly connected intermediaries that can act as a gateway to targeted networks and relevant industry partners, help provide initial contact points, support in identifying collaboration opportunities, translate between academic and business cultures, and practically support implementation.

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Capacity constraints on the demand side

Various interviewees emphasised that demand-side constraints are often underestimated. Particularly SMEs often operate under short-term commercial pressures and have limited time and resources to identify or implement research-based solutions. Public-interest organisations, municipalities, and non-profit actors often face similar constraints.

Beyond awareness, Vilma Purienė of Vilnius Tech highlighted that many collaborative projects require additional support because external partners, such as municipalities, often lack the internal capacity needed to implement innovation. In such cases, **guidance, training, and implementation support through dedicated intermediaries such as transfer offices** can play a crucial role.

A good practice identified in Poland is the systemic initiative *Innovation Coach*, described by Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, Deputy Head of the Centre for Research Programmes at Institute of Fundamental Technological Research Polish Academy of Sciences (IPPT PAN). She noted: *"We have 1900 companies coached by researchers and other people related to research, on which innovation can be implemented and how to implement those innovations."* The programme supports companies that want to innovate by providing coaching, practical tools to initiate research and development work, and assistance in accessing national and European funding instruments to implement new ideas.

These examples suggest that strengthening demand-side absorptive capacity is a crucial component of successful knowledge transfer. Without targeted support, many potential users of research, particularly SMEs and public actors, are unable to engage with and apply available knowledge and research results for practical innovation.

Supporting the "difficult middle" of collaboration

The interviews suggest that successful Knowledge Valorisation often requires several conditions to come together. Even when potential users are aware that research organisations can help address practical challenges and both sides are motivated to collaborate, practical barriers frequently remain.

A recurring theme across the interviews was that many collaborations encounter difficulties in the "difficult middle" of the process: the stage between initial contact and concrete implementation. **Intermediaries such as transfer offices, liaison centres, and dedicated support units can play an important role in handling this middle part of collaboration**, particularly in cases where both sides, researchers and the demand side, lack experience in collaborative processes and knowledge transfer. Interviewees suggested that the existence of such entities can play an important role in boosting Knowledge Valorisation. They can help reduce friction by providing guidance and hands-on support throughout the collaboration process.

Vilnius Tech's Knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre could serve as an example of an **effective "all-in-one" model that bundles services under one roof**. The centre provides early-stage valorisation support, administrative facilitation, implementation assistance, and training for external partners such as municipalities. The centre was also mentioned for its hands-on role in managing key legal and commercial aspects of cooperation: This includes actively protecting intellectual property rights, supporting licensing and patenting processes, and helping researchers understand ownership structures and possible exploitation pathways. By helping fill capacity gaps on all partners' side, it builds longer-term capability and encourages businesses and organisations to return with new and more ambitious collaboration proposals.

Tallinn University of Technology's TTO was mentioned as another example of effective intermediation. It supports research-to-practice pathways through structured matchmaking, legal

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and IP advice, and administrative assistance for collaborative projects, helping researchers and external partners move more efficiently from initial interest to concrete cooperation.

Considering the gaps and constraints both from researcher and demand side, it seems clear that improved awareness-building, brokerage, and intermediary support play an important role in boosting Knowledge Valorisation.

Knowledge Valorisation pathways: Starting from the demand side

An important insight from the interviews was that Knowledge Valorisation is often understood as a one-sided process of transferring existing research results into practice after they have already been developed. While this remains an important pathway, several stakeholders noted that such a simplistic, one-way model of transfer from science to practice overlooks a wide range of additional opportunities and leaves enormous potential for Knowledge Valorisation on the table.

For one, as discussed above, Knowledge Valorisation includes many pathways beyond patenting and spin-off creation. Especially when considering a broader range of disciplines, these pathways may involve policy advice, consulting, digital tools, service development, or collaboration with public-sector and civil-society actors.

Secondly, it also implies that broadening the concept of valorisation means rethinking not only the outputs, but also the direction of the process itself. Rather than only starting from existing research and searching for possible applications afterwards, **valorisation can also start from the demand side**. This can take two different forms: It may imply identifying concrete societal, industrial, or public-sector challenges and then **connecting these needs with relevant research expertise**; or it may mean approaching Knowledge Valorisation as a **co-creative process from the start** (see next section) to increase relevance and effectiveness.

Either way, as indicated in the previous chapter, the majority of stakeholders across Europe strongly emphasised that considering real-world demands and practical application options early on appears to be an important success factor in successful valorisation. A good practice for successful Knowledge Valorisation that was mentioned in different forms by many stakeholders across Europe is to generate and promote options that make it possible to start from the demand side.

Various comments highlighted that for some types of research, external stakeholders and end users should be included in research projects early on, ensuring that research and valorisation pathways are informed by actual needs right from the beginning. Michał Młynarczyk, the deputy director of the multidisciplinary centre for applied research SOLARIS argues that "*we need to listen to concrete needs, expressed in the language that a company is able to use, what their needs are, and only then is that the starting point. All the reverse mechanisms (...), are much more difficult and, in our view, do not work.*" Coming from a very industry-oriented background as, good practices according to him include

- **starting collaboration from company or societal needs**
- enabling on-the-ground collaboration through researchers' **onsite stays in companies**; i.e. short stays and diagnostic visits
- **standardising procedures and measurements in line with industry norms and standards** (such as GLP, GMP and ISO norms), which builds trust because companies see that the intermediary "speaks the same language" as the companies do
- using structured IP (licences, patents, protected knowhow) to communicate opportunities in a format that allows companies to quickly judge whether they are interested
- carrying out **tailored analytical studies** solving a specific industrial problem

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In terms of learnings, Młynarczyk also points out that in his view, what does not work are mass-scale presentations of research infrastructure at conferences and sectoral workshops, since few if any industry actors are willing to disclose concrete problems that might reveal competitive advantages.

SOLARIS may serve as an example of a **systematic integration of research and industry**. Here, Knowledge Valorisation is embedded in its mission as a national research infrastructure providing services to external users, including industry. The institution supports early-stage and precommercial valorisation mainly in three ways: By dedicating expert staff to work directly with companies on their problems; secondly by organising onsite stays of staff in companies to diagnose needs and translate them into research agendas; and thirdly by participating in industrial PhD schemes where company problems become the starting point for doctoral research.

User-oriented collaboration formats and co-creation

As indicated in the previous chapter, early and continuous involvement of end users and industry partners emerges as one of the most important success factors for Knowledge Valorisation. As discussed, this can look like starting with real-life demands. However, it may also take the shape of embedding collaboration even more systematically throughout the entire research process. Interviewees from all across Europe repeatedly point to the effectiveness of **co-creation and experimentation formats such as structured cooperation formats, living labs, student initiatives, or long-term partnerships**. These formats align research with practical needs, support iterative development, and make it more likely that research results and projects become practically relevant or can be adopted. Their effectiveness, however, depends on trust, facilitation and sustained engagement from users rather than purely transactional or short-term relationships.

In terms of best practices, Lukas Fuchs from EuroTeQ emphasised a relational, systemic co-creative approach in which researchers, policymakers, industry, and civil society work together from the outset. He argued that collaboration should begin at the stage of problem definition and research design, rather than only at dissemination: *"This is something I learned in the Netherlands – the co-creation approach, which includes a whole framework for how research looks in practice."* He further noted that *"the most successful examples […] are more relational or systemic. This means that there is a constant or regular exchange between researchers and government organisations, companies, NGOs, etc., where things are worked out together – not where research is simply translated into practice as a one-way street."*

A key lesson learned is that **regular, informal, and sustained interaction** is more effective than one-off projects or purely formal cooperation frameworks. The head of the Research and Transfer unit at a large German University of Applied Sciences noted that successful transfer activities are often embedded in ongoing collaboration with external partners. According to Vilma Purienė of Vilnius Tech, this can be observed in cases where solutions are *"developed together with companies and then presented to municipalities for public use", which she highlighted as one particularly good practice in her experience.*

Several stakeholders stressed that co-creation and continuous involvement of partners and/or end users is essential because **researchers' assumptions about user needs and industry realities often differ from real-world requirements and conditions**. A representative from Salzburg Research explained: *"As researchers you often have an opinion that you think something works a certain way or that this is what the companies need, and when you then actually work with […] the end-user […] they sometimes have different requirements or simply*

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see these things differently." As the same interviewee noted: *"The earlier and better you involve these end-users or the organisations in the projects, the more likely it is […] that research results will make it to the market or end up being used in the organisation."*

Some interviews suggested that one special benefit of co-creation is that they allow for **iterative learning processes, which make it far more likely for a project to succeed**. As an exemplary good practice, Andras Havasi from the University of Malta's Transfer Office explains how his institution formulates and tests hypotheses about a technology potential value: *"We formulate hypotheses about how the technology could create value and then test these hypotheses through structured engagement with industry… frequently, initial assumptions prove to be naive."* With that, researchers and partners are able to adapt, refine, or pivot projects based on real-world feedback.

Further examples from the interviews show how co-creation can take different forms across contexts. Lukas Fuchs highlights student teams from Eindhoven University as good practice to **bringing universities and industry together**: *"Engineering students are encouraged to form small student teams, and they then develop ideas for how to improve agriculture, such as solar cars or artificial ecosystems. They work together with industry, i.e. with stakeholders in Eindhoven, where many individual companies are based. The idea is that students first learn as part of the curriculum, and then these links between research and these companies are formed."*

As Fuchs concluded, *"the greatest impact is then not measured by how much knowledge is now going into industry. Instead, industry and these external stakeholders are drawn more strongly into the orbit of the universities through these student teams."*

Long-term collaboration can also play a key role. A representative from Tallinn University of Technology said that in their experience, that successful partnerships with industry are often built over many years through repeated joint projects, rather than one-off engagements. Similarly, Estonia's e-governance ecosystem was cited as an example of solutions developed in close cooperation between public authorities and university researchers.

Access to experimentation and testing infrastructures

Finally, another pathway to Knowledge Valorisation that emerged as a good practice from the interviews is valorisation and collaboration driven entirely by the demand side: Multiple interviewees shared the observation that the transition from research to practical application can also be boosted and facilitated effectively by **giving end users direct access to tools, infrastructures, testing, and experimentation environments**. Shared infrastructures such as open labs, testbeds and experimentation spaces allow companies and other users to validate research-based solutions before committing to larger investments, thereby lowering financial and technological risks.

As one interviewee noted, this can be particularly helpful to support SMEs and first-time users of research-based innovation who operate under capacity constraints and lack previous experience. Vilma Purienė points out that successful projects depend on the ability to run pilots in real environments and later integrate them into routine use – for companies, but also institutions or public actors such as municipalities.

Across Europe, interviews indicate that albeit promising, this approach is not yet widely employed.

Another good practice that was mentioned is the "**test-before-invest**" model: Austria runs a test-before-invest programme in the context of the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH),

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supported by the European Commission. The programme enables SMEs to test new technologies or projects by experimenting with digital and AI solutions before committing financial resources. It helps companies clarify their possible problems, challenges and needs, and identify viable solutions. As one interviewee from Salzburg Research noted, *"I noticed, companies are sometimes a bit skeptical when they get services for free… and they could be communicated and market better, because I think many companies don't even know that this exists. But in terms of the format, it's great."*

The interviewee also argued that the test-before-invest is a success format which could also be applied well in other contexts.

Yet another good practice can be found at Vilnius Tech, which actively encourages external parties such as companies, public actors and other potential users to approach the university in search for innovative solutions to challenges. As Vilma Purienė explains, her university's transfer centre allows external clients to *"come to the university with a need, and the centre responds by offering solutions from the university's portfolio."*

In terms of challenges, it was noted that this type of pathway, if even available, is often limited by a lack of awareness and knowledge among potential users such as companies or public actors. Looking at it from a more structural perspective, the approach remains relatively underdeveloped in many parts of Europe, partly because universities and the private sector traditionally operate in separate spheres. As publicly funded institutions, universities need to ensure that their resources are used in a way that complies with legal and regulatory frameworks, which can make access for private actors more challenging. In particular, questions around the private use of publicly funded infrastructure require careful handling.

