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# Valorisation of scientific results

Patent commercialisation scoreboard: European universities  
and public research organisations | Key findings | November 2020

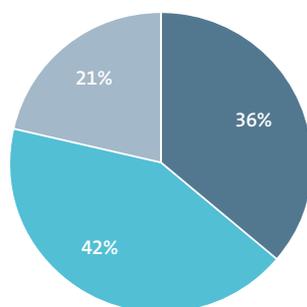


## Key findings

Universities and public research organisations (PROs) play a key role in Europe's innovation ecosystems as sources of scientific knowledge that can be transferred to industry. This scoreboard assesses the ways in which they use the European patent system for this purpose. As such, it provides policy-makers with comprehensive and reliable evidence to further exploit the economic potential of Europe's universities and PROs.

This study is based on a survey of European universities and PROs that have filed patent applications with the European Patent Office (EPO) between 2007 and 2018. It provides detailed information on their patented inventions, commercialisation patterns, and the challenges faced by research institutions in bringing them to market.

## Patent commercialisation by European universities and public research organisations

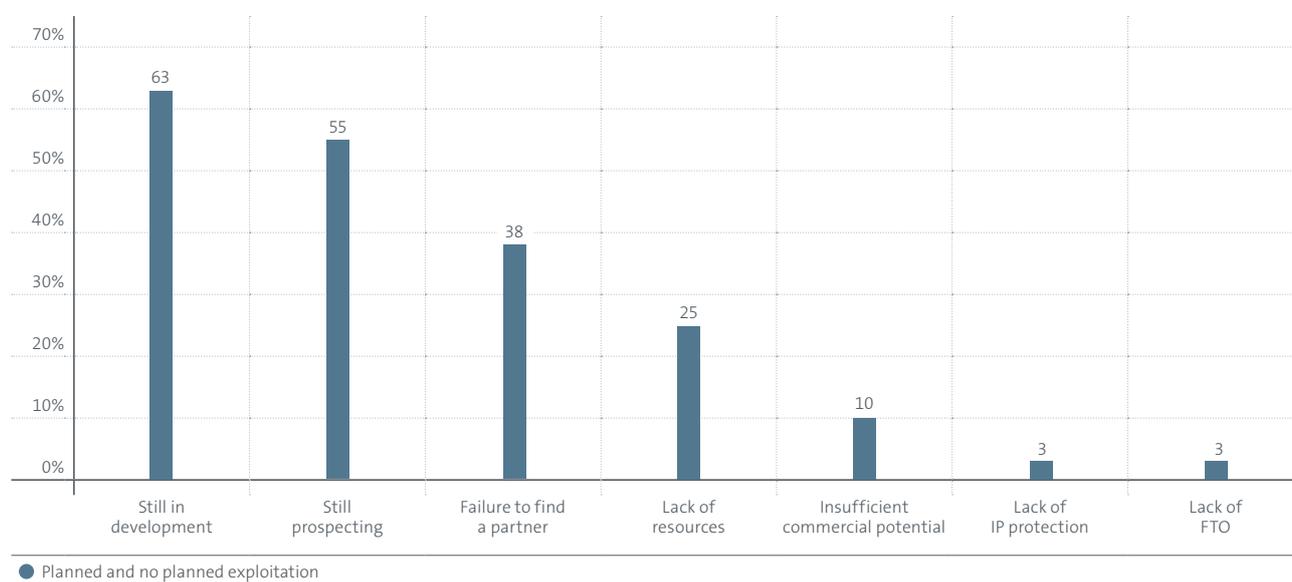


● Exploited ● Planned exploitation ● No planned exploitation

Source: European Patent Office

- European universities and public research organisations (UNI/PROs) use the European patent system in order to commercially exploit their inventions on an international scale. This is their chief route to bring their new technologies out of laboratories, scale up for manufacturing and enter the market, thereby generating revenue for their organisations.
- Research institutions already commercialise more than one third (36%) of the inventions for which they have filed a patent application with the EPO. Licensing is by far their preferred commercialisation channel (70% of commercialised inventions). They report setting up a spin-off company as a motive for 41% of commercialised inventions.
- Surprisingly, commercialisation partners include SMEs and large companies in equal proportions (around 40% each). Most of the successful collaborations (74%) involve partners from the same country and only 27% partners across European borders. However, partners from other European countries play a more important role for institutions in southern and eastern European countries.

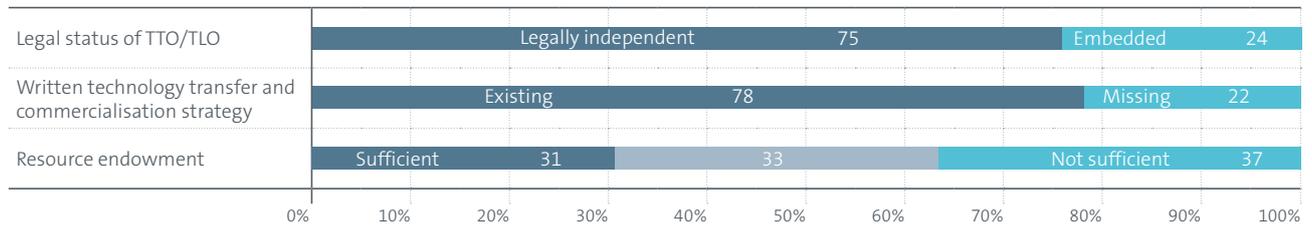
## Challenges to successful exploitation



Source: European Patent Office

- a. Commercialisation is planned but not yet achieved for 42% of the inventions for which European research institutions have filed patent applications with the EPO. In most cases this is because these inventions have not reached proof of concept, either because they are still at the R&D stage (63%) or because commercial opportunities have not yet been identified (55%).
- b. Failure to find interested partners is reported as the third most important reason for failed or planned commercialisation (38%). Overall, respondents from southern and eastern Europe reported this challenge more often (66% in the case of no exploitation and 44% in the case of realised exploitation) than did respondents from northern and western Europe.
- c. Currently, personal networks (92%) and prior business and research partners (71%) are the most frequently used sources for finding partners, followed by business fairs and conferences (49%). Patent databases (21%) and internet trading platforms (15%) are used less frequently and could be developed to improve chances of finding suitable partners.
- d. Lack of resources is mentioned as an important reason for non-exploitation for 25% of patented inventions. Again, this difficulty is reported more by respondents from southern and eastern Europe. The main challenge for the conclusion of successful exploitation deals is the complexity of negotiations, which is considered as “important” or “very important” for 35% of patented inventions, with little variation across geographical regions.

## IP practices of European TTOs/TLOs



Source: European Patent Office

- a. The patents for three quarters of the inventions from European universities and PROs are managed by TTOs/TLOs which are embedded in the applicant institution. Although they vary in size, the majority of them have 10 or fewer employees (56%), and just one to three people dealing with patent commercialisation (52%).
- b. The resource endowment of the TTO/TLO is regarded as sufficient for only 37% of patented inventions. Especially in southern and eastern Europe, where TTO/TLOs tend to be smaller in size, a clear lack of resources is reported (48% vs 14%).
- c. For a large majority of patented inventions (78%), European TTOs/TLOs have a written technology transfer and commercialisation strategy.

**The report can be downloaded from:**  
[epo.org/scoreboard-research](https://epo.org/scoreboard-research)

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