1. Public-private interaction under fluctuating public support programmes

Collaboration in the automotive field at the Széchenyi István University

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Abstract

Towards the end of the 1990s the Hungarian government recognised the fragility of the linkages between knowledge-generating institutions and business organisations as a major problem for the Hungarian innovation system. Since then the government has launched various initiatives to enhance the linkages of the public and private sphere this paper is focusing on one of its' subsets, on the industry-university collaboration. These produced a variety of results, but all were rather short-lived. This paper offers an overview of the major features of some of the most significant initiatives of the past 15 years; it investigates how the frequent changes to the programmes and to the principal actors and beneficiaries have affected the strengthening and improvement of the links between universities and industry. Whilst some programmes regarded innovative companies as the leading actors, others seemed to focus on Higher Education Institutions, emphasizing their function as regional organisers. We focus on the university and on efforts to improve knowledge utilization. The case study in this paper illustrates how a doctorate granting mainly engineering focused University has adapted to the changing environment and how it has made efforts to contribute to local economic development. The paper discusses whether the programme-based projects might have been more successful with incentives for the incremental development of links rather than with basic incentives to launch collaborative research. The chapter reveals the contrast between the limited impact of some government programmes and the determining influence of a multinational company - both on the local economy and on the University.