So, some interviewees pointed out that in order to tap into the potential of sharing infrastructure or providing access to tools and resources to the private sector in particular, they expect **clear, appropriate legal frameworks at the regional and national level to guarantee fair and compliant use across institutional borders**. Additionally, in cases where (unlike with Austria's test-and-invest programme) the offer is not free, users require clearly defined access conditions and transparent pricing models.

Overall, the interviews suggest that providing experimentation tools and infrastructures may be an effective way to stimulate Knowledge Valorisation in Europe if done intentionally. By lowering entry barriers and supporting iterative testing, and if supported by appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks, such approaches could increase the likelihood that innovation and research are taken up and applied in practice.

2.3 Institutional Level – Knowledge Transfer Capacity and Intermediaries

Strategic embedding and institutional commitment

In many organisations, Knowledge Valorisation is still only weakly anchored in institutional strategies and leadership frameworks. This leads to uneven prioritisation, limited legitimacy and insufficient long-term planning for transfer-related activities. Stakeholders expect clearer strategic positioning, stronger leadership signals and better as well as more durable integration of Knowledge Valorisation into institutional missions and governance.

A KTO from Salzburg Research argues that **systemic support is key**. Effective Knowledge Valorisation depends on **institutional structures**, incentives and processes that go beyond individual projects and researchers. This includes institutional recognition of Knowledge Valorisation, management support, clear mandates and responsibilities of research management institutions and officers, sufficient time and capacity for transfer activities.

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These findings are reflected in concrete institutional practices. One example for how to effectively empower knowledge transfer at the institutional level is provided by Masaryk University. Its Technology Transfer Office operates as an **independent economic unit with faculty-level decision-making competencies**, rather than a rectorate unit. As such, it is equipped with more autonomy than TTCs at many other universities, allowing it to operate more effectively and to speed up processes in a way that better matches how companies operate, a TTO from Masaryk University explained.

Another example is provided by Kornelia Mikuła, Head of TTO at the International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IIMCB) in Warsaw. She highlights the importance of **strategically setting up capacities** for knowledge transfer. One example is IIMCB's in-house TTO, supported by a Horizon WIDERA grant, which was used to finance setting up the office, hiring staff, and to fund extensive training and engaging in capacity-building activities. The TTO now conducts in-house patent drafting, IP assessment, business case building, and prepublication checks for potentially innovative outputs. It also engages in systematic outreach inside the institute, via seminars, lectures, success story communication, and hands-on trainings for researchers to show how scientific excellence and innovation can be combined.

Evidence from the **Austrian Academy of Sciences** shows that Knowledge Valorisation has gained increasing attention at the leadership level over time, following a period in which it was not yet a central institutional priority. This highlights the importance of strong leadership commitment and strategic embedding to ensure that Knowledge Valorisation **is fully integrated into institutional missions**, governance structures, and long-term planning, thereby strengthening its legitimacy and impact.

At a **German university**, the strategic anchoring of transfer is described as still evolving, noting that "*we have a transfer strategy - that is a good start, but at the same time there is still a lot to be done*." This reflects how formal strategies exist but are not yet fully embedded in institutional practice and governance.

Transfer capacity, staffing and proactive functions

Many institutions lack sufficient **structural capacity for active transfer functions**. Scouting, business development and transfer support are often concentrated in very small teams or individual staff members, which limits the proactive identification of opportunities and slows down the matching process with users and markets. As a result, stakeholders expect stronger and more durable institutional transfer capacity, including clearly identifiable first-contact and scouting functions.

Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden implemented an approach to address these challenges: transfer activities are supported through structured processes, where "*we have a shared process for validating ideas and developing them*." This illustrates how institutionalised processes can support the more systematic identification and development of transfer opportunities.

Capacity and professionalisation of intermediaries

Technology transfer offices, innovation units, hubs and clusters are widely seen as essential intermediaries, but their **effectiveness depends on professional capacity, continuity and recognition**. Interviewees highlight the need for stronger and more systematic investment in the capacity of intermediary organisations such as technology transfer offices. Strengthening these structures supports researchers and external partners and reduces bottlenecks in implementation.

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An example of good practice is provided by Claudia Kitzmüller, Knowledge Transfer Manager at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, who is currently **streamlining and standardising processes** within the Academy for faster results, allowing the Academy to *"incorporate spin-offs more quickly, that we establish standardised processes for this, that we perhaps also work out standardised term sheets where it is already stated in which range license fees would lie and which shares the Academy might take, so that founders already have a bit of a framework from the beginning and know what to expect*."

At **Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden**, intermediary roles are institutionalised through **dedicated innovation advisors**, where "*the innovation advisor's role is to meet researchers and… help them to valorise knowledge generated at the university*." This reflects the structured and professionalised role of intermediaries in supporting researchers and guiding Knowledge Valorisation processes.

Networks and ecosystem-based collaboration

One overarching theme that is reflected throughout all of Europe is the vital importance of strong networks. **Intermediary cooperation, regional innovation centres, clusters and cross-institutional collaboration platforms** are seen as **important enabling structures**. They help extend reach, build trust, scale established formats and connect research organisations with firms, cities and regions. Stakeholders therefore expect stronger support for intermediary cooperation and ecosystem-based transfer environments.

This is evident in a wide range of practical examples and perspectives from the practitioners reflected across different levels. Good practice for boosting knowledge transfer: **pooling resources and increasing networks through targeted, large-scale, systematic cross-country cooperation. One best practice in this regard is through European University Alliances**. Magdalena Sikorska, EUNICE Secretary General of the EUNICE University Alliance, highlights that "*as a consortium, we are very effective in supporting students and doctoral candidates: we have ideas, resources and instruments, and we strive to use them to the full, including in cooperation with business – both through our internship portal and through our associated partners. In the area of entrepreneurship education, we run an 'entrepreneurship lab' programme, under which ten universities share their experiences and knowledge, thereby building a stronger, broader and more consolidated message*." She also sees European University alliances as key actors for strengthening Europe's higher education and research, **providing a counterweight to leading American and Chinese universities and driving institutional change** within member universities. This is further illustrated by concrete initiatives within the alliance, such as the EUNICE Start Cup, an **entrepreneurship competition** held in parallel at all ten partner universities. Students first compete in local rounds, after which selected projects advance to a joint international final evaluated by an expert panel. One example is the project "WoundWise" from Poznań University of Technology, a hydrogel to accelerate healing of chronic wounds, where the competition not only recognised the concept but also provided financial support and access to internships to support further development. In addition, the consortium has established an **internship platform** bringing together around 200 companies across Europe, offering students opportunities to apply their ideas in real-life business contexts and to work on company-driven challenges. This is described as an effective mechanism for exchange and for fostering entrepreneurial skills in a practical environment.

This sentiment is echoed by various others, such as Lukas Fuchs, who heralds them as one of the most effective ways that different European knowledge systems can have to interact with each other. Looking at data from across Europe, EuroTeQ researcher Lukas Fuchs praises **university alliances** within the EU as highly successful institutional innovations. They

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foster cross-border dialogue, mutual learning, and reflection on the role of universities in society: "*It is very important for us not only to cooperate within the European network of consortia, but also to build collaboration at national level. In Poland alone, 35 universities already participate in European Universities consortia, which creates opportunities for jointly identifying problems and developing solutions. The strength of such a group's voice is incomparably greater than that of a single university, and this should be used in the process of shaping public policies.*"

Claudia Kitzmüller credits **strong networks** for the effectiveness of her work; they are key to carrying out supportive work as research managers effectively, and to enabling researchers by granting them access to those networks: "*We are very strongly networked within the university landscape, that is, with all universities in Austria and also with the other non-university research institutions, but also with the universities of applied sciences. By being strongly embedded in a network we are able to learn from the experiences of the other research institutions*." This includes structured formats such as entrepreneurship masterclasses and innovation labs (e.g. X-Bio, Quantum Innovation Lab, Digital Innovation Hubs), combining IP awareness, business planning and pitch training, with mandatory participation based on concrete research ideas. It also involves engagement in broader professional networks such as ASTP (Europe's Knowledge Transfer Association), valued for its annual conference, special interest groups and extensive webinar programme, as well as national Knowledge Transfer Office networks in Austria, facilitating coordination on licensing models and state aid compliance.

Magdalena Sikorska, EUNICE Secretary General also highlights the importance of learning and how **systematic support structures** (competitions, platforms, networks) and international collaboration significantly amplify the impact of individual student and researcher efforts, but their effectiveness is limited by fragmented and insufficient funding.

An example of network-based collaboration in research infrastructures is provided by the Polish synchrotron research infrastructure SOLARIS. SOLARIS also credits effective network structures for part of its success. It is **embedded in a dense network of European research infrastructure partnerships** and acts as a **node connecting Polish users**, including industry, to these ecosystems. These memberships mainly support access, visibility, and technical collaboration rather than direct Knowledge Valorisation tools. It is a member of: CERIC-ERIC, ERIC framework, LEAPS and LEAPS-INNOV, MAX IV, NEPHEWS project, the Jagiellonian University's Excellence Initiative, ESFRI landscape/networks. As an RPO, it also receives some indirect support from intermediaries such as the Jagiellonian University Technology Transfer Centre, which has strong international collaboration on marketing and licensing protected IP and on maintaining databases of promising compounds for big pharma and other investors. These intermediaries typically operate at a later stage (IP already protected) and in specialised markets; they are less involved in very early diagnostic and co-creation phases with SMEs.

Kornelia Mikuła, Head of TTO at the International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IIMCB) in Warsaw, identifies the development of effective **comprehensive partnerships and networks** as factors for success. In the example of the IIMCB in Warsaw, for instance, these include VIB, EU-LIFE, ASTP, AUTM, LifeArc, providing advisory input, benchmarking opportunities, training, pitching events, and exchange of good practices. "*Our institute is a member of the EU-LIFE network, which brings together independent research institutes across Europe. Within this framework, there is a technology transfer working group in which we organise pitching events, review projects and, importantly, exchange practices between technology transfer offices – including how we approach specific issues and which tools and organisational solutions we use*."

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She also highlights the **importance of long-term partnerships** with experienced intermediaries, such as a Czech incubator that supports go/nogo decisions through investment expertise and access to key opinion leaders: "*We benefit from the support of our partners, in particular the innovation and business team at VIB. Representatives of VIB also sit on our international commercialisation advisory board, which is specifically tasked with assessing invention disclosures submitted by our researchers.*"

Finland provides an example of good national practice. According to Hannele Lahtinen, Senior Advisor at Business Finland, Finland's collaboration landscape is dense but differentiated, with clear functional roles across institutions and intermediaries. Partnerships act as structuring mechanisms for long-term collaboration, building trust between academia and industry and supporting ecosystem development rather than short-term project delivery. Universities of Applied Sciences engage more routinely with companies in incremental and applied projects, while research universities tend to focus on deep-tech and longer-term research. Government-backed instruments aim to structure long-term collaboration rather than short-term project funding – e.g. Finnish Flagships Programme) and leading companies / ecosystems (Business Finland).

Overall, intermediaries and networks are perceived as highly effective for knowledge exchange by many interviewees, peer learning and capacity-building, particularly through mentoring relationships and access to resources and communities of practice.

For smaller countries, such as Estonia, **exchange and international connectivity are key to utilisation.** Where domestic industry demand is limited (including cases where relevant industries do not exist in Estonia), the organisation supports internationalisation through study trips and partnership-building. Multiple interviewees also suggested that smaller countries with relatively limited resources, such as Estonia, particularly seek their success in close cooperation with national universities working together very closely. The Technology Transfer Office at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia highlights **shared tools** (e.g. https://kthinnovation-readinesslevel.com, a nationally recognised innovation readiness level framework) and new matchmaking initiatives (https://adapter.ee/en/) aimed at strengthening connections between researchers and external partners. There is also more exchange between various levels (university, intermediaries, ministries), including in terms of personnel, which often switch between positions in the different areas or occupy multiple roles at the same time. Furthermore, this includes also increased use of EU resources and infrastructures and reliance on international exchange.

