

BUSINESS - UNIVERSITY COOPERATION IN EUROPE

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Abstract: For years, companies cooperate with universities in many ways. Both derive benefits from it. Such cooperation gives higher education institutions the possibility of increasing the scientific and didactic potential. The effects of the widely understood cooperation give companies the opportunity to gain competitive advantage and increase the share of knowledge in the creation of enterprise value. According to decisions of the European Council in the near future cooperation between business and universities should remain one of the high priority actions.

Key words: business, universities, business-university cooperation, Europe 2020, Lisbon Strategy.

Introduction

Knowledge-based economy, work environment which rapidly changes, and the increasing pace of technological development are the challenges of higher education in Europe. At the same time these challenges give the universities new opportunities, which should be efficiently used (Marinescu C. et al., 2013). Therefore, it is extremely important to promote cooperation in the higher education and business sector (Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej, 2009). If universities want to educate students so that their competencies and knowledge after the graduation correspond to the market needs, effective cooperation between science and business will be necessary (Kiełtyka and Smolağ, 2014).

The Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives

Since March 2000 Lisbon Strategy (Erixon, 2010) has been realized. Its purpose was to boost the economic development of the member states of the European Union, to create knowledge-based economy, to care about sustainable development etc. Due to the fact that the global crisis has revealed weaknesses in the European economy and disrupted many years of economic and social progress, the European Council adopted a new strategy, aiming to provide recovery from the crisis, creating the foundations for sustainable growth conducive to the economy based on knowledge and innovation (Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej, 2009; Bongardt and Torres, 2010).

At the European Council in June 2010, member states adopted a new strategy called „Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. The European Council set a strategic goal for the European Union member countries for the coming years. Once again there was the support for the purpose of investment in education and training - the European Union economy by

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2020 has to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. The European Commission in the strategy "Europe 2020" recommends (Forbes, 2012):

- better way of linking the university with the labor market,
- activities to improve the quality of education,
- developing students skills important in their professional work,
- supporting first work experiences or adopting programs to help young people entering the labor market.

Among the seven projects under the strategy one should mention the "Innovation Union" project. One of the main objectives of the project is to fight an unsatisfactory level of cooperation between universities and business. The starting point for the "Innovation Union" is to create a perfect, modern education system for all UE member states (Europa 2020 Unia innowacji, 2010). Companies should be more concerned with the elaboration of teaching and doctoral programs so qualifications suit better the needs of industry. For this purpose, one can take advantage of University-Business Forum - European platform for dialogue between communities of higher education and business. This Forum was launched due to the Statement of the European Commission "Delivering on the modernization agenda for universities: education, research and innovation" of May 2006. One of the areas requiring action in the statement was to develop by the higher education institutions structured partnerships with the business community so that they could "become significant players in the economy, able to respond better and faster to market needs and to develop partnerships which scientific and technological knowledge" (Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej, 2009).

To stay ahead of appearing social challenges, propose solutions and products that meet the expectations and needs of consumers the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) has been established. Special task of the EIT is to integrate higher education and entrepreneurship with the research and innovation, as elements of a single innovation chain in the EU and beyond. It should lead, among others, to intensify the marketing of innovative services, products and processes. The purpose of knowledge and innovation communities is to attract the world's best creative and innovative partners from business, science and academia to work together on solving major social problems. EIT is designed to support innovative research and the creation and development of enterprises inter alia by entrepreneurship education, allowing universities cooperating in the framework of knowledge and innovation communities granting multidisciplinary diplomas bearing the "EIT mark of quality" (Europa 2020 Unia innowacji, 2010).

In addition to the "Innovation Union" there were also announced other flagship initiatives, among others, "An industrial policy for the globalization era", "Digital agenda for Europe", "Mobile youth" and "An agenda for new skills and jobs". All of these projects are to create better conditions for innovation inter alia by (Europa 2020 Unia innowacji, 2010; Soriano and Mulatero, 2010):

- accelerating the development of high-speed internet and its applications,

- providing a strong foundation in the form of the industry,
- promoting outstanding education systems, modern labor markets and the proper selection of skills for the future European professional staff.

The educational program for 2014-2020 - key actions providing business cooperation with higher education institutions

The EU programs are used to build partnerships between the business community and universities. These partnerships are focused mostly on specific areas, such as research or students mobility. This cooperation has so far limited impact on the culture of management and organization in both areas (Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej, 2009). It should be noted, however, that the level of cooperation between countries varies considerably.

Until the end of 2013 the program "Lifelong Learning Programme" was functioning. The objectives of the program were, among others, to facilitate multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions, increase transparency and compatibility of qualifications in higher education, improve the quality and extend the cooperation between universities and enterprises. The program continued activities conducted earlier in programs such as: SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci, Jean Monnet, e-Learning i European Language Label.

