



## Entrepreneurialism as myth and ceremony?

In a retrospective view, the public research sector has once enjoyed unquestionable status and legitimacy. By contrast, the current situation is said to be marked by uncertainty and a suspension of the „social contract for science“. While the diagnosis of a crisis of legitimacy remains contested in itself, it is hard to deny that public research institutes and universities have increased their activities of justifying and accounting. Figuring prominently among the strategies of justification, one has to mention the display of „entrepreneurial culture“ many universities claim to be a host of.

But how then to measure and evaluate the „entrepreneurial capacity“ of public research institutes? The rankings and ratings of „entrepreneurial universities“ currently available suffer from the absence of formalised and quantifiable information on „entrepreneurial activities“ attributed to public research units.

This is why we are witnessing a curious situation: While there is a broad agreement that „the entrepreneurial university“ has become one standard answer to a rising demand to contribute to (economic) competitiveness and innovation, interpretations of the rise of the entrepreneurial phenomenon differ sharply:

On the one hand, it is claimed that a second academic revolution is taking place, producing desirable or undesirable effects. On the other hand, this phenomenon is said to be nothing but a useful myth and ceremony while the academic „core business“ is left unchanged.

Having studied universities and research institutes across Europe which have parented significant numbers of spin-off companies, the PROKNOW consortium is able to provide a more complex picture, and to escape the shortcomings of both views (stressing either discontinuity or continuity/either internal entrepreneurial initiative or

external pressure). In order to synthesise the results from its national reports, the conference will elaborate on three core aspects, namely entrepreneurial disciplines, entrepreneurial organisations, and entrepreneurial regimes. More specifically, contributions will provide fresh insights on the following set of questions:

- (1) Have entrepreneurial activities resulted in shifts within the economy of reputation? Regarding the parent institute, which is the organisational level most affected by such changes?
- (2) Do research institutes and universities frequently involved in spin-off activities converge towards more centralised organisational designs?
- (3) To what extent are entrepreneurial activities embedded in disciplinary cultures?
- (4) If entrepreneurialism has become a standard answer for many organisations in the public research sector, what will happen to those who refrain from being entrepreneurial?

All presentations will report on analyses of interactions between public research institutions and academic spin-offs. They will highlight the impact of science-based entrepreneurial activities on the academic research system. Policy recommendations to be drawn from these observations are presented and discussed. Adopting an integrated, international view on the research results of the national project partners, the conference will focus on intersecting agendas of innovation and science policy.

For more detailed information please visit the project's website: [www.proknow-eu.de](http://www.proknow-eu.de)

## Wednesday January 21, 2009

Moderator: *Peter Weingart*, University of Bielefeld

9:15 a.m.

*Pierre Valette*, European Commission, DG Research

9:30 a.m.

**Mapping interactions between academic spin-offs and their parent institutes**

*Jörg Potthast*, WZB

10:30 a.m.

**Observing repercussions at the level of parent institutes**

*Jürgen Enders*, CHEPS, University of Twente

11:30 a.m.

**Drawing conclusions for a future science policy agenda**

*Andreas Knie and Dagmar Simon*, PROKNOW coordinators, WZB

12 noon

**Response by a policy stakeholder**

*Christopher John Hull*, EARTO, Brussels

1:00 p.m.

**End of the conference**

The conference is organised by the PROKNOW research project: „Production of Knowledge Revisited: The Impact of Academic Spin-Offs on Public Research Performance in Europe“ and funded by the 6th Framework Programme, Priority 7 „Citizens and governance in a knowledge based society“.

The conference addresses both policymakers and researchers in the fields of Higher Education Studies and Science and Technology Studies.

To ensure a lively debate, a number of fellow researchers and experts on the issues noted above have been invited as speakers and discussants. This, it is hoped, will sharpen the focus of the PROKNOW approach and provide inputs for a further discussion on how this perspective can be fruitfully integrated into policymaking.

#### The Consortium

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Ivan Tchalakov  
Swiss Federal Institute for Aquatic Sciences and Technology (EAWAG), CIRUS, Dübendorf, Switzerland  
Bernhard Truffer

The conference will take place in Brussels, at the  
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# WZB

**Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin  
für Sozialforschung**

Social Science Research Center  
Berlin

**PROKNOW Conference**

**Entrepreneurialism as myth  
and ceremony?**

**Academic spin-offs, parent  
institutes, and new  
opportunities for science  
policy**

**January 21, 2009  
in Brussels**

funded by the European Commission,  
6th Framework Programme, Priority 7,  
„Citizens and Governance in a knowledge  
based society“