At the Austrian Academy of Sciences, collaboration across institutions is described as essential, with networks characterised as "*totally important… research organisations come together… we exchange experiences*." This points to the **role of networks and ecosystem-based collaboration in connecting actors, facilitating exchange,** and extending transfer activities beyond individual organisations.

At the same time, challenges remain. A German university representative highlights ongoing challenges in collaboration, noting that "*cooperation between universities and industry… still poses difficulties at many universities.*" This points to the **importance of strengthening ecosystem-based collaboration structures.**

Shared research infrastructures and open lab models

Several interviews highlight the importance of shared **open laboratories and testing infrastructures operated jointly** by universities, research organisations or regional partners. These

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infrastructures enable early experimentation, support collaboration with companies and reduce duplication of expensive facilities. Effective operation requires clear governance arrangements, transparent access conditions and sustainable financial models.

One example of how this is addressed in practice is provided by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, where the **access** to **infrastructure for early-stage ventures is emphasised**, for example when "*a spin-off… can still make use of our services… use the laboratory… in this first phase.*" This highlights how shared infrastructures and access arrangements support early experimentation and collaboration between research and application contexts.

A Swedish perspective (RISE – Research Institutes of Sweden) emphasises the importance of **engagement with external environments,** stating that "*we need to go to them and get to know their product.*" This reflects the role of real-world environments and shared infrastructures in supporting application-oriented development.

2.4 National Level – Policy Frameworks, Funding and Regulation

Including valorisation in research funding calls

Transfer should be considered and incorporated into research processes and funding from the outset.

A Transfer Officer from a major German university notes that in projects funded by Germany's largest research funding agency (DFG), "*knowledge transfer remains a low priority. In fact, these transfer considerations could be explicitly included as standard in every application. The EU already demands much more in this regard, and I don't see that happening in Germany yet. There are good transfer funding programs, but that's different from requiring a stronger focus on transfer in research from the very beginning.*" Similarly, a German university representative highlights the role of funding design, stating that "*for every proposal, one could actually include these transfer considerations as a standard requirement.*" This reflects how **funding frameworks influence** whether and how **Knowledge Valorisation is integrated into research processes from the outset.**

In contrast, Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, Deputy Head of the Centre for Research Programmes at Institute of Fundamental Technological Research Polish Academy of Sciences (IPPT PAN), notes that NCBR and the Foundation for Polish Science run grants and mentoring where valorisation is mandatory; NCBR calls require academia-industry consortia led by industry. These **schemes provide important funding and skills but remain competitive and grant-dependent**, limiting long-term sustainability.

Legal uncertainty and predictability

Legal and **regulatory uncertainty** is a **major barrier, especially with regard to state aid, early-stage support, pricing, infrastructure access and licensing.** In the absence of clear operational guidance, **institutions tend to adopt risk-averse approaches** that slow down collaboration and spin-off development. Stakeholders expect clearer, more predictable and more harmonised implementation of relevant legal frameworks.

This is illustrated by stakeholder experience in practice. Michał Młynarczyk (Poland) notes that "*in widening countries there is an extraordinary level of caution – we have been taught that we must be very careful to comply with the rules. Our interpretations are extremely cautious. (...) If there is a risk that someone could accuse us that this is economic activity and that we are breaching State aid rules, we simply do not engage."*

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At the Austrian Academy of Sciences, regulatory frameworks are described as a recurring issue, with the observation that "*state aid law… is a problem… we have to ensure that we comply with it.*" This illustrates how legal and regulatory considerations shape institutional approaches to collaboration, pricing, and support for spin-offs.

Standardisation of spin-off and licensing conditions

Spin-off creation and licensing frequently require case-by-case negotiation because **standard models for equity participation, revenue sharing and licensing conditions** are often missing. This increases transaction costs and reduces predictability for founders and institutions. Stakeholders therefore call for standardised templates, model contracts and clearer decision pathways at national or institutional level.

This is illustrated by institutional practices and stakeholder experiences. Claudia Kitzmüller, Austria notes that "*certain research institutions have standard conditions that they publish, so that one can actually see them on their homepage. But many do not have them. With many it is also the case that they say they decide this on a case-by-case basis, and it is just different every time. Hurdles are precisely these standard conditions, or that one unifies things a bit there, or that one perhaps has documents where the founders can from the very beginning see what to expect when they found a spin-off with a research institution.*"

At the **Austrian Academy of Sciences**, spin-off and licensing arrangements are often handled individually, as "*many decide this on a case-by-case basis*," while standard conditions would allow founders "*to know what to expect.*" This reflects the role of standardisation in structuring transfer processes and reducing negotiation complexity.

At **Chalmers University of Technology**, different exploitation pathways are considered, including "*we also discuss the best pathway… a startup/spin-out, licensing to an existing company, releasing it openly.*" This reflects structured approaches to managing different transfer options.

Funding challenges: costs of liaison activities, public use, industry interests

Intermediaries such as TTOs, technology brokers and ILO units rarely "*pay for themselves*". Expecting them to be self-financing and funded largely by private sector income risks undermining their public interest mission. This points to a broader challenge of balancing public funding, common good objectives and private-sector benefits in Knowledge Valorisation.

This is illustrated by stakeholder perspectives and practical examples. A TTO from Poland highlights that at EU and national level, he sees value in funding flexible mini-project budgets managed by TTOs and CTTs, and in policies that explicitly recognise and support their intermediary role as a strategic investment in economic development, rather than treating them as cost centres expected to be self-financed from "IP" revenues, since effective facilitation of collaboration can generate far greater long-term benefits for the economy.

From a systemic perspective, this points to an issue thar requires further evaluation, especially considering that liaison officers and transfer institutions are seldom self-financing, this raises the question of **how to balance the use of resources of public funds and resources of common good objectives** with **industry gains and individual benefits**. If public funds, resources and infrastructure are used to address industry needs and boost industry revenue, how can these gains **be fed back into public common good** (beyond taxation of earnings) to support further activity in the same area, ensuring exchange in both ways?

Vilma Purienė from Vilnius Tech highlights successful examples of Knowledge Valorisation, in particular with regard to public use, in projects driven by state instruments and funding that

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encourage science-business cooperation, in particular in pre-commercial procurement with state-owned enterprises. These are described as bringing the clearest value, generating visible economic and social impact.

Vilma Purienė from Vilnius Tech further illustrates this with an example where "*solution developed together with companies and then presented to municipalities for public use: drone systems were piloted for monitoring and inspection and later became part of municipalities' everyday work (urban planning, architecture, transport services, landscape, mobility, digitalisation).*" She also refers to cooperation with the Ministry of Transport and defence actors, and noted alumni involvement as an additional tool for Knowledge Valorisation.

Funding: Continuity across the valorisation lifecycle

Interviewees repeatedly stress **that short-term, project-based funding is insufficient** for building **durable transfer capacity**, supporting **early exploration or bridging** into later development and scale-up. Funding is often fragmented across programmes, ministries and policy areas, creating gaps across the valorisation lifecycle. Stakeholders therefore emphasize that sustainable transfer requires more stable, continuous and better aligned funding from proof-of-concept to later-stage development.

This is reflected in further stakeholder perspectives and concrete examples.

Kornelia Mikuła (Poland) notes that „*another barrier is, in my view, the **lack of a coherent strategy for building the innovation** ecosystem in Poland. Funding opportunities for innovation do exist, but it happens that some funding appears suddenly and needs to be distributed within two months. Innovation simply does not work this way, because it requires time, careful planning and continuity."*

At the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the continuity of funding instruments is described as uncertain, with programmes such as the spin-off fellowship being "*a shaky candidate, where one does not know whether it will exist next year.*" This reflects the importance **of stable funding conditions across different stages** of the valorisation lifecycle.

Hannele Lahtinen, Chief Advisor for EU funding at Innovation Funding Agency Business Finland highlights that successful Knowledge Valorisation often depends on **sequencing multiple national and EU instruments** over long timeframes, combined with access to shared research infrastructures, talent, and international mobility – no single funding scheme is sufficient alone. This underlines the benefits of utilising various funding instruments on national and EU level supporting various needs at different stages.

Examples of successful long lasting transfer in Knowledge Valorisation in Finland include cases such as IQM Quantum Computers, building the world's most advanced superconducting quantum processors through a combination of long-term scientific research funded by the Research Council of Finland (in the form of e.g. personal/project grants, support to Centres of Excellence and Research Infrastructures), the Horizon Europe (e.g. ERC, MSCA and Clusters of Pillar II), and Business Finland's support once the company was founded. This has eventually led to full international growth of IQM through Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator including equity for growth and scale-up activities. Similarly, ICEYE (Space and Earth observation) illustrates a pathway from scientific research to a company supported by various funding instruments during different stages of development and commercialisation, enabling finally rapid scaling and market entry. EU funding is especially needed for the scale-up phase of companies, since this type of funding is still scarce in Europe and not available from national

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sources. These examples highlight how **different kinds of funding instruments can be sequenced and complement each other over time** and drive the successful exploitation of research results leading to sustainable economic growth in Europe.

Administrative burden and over-formalisation

Administrative complexity, **rigid ex-ante planning and burdensome reporting reduce** time and flexibility for experimentation, user engagement and adaptation. Stakeholders describe a culture of **procedural correctness that is often disconnected from practical usefulness**. Stakeholders therefore expect simplified procedures, reduced duplication and more **flexible, learning-oriented funding** schemes.

This becomes clear in the following cases. František Duchoň (Slovakia) describes this as follows: "*Bureaucracy: I spend a huge amount of time on "harassment" and "uselessness," like providing three hotel quotes a year after a project ends or filling out hourly time sheets, which is a Slovak invention*."

At Salzburg Research in Austria, administrative requirements are described as highly detailed and sometimes difficult. Projects "*need to be planned on person and hour level, but we know that innovation projects often evolve during implementation and highly depend on client requirements, which are unknown at the stage of proposal writing*." This illustrates how administrative structures and reporting requirements can create significant overhead and reduce flexibility in innovation and transfer activities.

Regional and cross-institutional ecosystems

Stakeholders underline the importance of **regional** innovation ecosystems, shared infrastructures and structured collaboration between universities, cities, regions, clusters and firms. These environments can strengthen transfer capacity, lower access barriers and **create more visible entry points for users**. Stakeholders expect stronger support for ecosystem models that go beyond individual organisations.

This is reflected in stakeholder views and concrete examples. Andras Havasi (Malta) underlines that "*it is important to recognise that innovation ecosystems differ significantly across Europe. As a result, these tools are not directly transferable in a "plug-and-play" manner. They must always be adapted to local conditions and institutional realities*." From the perspective of Mathias Gaunitz (Sweden), "*A pan-European approach to research infrastructures, investments, and dissemination would be beneficial for everyone*." At Salzburg Research, collaboration with partners is described as dependent on established relationships, where "*you need a certain basis of trust… to enter such research projects with partners*." This highlights the relational dimension of regional and cross-institutional ecosystems.

Chalmers University of Technology engages through a structured process with stakeholders, where *"we look at… how the knowledge could be used, and who the potential target groups are."* This reflects how ecosystem engagement is embedded in transfer activities.

Knowledge Valorisation as a National Strategic Approach

Considering the **complexity of Knowledge Valorisation,** the interviewees emphasize that overarching strategic approach at **national level is** considered valuable, taking a broader perspective and keeping all elements, aspects, and players within the entire ecosystem in mind. This also points to the need for a broader understanding of Knowledge Valorisation **beyond narrow or partial interpretations.**

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This becomes evident in the perspectives in national examples: In Slovenia, Knowledge Valorisation is a **dedicated part of the national Science Strategy**. A representative of the Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation (MVZI) estimates that "*Knowledge Valorisation is still in the beginning stages of development in Slovenia, but thanks to the ministerial and agency efforts, there are advancements in Knowledge Valorisation".* The topic has been present at the Slovenian Ministry for Higher Education, Science and Innovation for some time already. More recently, with the adoption of new legislature (Science and Innovation Act, Science Strategy 2030) it has been more concretely addressed, specifically as "Goal 5". In 2025, an Action plan for Goal 5 was adopted, addressing various aspects of Knowledge Valorisation and related topics. This has **formalised the work** at the ministry and enabled the Ministerial Science and Innovation Directorate, Division for R&D Structural Funds to fully focuses on policy and strategic work. This also reflects a broader perspective at n**ational level, integrating different elements**, aspects and actors across the ecosystem.