In 2014 the program "Erasmus plus" entered into force. It replaced the previously functioning programs. "Erasmus plus" offers, among other things, financial support to organizations and institutions working in the field of education and training in Europe. Responding to the challenges outlined mostly by the Europe 2020 strategy, the new program is designed to contribute the development of the skills of its participants, and to increase their opportunities for employment and modernization of education systems. "Erasmus plus" gives the opportunity of trips for educational purposes (eg, to study or work, undergo training or engage in voluntary work) for pupils, students, educational staff and youth workers. The program also supports building of partnerships between universities, enterprises and non-profit organizations to strengthen innovation and knowledge-building. In this program there is an emphasis on strengthening synergies between the sectors of education and the work environment. One of the sectors of the program is "Higher Education". Three key actions of the program are (Erasmus+, 2014):

Educational Mobility. As part of the key action 1 it is possible for students to study or practice abroad (in other countries that participate in the program). Their minimal duration is two months in case of practices and three months in case of studies abroad. The Erasmus + gives the opportunity to go on a foreign practice or internship also for university graduates. The condition of the program is that the trip must be held within one year of the graduation. The recruitment is in the final year of the study. The Erasmus + also gives the possibility of trips for university employees to foreign institutions, such as businesses, organizations, universities, etc. in order to increase knowledge, skills and qualifications needed for the job, or

the exchange of experiences. Staff mobility for training purposes can last from two days to two months.

Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The part of this key action are strategic partnerships. The purpose of these projects is the implementation and promotion of innovation in higher education. The result of such projects should be the modernization of the educational offer and its better adaptation to the needs of the economy and society. The project may involve both organizations and institutions of the participating in Erasmus + countries as well as organizations of partner countries. Other important projects for cooperation, business-higher education institutions as part of key action 2 are alliances for knowledge. Their aim is, among other things, to develop society entrepreneurial skills, to encourage innovation in higher education and the business community or stimulate and facilitate the flow of knowledge between universities and enterprises. In these projects at least six organizations from the three countries participating in the Erasmus + must be involved – at least two universities and two companies. All higher education institutions participating in the projects of the "Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices" must have an Erasmus for Higher Education.

Support for reforms in education. It is a campaign run by the European Commission which supports the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, „Education and Training 2020” strategy (Konkluzje Rady, 2009) and EU Strategy on Youth 2010-2018 (Rezolucja Rady, 2009).

Benefits arising from the collaboration between enterprises and higher education institutions. Polish experience

Cooperation with business expands the scope of scientific research, increases standards and expands the scale of research conducted at universities, as well as develops research skills of university employees. It also gives more opportunities to publish their research results. Improvement of the quality of the results of scientific publications inter alia increases the credibility of the university, raises its prestige, improves its position in the ranking of higher education institutions, increases the possibility of obtaining a government grant (Nellickappilly and Maya, 2009). Business involvement in cooperation with universities not only gives profits for universities. Collaboration with scientific institutions, in turn, helps businesses to generate higher profits or increase competitiveness. The next advantages are, among others, the creation of new jobs, lower costs and improving business and operating activity of the company.

The most important benefits for academic centers which brings the cooperation with the business community, defined on the basis of questionnaire survey (Projekt Najlepsze praktyki, 2008) are presented in figure 1.

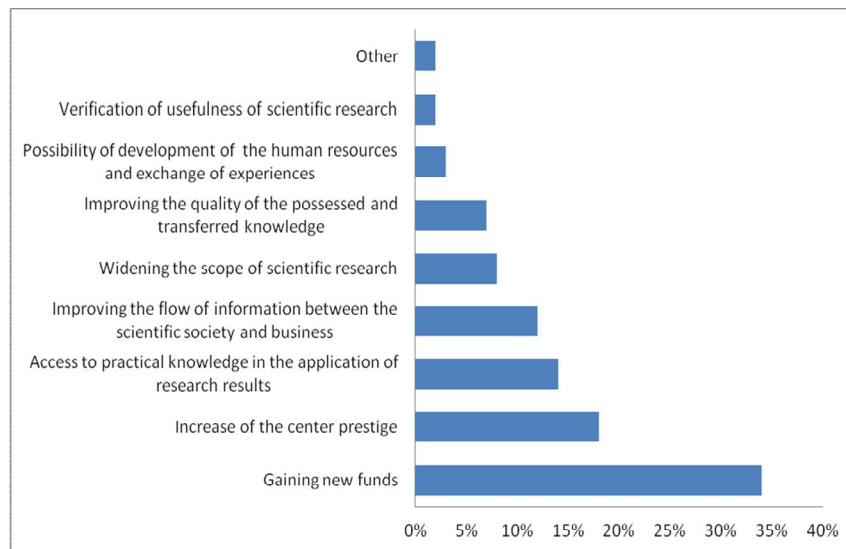


Fig.1. The most important benefits for research centers which creates the cooperation with business (Projekt Najlepsze praktyki, 2008)

On the basis of survey results it is clear that for the vast majority of the surveyed academic centers the main benefit of cooperation has a financial nature (34%). Second was placed the response indicating the fact that the increase of the center prestige is very important (18%). Third place was taken by the response "access to practical knowledge in the application of research results" (14%). Other positions went to "improving the flow of information between the scientific society and business" (12%), „widening the scope of scientific research” (8%), „improving the quality of the possessed and transferred knowledge” (7%). Less than 5% of votes received the responses concerning the possibility of development of the human resources and exchange of experiences (3%), and „verification of usefulness of scientific research” (2%).

