The policy mix for science-industry knowledge transfer in Austria

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The case study analyses the Austrian policy mix supporting knowledge transfer from an analyst point of view, describing its history, main instruments, and current challenges faced.

Topics covered
- Policy mix, development, Competence Centres, collaborative laboratories, regional & cluster policies
- Implementation of policy mix for knowledge transfer

History of knowledge transfer policies

Catching up since 1990s: Knowledge transfer identified as strategic weakness of the Austrian innovation system

“Technology billion”: Funding for the development of the institutionalised cooperative research structures

First programme for cooperative research Christian Doppler Association (CDG) launched in 1995

Competence Centre Programme launched in 1998

Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH (aws) (est. 2002): Funding of high-tech startups via venture capital

Main instruments
- COMET Competence Centre Programme
- Christian Doppler (CD) Laboratories and Josef Ressel Centres
- BRIDGE
- COIN Cooperation & Innovation
- Research Studios Austria (RSA)
- AplusB Centres
- Laura Bassi Centres of Expertise
- Knowledge Transfer Centres and IPR Exploitation
- Innovation Voucher
- Spin-off Fellowships
- Cluster policy (e.g. Automotive Cluster Styria, 1998; Automotive Cluster Upper Austria, 2000)
- Silicon Austria laboratories

Selected funding programmes targeted towards knowledge transfer, according to size and activities funded

Overview of COMET Competence Centre programmes

Interaction with other policies

RTI strategy, sub-strategies: IP, open innovation, “Gründerland”

Tax incentives Research premium

Programmes: bottom-up, thematic, infrastructure

Autonomy of universities, establishment of non-university research institutions

Challenges
- Transfer of academic knowledge into goods and services by academic spin-offs
- Strengthen strategically oriented collaboration between science and industry
- Paying attention to excellence and sustainability of collaborative research outcomes
- Support SMEs for more STI-collaboration
- Foster more enterprises towards technology leadership and top positions (“niches”) in innovation
- Reduce complexity of funding landscape and strengthen synergies.

Study on interactions with other policies
- Method: Interviews with 27 policy experts from ministries and agencies responsible for R&D
- Diversified research funding portfolio of funding programmes since 1990s
- Universities Act of 2002 increased autonomy of universities
- R&D tax credit (“research premium”)
- National RTI Strategy of 2011