At the same time, an important step identified by stakeholders is a: broader**: mindset change, as Knowledge Valorisation is still** only partially understood across Europe.

This need for a broader understanding of Knowledge Valorisation is also emphasized by the interviewees, as reflected by MVZI Slovenia: *"[We need to understand it in a broader sense. We often stop short at only looking at patents or intellectual property, or we go to the other extreme – scientific communication, policy recommendations – because that's simply easier. But Knowledge Valorisation is much more than that. It's about what research gives back to society and how different fields – the humanities, natural sciences, engineering – even understand this. In the background, there's always research culture and mindset. If that doesn't change, even the best legislation won't help much.*"

A similar pointed is raised by the TTO of a major German university, who also highlights that Knowledge Valorisation is oftentimes - by both politicians and the general public – **reduced to of spin-offs and patents, whereas a wider understanding** is needed: "*Patents are easy to capture. You can also easily count startups. But if I now take another important area of transfer, such as the collaboration between universities and the corporate sector: Where can I find figures on that? That could be something to tackle.*"

2.5 European Level – ERA Instruments, Coordination and Regulatory Guidance

Visibility and use of ERA instruments

Judging from the responses of nearly all interviewees, it appears that ERA instruments are not systematically integrated into everyday routines across Europe, often due to low awareness. Out of the 24 interviewees, nine did not know any of the instruments at all and only learned about them in the interview, two had heard vaguely of only one of them. There is no geographical pattern to this – lack of awareness of the ERA instruments is spread across countries as well as professional roles. ERA Knowledge Valorisation instruments are generally considered relevant by those who know them, but practical use varies strongly across roles and institutions.

Vilma Puriene, VilniusTech, Knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre, points out that there are many separate platforms, and what is **missing is better links and integration** between them, so they connect more smoothly in day-to-day use.

A TTO from the Technology Transfer Division at Masaryk University, Czechia: "*From my perspective [the ERA Tools] are somewhat difficult to apply directly into practice, as they tend to*

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remain at a rather general level. I can imagine a workshop where one learns something, but the materials that are presented as recommendations are often unusable at the level I work at, because they are not specific enough or not close enough to what I actually do in practice."

Stakeholders expect clearer communication, more targeted dissemination and stronger links between ERA instruments and institutional routines.

Usability and operational relevance

The ERA Knowledge Valorisation Platform and the Codes of Practice are valued conceptually, but are often perceived as too abstract or insufficiently embedded in operational workflows. Interviewees point to the need for **more actionable guidance**, concrete examples and formats that can be applied more easily in day-to-day implementation.

An officer from the Lithuanian Science and Innovation Liaison and Competence Office points out: *"I have to say I'm a bit sceptical about this particular platform. It's very niche. Again, it's aimed at a specific group of people who are interested in, you know, the commercialisation of knowledge. Sure, it's good to read those examples, those success stories. But I'd rather integrate it into a broader context, not just a separate field, because here we're already getting into very specific aspects of Knowledge Valorisation."*

At the Austrian Academy of Sciences, EU-level tools are described as *"theoretical… [and should be] more practice-oriented and supported with concrete examples."* This highlights how operational usability is perceived in relation to conceptual guidance.

A Swedish perspective emphasises the need for clearer guidance, noting that "*to spark motivation, you need to show a pathway, create a map."* What this makes clear is that practical usability is linked to actionable guidance. As the interviewee points out, there is a practical impact pathway in technical innovations for which *"there has long been a fairly developed process for how to manage this."* By contrast, in areas such as "*social sustainability, that type of work, there have historically not been equally clear end-users, and not the same clear ability or willingness to pay. If we talk about mental health and similar areas: there are many research results there, but when you work with social innovation and the* ***utilisation of social innovations****, the process has not historically been as clear.*"

This view is shared by Claudia Kitzmüller, Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), who would like the ERA Knowledge Valorisation platform to showcase more practice-oriented content, concrete case studies and a **stronger focus on SSH**: *"In the social sciences and humanities, the spin-offs are usually in counselling or consulting, or perhaps in app development. And that is still much more in development. And the whole area has also been somewhat neglected within the community of knowledge transfer professionals and is now becoming more important."*

Stakeholders expect EU tools to become more practice-oriented and **better differentiated by audience**, so that a wider spectrum of research outputs is supported.

Exchange formats and practical learning

Knowledge Valorisation Week and related ERA events are recognised as useful for visibility and exchange, but their practical impact is seen as uneven. Participation can be resource-intensive, and formats are sometimes perceived as too presentation-oriented or policy-focused.

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An employee of Salzburg Research, Austria: "*I have to say quite honestly that often… I think twice about whether I should really go to these webinars, because they are quite time intensive compared to the value I can get out of them. I would encourage to create shorter formats that are practice-oriented, time-efficient and result in tangible follow-up actions.*"

Some interviewees from Eastern European countries perceive a **cultural barrier** when it comes to the presentation of best practices that are not given by a peer group working under similar conditions: *"In addition to linguistic constraints, cultural factors also play a role. Existing models and initiatives developed at the European level are often perceived as better suited to non-widening countries. As a result, there is a need for more locally grounded success stories that demonstrate effective collaboration within national contexts. The availability of such examples would help build trust and provide practical guidance by illustrating how similar actors have successfully navigated these processes."*

Sometimes, the specialised staff for knowledge transfer would like to but are unable to visit events like the Knowledge Valorisation Week due to lacking resources. *"The question is also: who does it reach? My experience is that we – the staff from the Knowledge Valorisation Office, who would truly benefit from these events – are so overloaded with hands-on work and so understaffed that we are unable to prioritise them.",* as Helena M. Bergström from Örebro University's Holding Company noted.

Summarising, stakeholders expect more interactive, problem-oriented and hybrid formats that better support implementation and peer exchange.

Entry points for identifying exploitable research results

Stakeholders note that existing tools such as CORDIS and the Funding & Tenders Portal provide useful orientation for collaboration, follow-up activities and the identification of research results with potential for further development. Strengthening features that **facilitate the discovery of valorisation-relevant outputs** could further enhance their role as a practical entry point for Knowledge Valorisation.

An Estonian perspective: "*Maybe there is a well-functioning tool for this whole co-founder matchmaking process somewhere. In the region, and especially in Estonia, we are trying to find co-founders for science-based companies. It would be great if we could find sector-specific research and business professionals who would be interested in taking some business cases forward. As I said, I have seen different attempts at this, but it seems to be an issue.*"

A **staged funding process** could be a way to operationalise Knowledge Valorisation, as Mathias Gaunitz, Chalmers University of Technology (Chalmers grants and innovation office) describes: "*ERC funding is staged, which aligns with how we validate step by step. It culminates in proof-of-concept, which is directly about dissemination and exploitation. We need more financing of that type, and we need the first step to be very low-threshold and easy to obtain–then you tighten criteria in later steps.*"

Coordination, coherence and cross-border guidance

Stakeholders express strong expectations for better coordination and transparency across EU initiatives relevant to Knowledge Valorisation. Overlapping instruments, unclear timelines and weak connections between initiatives reduce usability and make it difficult for organisations to understand how different tools relate to one another. Cross-border collaboration is valued, but also exposes divergent legal interpretations and practical uncertainty, especially regarding state aid and shared infrastructure access.

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As is suggested at Salzburg Research: "*A better harmonization of these modalities between the Commission and the national funding would be quite helpful*."

Also, coordination across institutions and systems is needed, according to a Swedish perspective at Chalmers University of Technology, noting that activities are "*linked… together with innovation advisors at five other higher education institutions*."

From a Lithuanian point of view, stronger financial support for international and interregional instruments, not only for local measures, would be beneficial: The interviewee argued that funding for cross-border collaboration should be increased (larger volumes and/or more frequent calls), because competition is currently too high.

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3. Policy Recommendations

3.1 Policy Recommendations for the European Commission

Researcher Level – Research Careers, Skills and Incentives

Integrate Knowledge Valorisation into European research career frameworks

It is recommended to integrate Knowledge Valorisation more systematically into ongoing ERA activities on research careers, skills and talent. This could involve explicitly incorporating relevant competencies into European competence frameworks, guidelines and policy documents, including collaboration with external stakeholders, co-creation processes, intellectual property literacy, entrepreneurship, application-oriented research design, and pathways for societal and public-sector uptake. In practical terms, this may include aligning existing initiatives such as the European Framework for Research Careers or skills taxonomies stronger with clearly defined valorisation-related competencies, as well as encouraging their reflection in institutional HR strategies.

The available evidence suggests that Knowledge Valorisation is currently not consistently embedded in career development frameworks and is often perceived as secondary to publication-based metrics. This creates a structural disincentive for researchers to engage in valorisation activities, particularly at early and mid-career stages. Strengthening its visibility and formal recognition at EU level could provide an important reference point for national reforms and institutional practices.

Promote early exposure to Knowledge Valorisation in doctoral and postdoctoral training

It is recommended to embed Knowledge Valorisation more explicitly within European initiatives related to doctoral education, researcher development and skills agendas. This could include the provision of guidance encouraging universities and doctoral schools to integrate specific practice-oriented learning formats into their programmes. Such formats may involve short modular courses on intellectual property and licensing, collaboration with industry and public-sector partners, introduction to different valorisation pathways (e.g. spin-offs, policy uptake, service development), and early-stage opportunity recognition. In addition, exposure to real-world cases, guest lectures from practitioners, or placements in non-academic environments could complement formal training.

Findings from the analysis indicate that many researchers encounter Knowledge Valorisation relatively late in their careers, often only when specific project opportunities arise. At the same time, awareness and confidence levels among doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers remain limited. Earlier and more structured exposure could contribute to normalising valorisation as a standard element of research practice, rather than an optional or exceptional activity.

Support peer-learning formats focused on practical researcher support

It is recommended to complement strategic-level policy guidance with peer-learning and exchange formats specifically targeted at professionals who directly support researchers in their day-to-day work. This includes staff from technology transfer offices, research management, innovation support services and doctoral programme coordination. Such formats could focus on concrete implementation challenges, for example: how to identify valorisation potential at early stages of research projects, how to design low-threshold entry points for researchers with limited prior experience, how to support non-technological pathways, and how to align

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support services with existing research workflows rather than requiring additional administrative effort.

In addition, European exchange and capacity-building activities could encourage institutions to establish clearly identifiable first-contact points for researchers seeking support on Knowledge Valorisation, including guidance on collaboration pathways, early-stage support and access to intermediary services.

The analysis indicates that support structures across Europe are often fragmented, unevenly visible and not always well integrated into researchers' working environments. Peer-learning formats that focus on practical solutions and exchange of tested approaches may therefore contribute to more consistent and effective support practices.

Demand-Side Level – Innovation Uptake and User Engagement

Expand EU support for low-threshold collaboration between research and users

It is recommended to further develop and scale EU-level instruments that enable low-threshold collaboration between research organisations and external users, including companies, public authorities, hospitals, municipalities and civil society organisations. Such instruments could be designed to minimise financial risk and administrative complexity, particularly for first-time users with limited prior experience of working with research institutions. Relevant formats may include test-before-invest schemes, living labs, pilot environments and structured co-creation processes. In addition to funding, these formats could be supported by facilitation services that help define collaboration objectives, manage expectations and ensure continuity beyond initial engagement.

Evidence from both survey and interview data indicates strong interest in interactive and co-creation-based formats, while also pointing to limited engagement capabilities on the demand side. Expanding accessible entry points for collaboration may therefore help to broaden participation and stimulate more sustained interaction between research and user communities.

Support practical experimentation environments for SMEs and first-time users

It is recommended to strengthen EU support for experimentation environments that allow external users – particularly SMEs, startups and public-sector actors – to test and validate research-based solutions under real-world conditions. This could include accessible testbeds, demonstration environments, shared laboratories and pilot infrastructures that are designed with usability and flexibility in mind. In practice, this may involve not only physical or digital infrastructure, but also accompanying support services such as technical guidance, brokerage, and assistance with regulatory or standardisation issues. Ensuring that such environments are easily accessible, transparently governed and responsive to user needs could further enhance their effectiveness.