The most important benefits for business which brings the cooperation with the academic centers, defined on the basis of questionnaire survey (Projekt Najlepsze praktyki, 2008) are presented in figure 2.

On the basis of survey results the greatest benefit associated with entrepreneurs cooperation with representatives of the scientific community is the ability to implement new technologies (36%). On the second place is the response indicating access to the latest specialist knowledge (21% of the total amount of votes). Third and fourth place was taken by the response "achievement of sustainable competitive advantage" (11%) and „gaining new customers and increase market share” (8%). Fifth place ex aequo with 5% of votes took "improvement of the quality of offered products and services", „increase of the company's prestige”, „improvement of the company profitability” and „opportunities to reduce costs”.

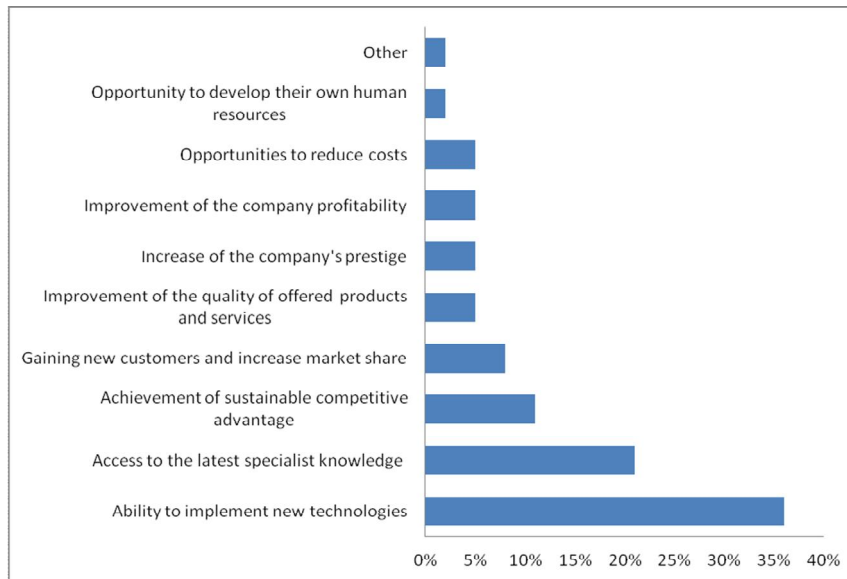


Figure.2. The most important benefits for business which creates the cooperation with research centers (Projekt Najlepsze praktyki, 2008)

Of secondary importance to the business is "opportunity to develop their own human resources" (2%). The remaining 2% of the respondents granted the other answers, among which, were the acquisition of new valuable employees recruited mainly among scientific workers, cooperating with the company.

Conclusions

The collaboration of the business community and higher education without doubt makes it possible to achieve substantial benefits for both sides. It should focus on shaping the direction of common knowledge and skills of students through joint educational initiatives, as well as on mutual research and development. It should be noted that there is still a small amount of companies that work with the educational community, probably due to rather complicated rules of cooperation. Among the barriers of collaboration between business and the education sector one should mention: educational program not exactly corresponding with the needs of the company, complicated rules of cooperation or incompatible expectations with respect to establishing cooperation.

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WSPÓLPRACA BIZNESU Z UCZELNIAMI WYŻSZYMI W EUROPIE

Streszczenie: Od lat przedsiębiorstwa współpracują z uczelniami wyższymi na wiele sposobów czerpiąc z tej współpracy korzyści. Efekty szeroko rozumianej współpracy dają przedsiębiorstwom możliwość zdobycia przewagi konkurencyjnej oraz zwiększenia udziału wiedzy w tworzeniu wartości przedsiębiorstwa. Z kolei taka kooperacja daje uczelniom możliwości zwiększenia potencjału naukowego i dydaktycznego. Według Rady Europejskiej w najbliższej przyszłości współpraca pomiędzy biznesem a uczelniami powinny pozostać jednym z działań priorytetowych.

Słowa kluczowe: biznes, uczelnie wyższe, współpraca biznesu z uczelniami wyższymi.

关于商业大学合作在欧洲

摘要: 多年来,公司与高校携手在很多方面。两者都从它派生的好处。这种合作使高等教育机构增加的科学和教诲潜力的可能性。影响广泛了解合作的机会公司获得的竞争优势并增加知识在创造企业价值中的份额。根据欧洲理事会的决定在不久的将来企业和大学之间的合作应保持高优先行动之一

关键字: 企业、大学、商业大学合作