The available evidence suggests that access to experimentation environments represents a critical enabling factor for innovation uptake. This is particularly relevant for actors with limited internal R&D capacity, for whom early-stage validation and risk reduction are essential preconditions for further investment.

Strengthen European support for brokerage and translation functions

It is recommended to more explicitly recognise brokerage, matchmaking and translation between research and user needs as core components of Knowledge Valorisation, and to reflect this in the design of EU instruments and support measures. This could include strengthening intermediary functions and support for matchmaking formats that connect researchers

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with companies, public-sector actors and civil-society organisations around concrete needs, application opportunities and collaboration interests. At the same time, support could be provided to help researchers better understand user contexts, constraints and expectations.

The analysis consistently highlights that successful valorisation depends not only on the quality of research outputs, but also on the ability to bridge differences in language, incentives and time horizons between sectors. Strengthening brokerage capacities at European level may therefore contribute to more effective and scalable collaboration models.

Institutional Level – Knowledge Transfer Capacity and Intermediaries

Recognise intermediary organisations as essential implementation actors

It is recommended to more explicitly position intermediary organisations – such as technology transfer offices, innovation offices, research management units, incubators, cluster organisations and other support structures – as central operational actors within the European Knowledge Valorisation ecosystem. This recognition could be reflected more clearly in ERA-related activities, EU funding programmes, capacity-building initiatives and policy guidance. For example, intermediary actors could be addressed more directly as target groups in relevant instruments, and their roles in supporting different stages of the valorisation process could be more systematically articulated.

The available evidence indicates that these organisations play a critical role in enabling Knowledge Valorisation by supporting researchers, facilitating external collaboration and managing processes such as IP protection or partnership development. At the same time, many of these structures operate under significant capacity constraints, including limited staffing, fragmented mandates and short-term funding conditions. Strengthening their recognition at EU level may therefore contribute to more coherent and adequately resourced support systems.

Expand European capacity-building for transfer professionals

It is recommended to further develop European-level capacity-building measures for professionals working in Knowledge Valorisation and research support functions. This could include structured training programmes, peer-learning formats, staff exchange schemes and communities of practice that focus on practical implementation challenges. Relevant thematic areas may include early-stage identification of valorisation opportunities, effective engagement with researchers, support for non-patent-based pathways, co-creation methods, intellectual property management and cross-sector communication.

Findings from surveys and interviews indicate that the capabilities and professionalisation of intermediary staff are a decisive factor for successful Knowledge Valorisation. At the same time, access to structured training and exchange opportunities remains uneven across Europe. Survey findings point to demand for better access to EU-level networks and learning opportunities. Capacity-building measures could therefore place stronger emphasis on peer exchange, cross-border learning and easier access to relevant European professional communities.

Promote learning on diverse valorisation pathways

It is recommended to support learning processes at a European level that encourage a broader understanding of Knowledge Valorisation beyond patenting and spin-off creation. This could involve the systematic collection and dissemination of case studies, peer-learning activities and guidance materials that reflect a wide range of pathways. Examples may in-

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clude valorisation approaches in the SSH, collaboration with public-sector organisations, development of services and digital tools, consulting activities and forms of societal innovation. Highlighting these pathways could help institutions recognise and support a wider spectrum of research outputs and impact mechanisms.

The analysis suggests that many institutions continue to operate with relatively narrow models of valorisation that prioritise technological commercialisation. As a result, significant parts of the research system – particularly in SSH and public-sector-oriented fields – remain underrepresented in existing support structures. Expanding institutional awareness of diverse pathways may therefore help unlock additional potential.

Policy Level - ERA Instruments, Coordination and Regulatory Guidance

Make ERA Knowledge Valorisation instruments more practical and user-oriented

It is recommended to further adapt the design and communication of ERA Knowledge Valorisation instruments so that they are more directly usable for specific target groups, including researchers, TTO staff, institutional leaders, doctoral schools, policymakers and intermediary actors. This could involve tailoring tools and guidance more closely to concrete roles, implementation contexts and decision-making situations rather than maintaining a predominantly conceptual level. In practical terms, this may include differentiating guidance formats by user group, aligning tools with typical narrative and workflows as well as providing clearer entry points depending on experience level. Improving usability and accessibility could support broader uptake across diverse institutional contexts.

Evidence from the analysis indicates that existing ERA tools are generally perceived as valuable in principle, but often too abstract and insufficiently aligned with day-to-day practice. Increasing their practical relevance may therefore enhance their overall effectiveness.

Complement strategic guidance with concrete operational tools and materials

It is recommended to enrich ERA Knowledge Valorisation instruments with more detailed, implementation-oriented content that supports practical application. This could include templates, step-by-step guidance, decision trees, example workflows, case studies and model institutional approaches, including discipline-sensitive examples. Such materials may be particularly valuable in early-stage contexts, where institutions and researchers require concrete orientation to translate general principles into actionable steps. Providing modular and adaptable resources could further support use across different institutional settings.

Survey findings strongly indicate demand for practical tools and examples that go beyond high-level guidance. Expanding the operational dimension of ERA instruments may therefore facilitate more effective implementation.

Strengthen inclusiveness through diverse examples and peer learning

It is recommended to increase the representation of diverse national and institutional contexts within ERA tools and exchange formats. This could include more examples from widening countries, smaller innovation ecosystems and institutions operating under resource constraints, as well as structured peer-learning opportunities among comparable actors. Such an approach may improve the perceived relevance and applicability of ERA instruments, particularly for stakeholders who currently experience a gap between presented examples and their own operational realities.

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Interview evidence suggests that peer examples from similar contexts are particularly valuable for learning and adaptation. Expanding contextual diversity may therefore support broader engagement and uptake.

Redesign exchange and coordination formats to better support implementation

It is recommended to further develop ERA-related exchange formats – such as Knowledge Valorisation Week and similar initiatives – towards more interactive, problem-oriented and implementation-focused approaches. This could include smaller working groups, hands-on sessions, structured follow-up activities and hybrid participation formats that reduce barriers related to time and travel. Such formats may help move beyond awareness-raising and visibility towards more concrete problem-solving and knowledge exchange on implementation challenges.

Findings indicate that current formats are appreciated for networking and visibility, but are often perceived as too presentation-focused and insufficiently aligned with practical needs. Strengthening their implementation orientation may therefore increase their added value.

Improve coordination, signposting and user navigation across EU instruments and platforms

It is recommended to strengthen coordination and improve signposting across EU-level initiatives, platforms and funding instruments related to Knowledge Valorisation. This could involve creating clearer user journeys, improving interoperability between platforms and making links between strategic guidance and operational opportunities more visible. In addition, efforts could place greater emphasis on coordination not only at the level of information provision, but also across European initiatives and programmes involved in the Knowledge Valorisation lifecycle. This may include closer alignment between relevant EU instruments and responsible actors, with the aim of reducing fragmentation, avoiding overlaps and enabling smoother transitions between different stages of support.

In addition, clearer signposting could help institutions and intermediary actors make more strategic use of existing EU-funded Knowledge Valorisation opportunities across different programmes and stages of the valorisation process.

The analysis consistently highlights fragmentation, weak interconnections and limited transparency as barriers to effective use of EU instruments. Strengthening both operational navigation and structural coordination may therefore improve accessibility, coherence and overall system performance.

Provide clearer regulatory guidance and reference frameworks for key valorisation processes

It is recommended to develop more practical and accessible guidance on how regulatory frameworks – such as state aid rules, pricing of services, infrastructure access and early-stage support mechanisms – apply to Knowledge Valorisation activities. In parallel, the development of adaptable reference models for spin-off creation, licensing arrangements and related processes could be supported. Beyond guidance, efforts could also aim to facilitate greater convergence and mutual understanding across Member States in the interpretation and application of relevant regulatory frameworks. While full harmonisation may not be necessary, the establishment of shared reference points and commonly used approaches may help reduce uncertainty, improve comparability and support cross-border collaboration.

Evidence from the analysis indicates that legal uncertainty and divergent practices can lead to cautious behaviour, delays and increased transaction costs. Providing clearer operational guidance alongside greater alignment in practice may therefore contribute to more predictable and efficient implementation across the European Research Area.

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3.2 Policy Recommendations for Member States

Researcher Level – Research Careers, Skills and Incentives

Reflect Knowledge Valorisation in research assessment and career progression

Member States are encouraged to review existing national frameworks for research assessment, academic promotion and career progression with regard to their treatment of Knowledge Valorisation. This could involve explicitly recognising a broader range of activities, including collaboration with external partners, patents and licences, spin-off creation, applied problem-solving, public-sector engagement, policy contributions and non-technological transfer pathways.

The available evidence indicates that current systems remain heavily focused on publication outputs and citation-based metrics. As a result, many researchers perceive engagement in Knowledge Valorisation as carrying career risks, particularly in competitive academic environments. Adjusting incentive structures could therefore play a key role in enabling more balanced engagement.

Strengthen the role of Knowledge Valorisation in doctoral and postdoctoral development

It is recommended to integrate Knowledge Valorisation more systematically into national frameworks for doctoral and postdoctoral training. This could include setting expectations or providing incentives for higher education institutions and research organisations to offer accessible and practice-oriented training formats. Examples may include short courses, workshops, interdisciplinary project formats, and case-based learning that reflect valorisation-specific needs. Particular attention could be given to ensuring that training is relevant not only for STEM disciplines but also for SSH and public-sector-oriented research fields.

The findings suggest that existing training opportunities are often voluntary, fragmented and not sufficiently aligned with researchers' day-to-day work. Strengthening their visibility, accessibility and practical relevance could improve uptake and effectiveness.

Develop structured pathways into valorisation and entrepreneurship

Member States may consider expanding and institutionalising pathways that enable students and doctoral candidates to engage in Knowledge Valorisation activities at an early stage. This could include programmes such as industrial PhDs, internships, challenge-based collaboration formats, entrepreneurial education and structured support for research-based startup activities. Ensuring that such pathways are embedded within institutional structures, rather than relying on temporary or project-based initiatives, could improve continuity and accessibility.

Evidence from the analysis indicates that students and doctoral candidates often represent effective entry points for early-stage valorisation processes. However, current opportunities are unevenly distributed and often depend on individual initiative or local conditions.

Enable time and support for engagement in transfer activities

It is recommended to explore policy and institutional mechanisms that provide researchers with dedicated time and support for engagement in Knowledge Valorisation activities. This could include specific funding schemes, applied research pathways, or adjustments to performance expectations. Such measures may be particularly relevant in early-stage development phases, where activities such as prototyping, user engagement or validation require time investments that are not easily compatible with standard academic workloads.

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Member States may also encourage institutions to establish clearly visible contact points for Knowledge Valorisation, in order to make support structures easier to access for researchers, doctoral candidates and external partners.

The analysis consistently identifies time constraints, administrative workload and competing performance expectations as key barriers to engagement. Addressing these factors could improve researchers' ability to participate in valorisation processes.

Demand-Side Level – Innovation Uptake and User Engagement

Establish or expand national low-threshold schemes for SME–research collaboration

Member States are encouraged to introduce or further develop national funding schemes that support small-scale, exploratory collaboration between research organisations and companies, with a particular focus on SMEs and first-time users. Such schemes could fund activities including feasibility studies, prototyping, test-before-invest approaches, short-term expert placements and initial collaboration projects. Member States could also consider small-scale, low-threshold instruments such as innovation transfer vouchers for companies and public institutions, enabling them to access research-based expertise, feasibility support and early collaboration services with limited administrative burden. Keeping application procedures proportionate and timelines short may be important to ensure accessibility, especially for smaller companies with limited administrative capacity.

The findings indicate that many external partners face constraints in terms of time, resources and experience when engaging with research organisations. Low-threshold collaboration formats can help reduce perceived risks, build trust and create entry points for longer-term cooperation.

Strengthen brokerage structures that make research capabilities understandable to users

It is recommended to strengthen intermediary structures that actively connect user needs with research capabilities. This may include cluster organisations, innovation agencies, sector-specific platforms and university-facing liaison structures that operate at regional or national level. These actors can play a key role in translating research expertise into user-relevant applications, supporting partner identification, and facilitating communication between different stakeholder groups. Ensuring stable funding and clear mandates for such functions may help to avoid fragmentation and improve continuity.

Evidence from the interviews suggests that many companies and public-sector actors have limited visibility of available research capabilities, while researchers themselves may lack insight into concrete user needs. Strengthening brokerage functions could therefore address a central coordination gap in the system.

Support demand-led Knowledge Valorisation formats

Member States are encouraged to design and support programmes that allow Knowledge Valorisation processes to originate from clearly articulated user needs rather than primarily from the supply of existing research outputs. This could include problem-driven collaboration programmes, innovation partnerships between academia and industry, and early-stage co-design processes involving multiple stakeholders. In such approaches, research activities are more directly aligned with identified challenges, which may increase relevance and likelihood of uptake.

The analysis suggests that demand-led formats can be particularly effective in contexts where external users – such as companies, municipalities or public service providers – face

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concrete problems that require tailored solutions. Compared to purely supply-driven approaches, these formats may support stronger engagement and more sustainable outcomes.

Facilitate access to pilot and demonstration infrastructures

It is recommended that national policies support more open, transparent and user-oriented access to testing environments, laboratories, pilot spaces and demonstration infrastructures. This may involve establishing clear access rules, transparent pricing models and standardised legal frameworks that reduce uncertainty for external users. In addition, support mechanisms could include advisory services that help users identify suitable infrastructures and navigate administrative or technical requirements. Particular attention could be given to ensuring accessibility for SMEs, startups and public-sector organisations that may lack prior experience.

Evidence from the analysis indicates that access to experimentation infrastructures can significantly reduce risk and accelerate the uptake of research-based solutions. At the same time, such infrastructures are often perceived as difficult to access in practice due to administrative, legal or informational barriers. Addressing these constraints could therefore enhance their overall impact.

Institutional Level – Knowledge Transfer Capacity and Intermediaries

Ensure stable and strategically embedded transfer capacities within institutions

Member States are encouraged to provide stable and predictable core funding for intermediary structures involved in Knowledge Valorisation, including TTOs, innovation advisors and related support functions. This could involve reducing reliance on short-term project-based funding and uncertain IP-derived revenues, and instead enabling longer-term institutional planning and capacity development. At the same time, it is recommended to strengthen the strategic embedding of Knowledge Valorisation within RPOs. This may include integrating valorisation into institutional strategies, governance structures and leadership priorities, as well as defining clear mandates and responsibilities at management level.

Available evidence indicates that intermediary structures are often under-resourced and operate under fragmented or short-term conditions, while weak strategic embedding can result in isolated and inconsistent activities. Addressing institutional integration may improve continuity, visibility and effectiveness of support across the valorisation lifecycle.

Strengthen proactive engagement, scouting and external interface functions

Member States may consider supporting the expansion of dedicated roles and functions within research institutions that enable more proactive engagement with Knowledge Valorisation opportunities. This could include scouting activities to identify promising research outputs at an early stage, liaison roles to build relationships with external partners, and business development functions to structure and advance collaboration processes. Such roles may help shift institutional approaches from reactive, opportunity-driven engagement towards more systematic identification and development of valorisation potential. They can also contribute to improving alignment between research activities and external needs.

The analysis indicates that limited capacity for these proactive functions is a recurring constraint, often leading to delayed engagement or missed opportunities. Strengthening these interfaces may therefore enhance both the quantity and quality of valorisation outcomes.

Promote coordinated, collaborative and inclusive transfer ecosystems

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It is recommended that national policies support greater coordination and cooperation between intermediary organisations, including universities, TTOs, incubators, clusters and innovation centres. This may involve establishing networks, shared tools, joint training formats, coordinated advisory services and common matchmaking platforms. Such approaches may be particularly relevant in smaller or less-resourced systems, where pooling capacities can improve efficiency and coverage. In parallel, Member States are encouraged to support the development of more inclusive transfer models that reflect a wider range of disciplines and valorisation pathways. This could include adapting support services and funding schemes to better accommodate industry and public-sector collaboration, service development and other non-technological forms of impact.

Evidence suggests that ecosystem-based cooperation can significantly enhance the reach and effectiveness of intermediary support, while current transfer models often remain narrowly focused on technological commercialisation.

Policy Level – Policy Frameworks, Funding and Regulation

Ensure continuous and connected funding across the full Knowledge Valorisation lifecycle

Member States are encouraged to design or reform funding systems in a way that provides coherent and continuous support across all stages of the Knowledge Valorisation process. This includes early opportunity exploration, proof-of-concept, validation, prototyping, piloting, as well as later-stage activities such as spin-off creation, licensing and scaling. In practical terms, this may involve better alignment and sequencing of funding instruments, clearer transition pathways between programmes, and mechanisms that ensure promising projects can progress without interruption. Reducing fragmentation between funding schemes and improving coordination across responsible agencies may further enhance continuity.

The available evidence consistently identifies discontinuities between early-stage and later-stage funding as a major barrier. Promising ideas frequently fail to progress due to a lack of follow-up support, suggesting that more connected funding architectures could significantly improve overall effectiveness.

Improve framework conditions through simplification, flexibility and standardisation

Member States are encouraged to review and adapt administrative and regulatory conditions affecting Knowledge Valorisation activities. This could include simplifying application, reporting and auditing requirements, introducing more proportional control mechanisms, and allowing greater flexibility during project implementation. In parallel, it may be beneficial to promote more standardised frameworks for spin-off creation, licensing agreements, infrastructure access and revenue-sharing. The use of templates and common reference models could reduce negotiation effort and increase predictability for all parties involved.

The analysis indicates that administrative complexity and legal uncertainty are frequently perceived as barriers, particularly in early and experimental phases. Addressing these issues may improve accessibility, reduce transaction costs and support more efficient implementation.

Strengthen early-stage and proof-of-concept funding as a strategic strength

It is recommended to expand funding dedicated to early-stage development, including proof-of-concept, prototype development, validation, market and user testing, and early interdisciplinary team formation. Such funding should be designed as low-threshold and accessible, with simplified entry requirements and openness to a wide range of disciplines and valorisation pathways.

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Survey and interview findings consistently highlight early-stage funding as one of the most critical leverage points for improving Knowledge Valorisation. Strengthening this phase may help reduce risk, build evidence for viability and create a more robust pipeline for subsequent investment.

Support the development of regional innovation ecosystems and shared infrastructures

It is recommended that Member States invest in regional ecosystem approaches that connect research organisations with companies, public authorities and intermediary actors. Such ecosystems could be built around shared infrastructures, pilot environments, collaboration platforms and regular interaction formats. These structures may provide visible entry points for collaboration, facilitate repeated interaction between stakeholders and enable more effective use of existing capacities. Particular attention could be given to ensuring accessibility for SMEs and public-sector actors.

Evidence from the analysis suggests that Knowledge Valorisation tends to be most effective in environments characterised by well-functioning networks. Strengthening regional ecosystems may therefore contribute to more sustainable and scalable collaboration models.

Adopt strategic and inclusive approaches to Knowledge Valorisation at national level

Member States are encouraged to move beyond isolated policy measures and develop more integrated national strategies or action plans for Knowledge Valorisation. Such approaches could aim to align research policy, innovation policy, higher education, funding design, intermediary support and regulatory frameworks. At the same time, it is advisable to ensure that funding systems and policy instruments reflect a broad understanding of Knowledge Valorisation, including non-technological and public-value-oriented pathways such as service development, policy uptake, societal innovation and digital public goods.

The analysis indicates that fragmented policy approaches and narrow valorisation models can limit system-wide effectiveness and exclude significant parts of the research landscape, particularly in SSH and public-sector-oriented fields. More strategic and inclusive approaches may therefore enhance coherence, participation and overall impact.

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Annex

List of Abbreviations

- **AI** – Artificial Intelligence
- **CTT** – Centre for Technology Transfer
- **EDIH** – European Digital Innovation Hubs
- **ERA** – European Research Area
- **EU** – European Union
- **EU-LIFE** – Alliance of Independent Life Science Research Institutes in Europe
- **EUNICE** – European University for Customised Education
- **GLP** – Good Laboratory Practice
- **GMP** – Good Manufacturing Practice
- **HR** – Human Resources
- **ILO** – Industry Liaison Office
- **IP** – Intellectual Property
- **ISO** – International Organization for Standardization
- **KTO** – Knowledge Transfer Office / Knowledge Transfer Officer
- **KV** – Knowledge Valorisation
- **LEAPS** – League of European Accelerator-based Photon Sources
- **NGOs** – Non-Governmental Organisations
- **R&D** – Research and Development
- **RISE** – Research Institutes of Sweden
- **RPOs** – Research Performing Organisations
- **SMEs** – Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- **SOLARIS** – Polish synchrotron research infrastructure
- **SSH** – Social Sciences and Humanities
- **STEM** – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- **TTC** – Technology Transfer Centre
- **TTO** – Technology Transfer Office / Knowledge Transfer Officer

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Overview of Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

The following below summarises the main findings from the interviews and analysis, including policy recommendations aimed at strengthening Knowledge Valorisation across the European Research. Area.

Level	Key Findings (Gaps, Needs, Expectations)	Recommendations (European & national level)
Researcher Level – Research Careers, Skills and Incentives	- Awareness raising and mindset change amongst researchers - Education, training and accessibility of support - Student and doctoral pathways - Career incentives and recognition - Timing of engagement - High-potential transfer activities and spin-offs - Widening the scope of valorisation: Beyond patents and technology	**European Level** - Integrate Knowledge Valorisation into European research career frameworks - Promote early exposure to Knowledge Valorisation in doctoral and postdoctoral training - Support peer-learning formats focused on practical researcher support **National Level** - Reflect Knowledge Valorisation in research assessment and career progression - Strengthen the role of Knowledge Valorisation in doctoral and postdoctoral development - Develop structured pathways into valorisation and entrepreneurship - Enable time and support for engagement in transfer activities
Demand-Side Level – Innovation Uptake and User Engagement	- Awareness and translation between sectors - Capacity constraints on the demand side - Intermediaries: Supporting the "difficult middle" of collaboration - Knowledge Valorisation pathways: Starting from the demand side - User-oriented collaboration formats and co-creation - Access to experimentation and testing infrastructures	**European Level** - Expand EU support for low-threshold collaboration between research and users - Support practical experimentation environments for SMEs and first-time users - Strengthen European support for brokerage and translation functions **National Level** - Establish or expand national low-threshold schemes for SME-research collaboration - Strengthen brokerage structures that make research capabilities understandable to users - Support demand-led Knowledge Valorisation formats - Facilitate access to pilot and demonstration infrastructures
Institutional Level – Knowledge Transfer Capacity and Intermediaries	- Strategic embedding and institutional commitment - Transfer capacity, staffing and proactive functions - Capacity and professionalisation of intermediaries - Networks and ecosystem-based collaboration - Shared research infrastructures and open lab models	**European Level** - Recognise intermediary organisations as essential implementation actors - Expand European capacity-building for transfer professionals - Promote learning on diverse valorisation pathways **National Level** - Ensure stable and strategically embedded transfer capacities within institutions - Strengthen proactive engagement, scouting and external interface functions - Promote coordinated, collaborative and inclusive transfer ecosystems -

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National Level - Policy Frameworks, Funding and Regulation	- Legal uncertainty and predictability - Standardisation of spin-off and licensing conditions - Funding challenges: costs of liaison activities, public use, industry interests - Funding: Continuity across the valorisation lifecycle - Administrative burden and over-formalisation - Regional and cross-institutional ecosystems - Knowledge Valorisation as a National Strategic Approach	**National Level** - Ensure continuous and connected funding across the full Knowledge Valorisation lifecycle - Improve framework conditions through simplification, flexibility and standardisation - Strengthen early-stage and proof-of-concept funding as a strategic strength - Support the development of regional innovation ecosystems and shared infrastructures - Adopt strategic and inclusive approaches to Knowledge Valorisation at national level
European Level - ERA Instruments, Coordination and Regulatory Guidance	- Visibility and use of ERA instruments - Usability and operational relevance - Exchange formats and practical learning - Entry points for identifying exploitable research results - Coordination, coherence and cross-border guidance	**European Level** - Make ERA Knowledge Valorisation instruments more practical and user-oriented - Complement strategic guidance with concrete operational tools and materials - Strengthen inclusiveness through diverse examples and peer learning - Redesign exchange and coordination formats to better support implementation - Improve coordination, signposting and user navigation across EU instruments and platforms - Provide clearer regulatory guidance and reference frameworks for key valorisation processes

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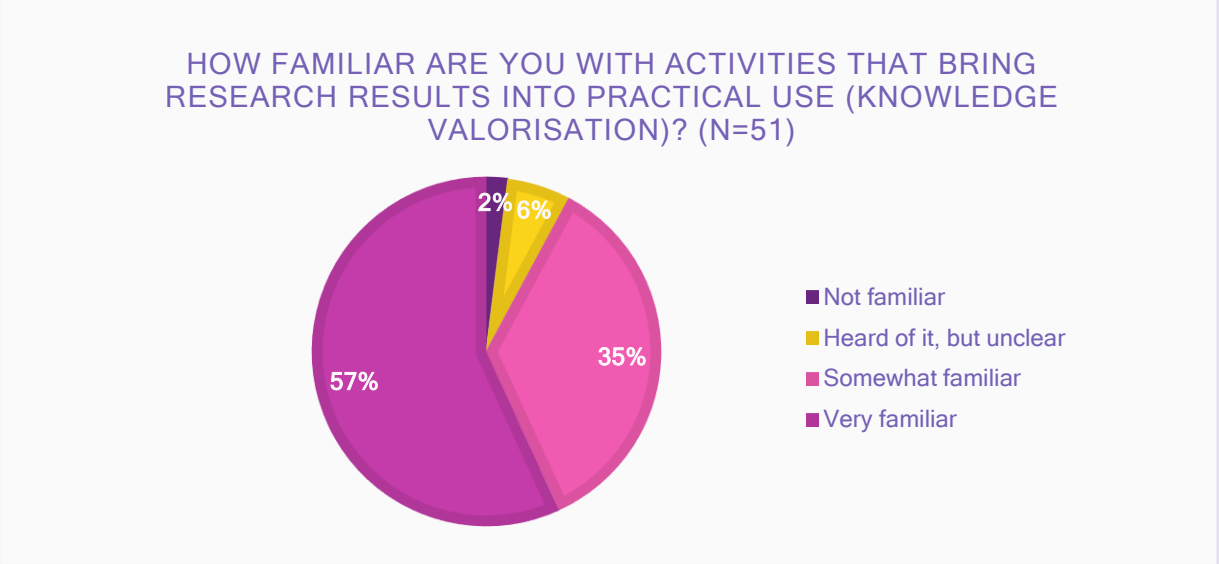
Detailed online survey results

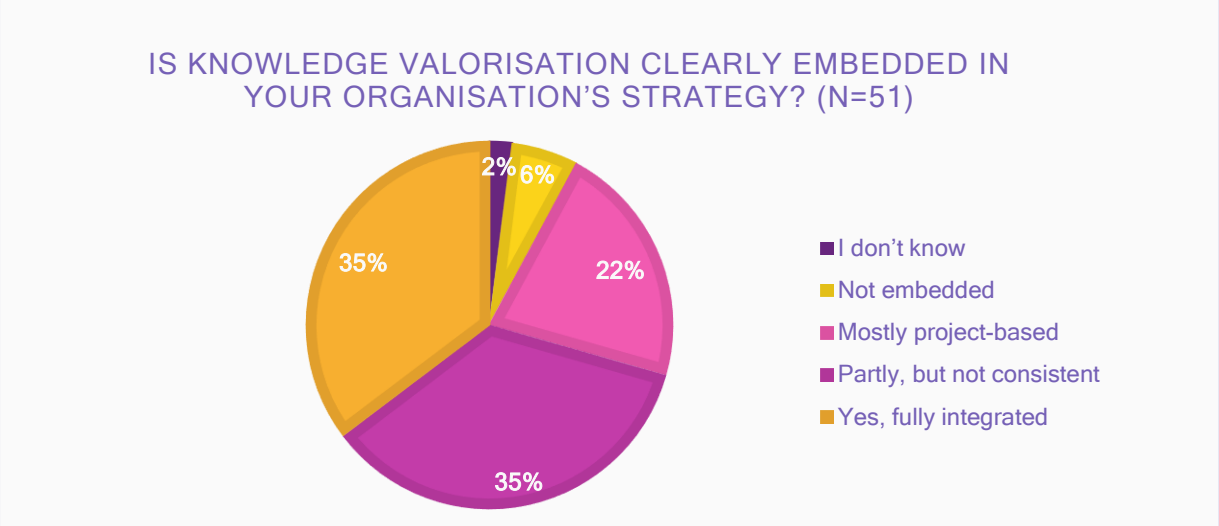
The following figures present the responses collected through the online survey.

Please note:

Unless otherwise indicated, percentages are based on the total sample (N = 68), including non-applicable responses. Percentages in pie charts refer only to valid responses to the respective question. Bar charts may include multiple-response questions (percentages therefore may exceed 100%).

Stakeholder Context





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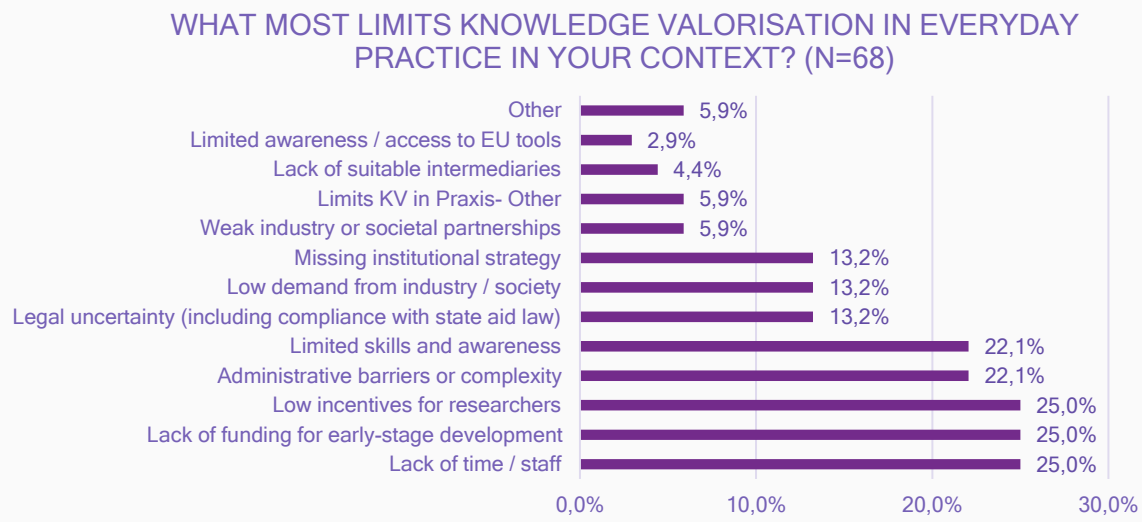
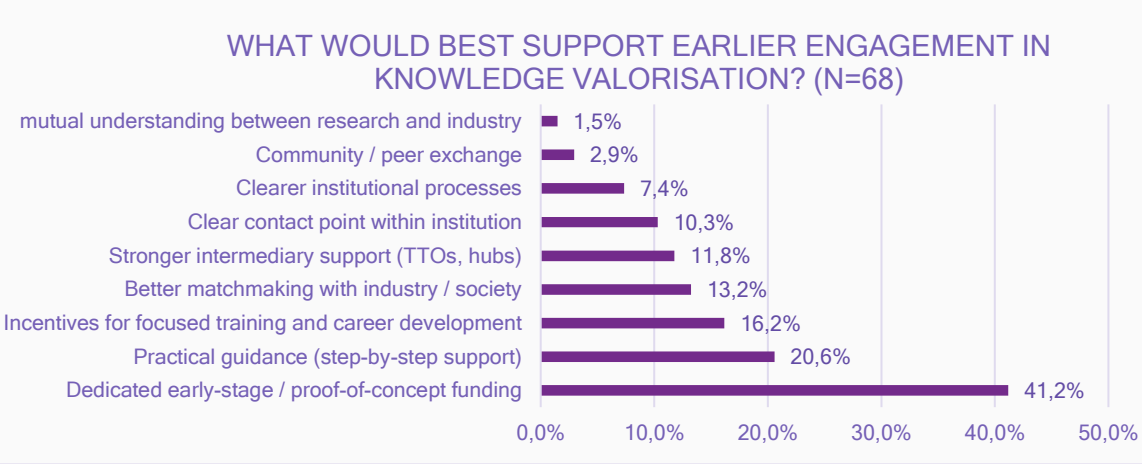
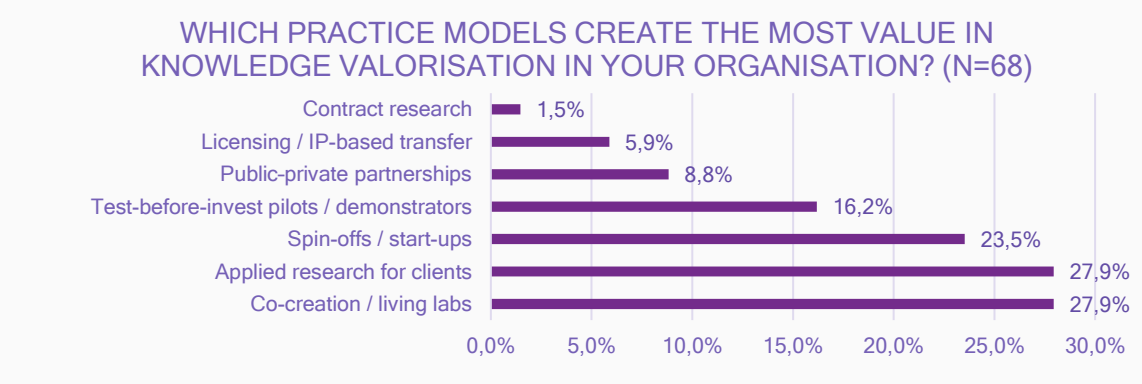
Needs & Barriers





Good Practices & Intermediaries



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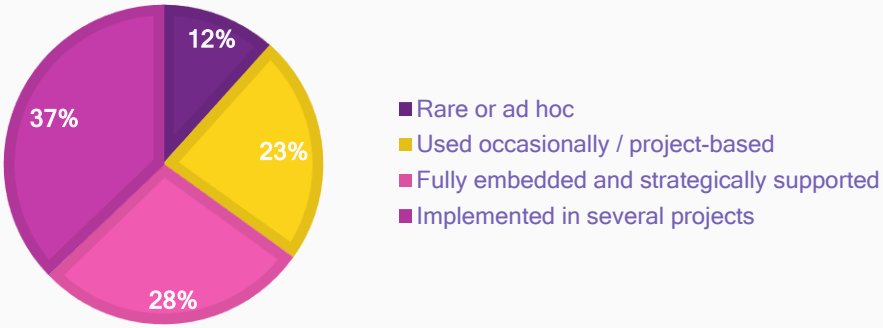
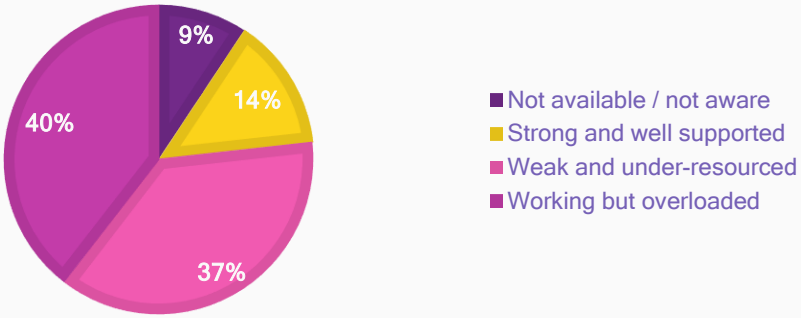
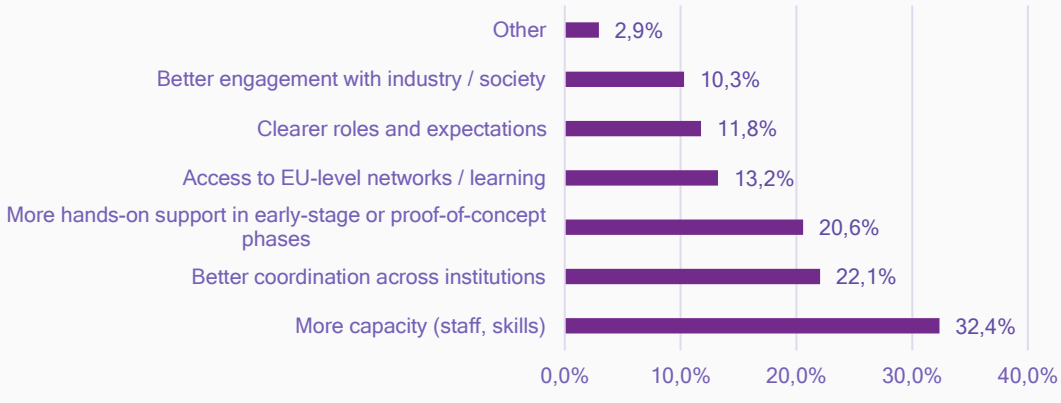
HOW SYSTEMATICALLY ARE THESE KNOWLEDGE VALORISATION PRACTICE MODELS IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR ORGANISATION? (N=43)



HOW STRONG ARE INTERMEDIARY STRUCTURES (TTOS, HUBS, CLUSTERS) IN YOUR ECOSYSTEM? (N=43)



WHAT IMPROVEMENT IN INTERMEDIARY SUPPORT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE? (N=68)



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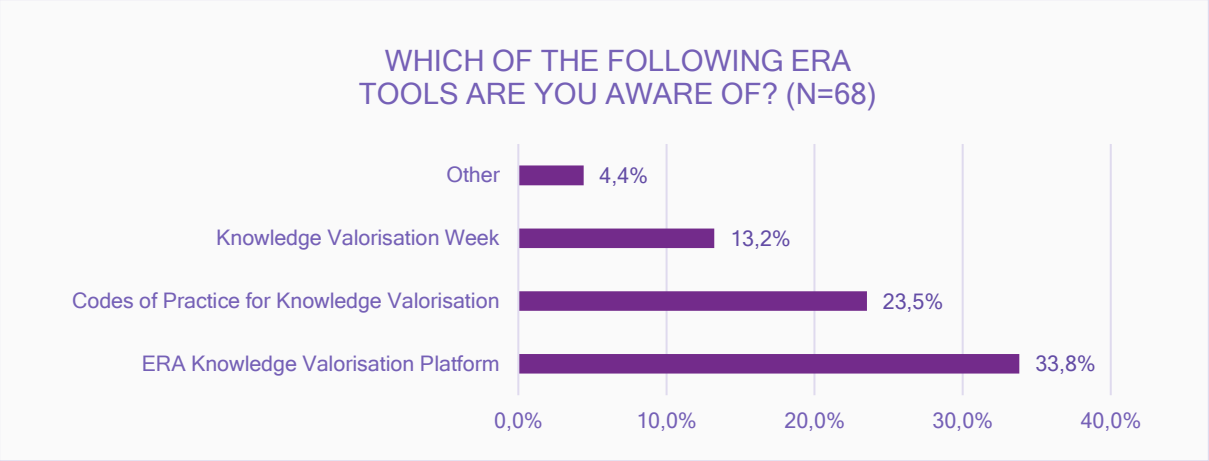
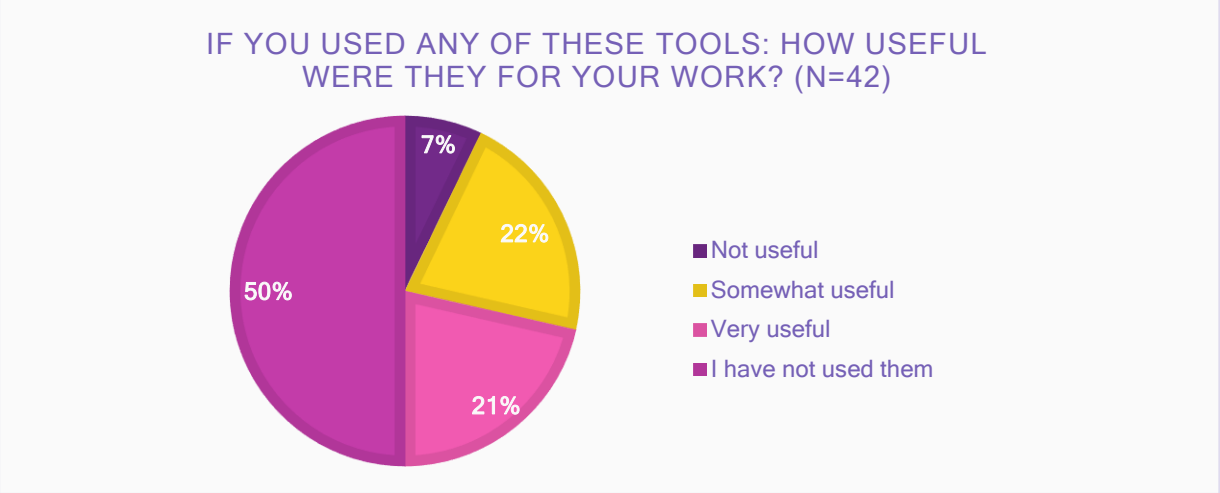
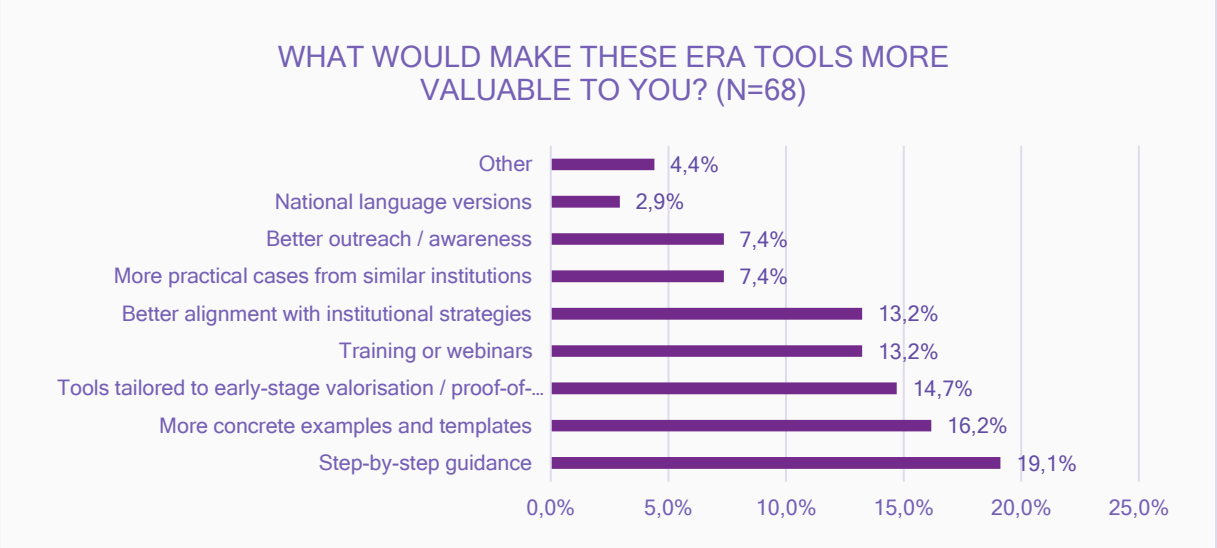
Use of ERA Tools







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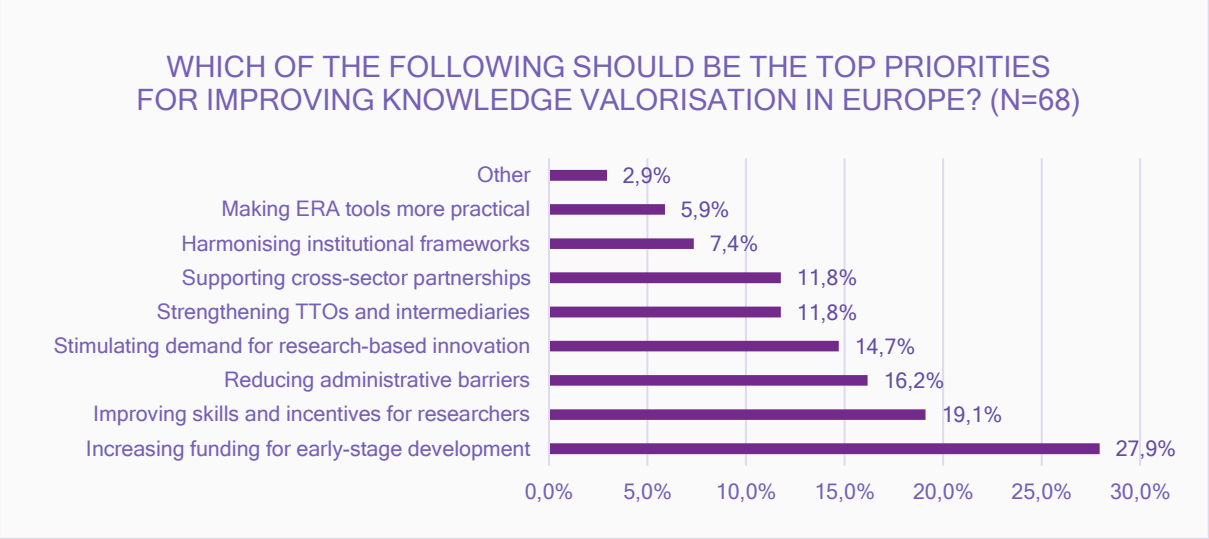
Policy Feedback



If you could propose one practical step for policymakers to improve the transfer of research results into practical use, what would it be?

- Believe less in academic R&D profiles of state-funded R&D institutes. Listen more to real-world problems that especially industrial startups address
- change of mindset for researchers and that of the whole research culture is needed to make Knowledge Valorisation more successful. Moreover, you need more RM professionals helping researchers because it should not be the task only for researchers. All in all, these changes can happen if we advance in our ERA priority areas, including research assessment, research careers, and research management.
- Concept of PMER (Planning / Monitoring / Self-Evaluating / Reporting)
- Create dedicated “Innovation Transfer Vouchers” for companies and public institutions
- development of cross-stakeholder valorisation networks
- Encourage a more strategic use of EU project-funded valorisation opportunities. A good practice example was Baltic TRAM endorsed by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS): https://www.baltic-tram.eu/ Its model, lessons learnt and investment in human capital remains relevant beyond the project time frame.
- I think most of the footwork has to be done by the universities / ttos themselves. I'd think big levers are more availability of skilled risk capital / funding as well as clear incentives for universities to pursue Knowledge Valorisation similarly to the knowledge exchange framework in the UK
- In the future, every publicly funded project at TRL 3 or higher must be able to demonstrate that it has the potential to reach TRL 6 and outline how the TRL 6 level (prototype) can be achieved.
- making clear the difference between Pure Basic Research / Basic Research / Applied Research / Experimental Development in context IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards), etc
- More coordinated action among EU member states
- more structured processes between research organisations and both institutions and other private partners where practitioners use research results

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- PoC / Innovation Funds within academic institutions, combined with hands-on transfer scouts
- provide incentives for the transfer as you did for research and teaching
- Push European industry to increase research funding (private and public)
- Reducing administrative barriers
- stimulating demand for private sector for university research-based innovation
- There should be incentives for professors to initiate knowledge transfer projects. They very often just don't get time ressources for "extra" projects.
- you need people to create awareness; if the first best practice examples are out there in the chairs / faculties you have a snowball system that works

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