**PRESS RELEASE**

**University research generates over 10% of all inventions in Europe, new EPO report finds**

* **Leading countries are Germany, France, UK and Italy****; a small group of European universities (5%) accounts for half of all academic patent applications**
* **Study highlights universities’ crucial role in European innovation but also the challenges of market fragmentation cited in Draghi report**
* **Free tool – the *Deep Tech Finder* – expanded with over 10 000 profiles for investment-ready European startups, spin-outs and universities with European patent applications**

**Munich, 22 October 2024 –** Inventions in fields such as vaccines or mRNA research, materials science, or advances in laser technology, all owe their existence to university research. A new report published by the European Patent Office (EPO) today finds that patent applications for inventions originating in European universities have been on the rise over the past two decades, and now account for 10.2% of all patents filed at the EPO by European applicants. The EPO’s free Deep Tech Finder tool has also been expanded to include almost 900 universities and over 1 500 spin-outs, making it easier for investors to connect thousands of investment-ready startups and/or universities with European patent applications.

The report, the first comprehensive analysis of its kind, is based on data for **1 200 European universities that have generated patent applications at the EPO** between 2000-2020. In addition to patent applications that are filed directly by the universities themselves, the study also looks at indirect applications filed by other entities but naming university-affiliated researchers as inventors on the patent.

*“Europe has a longstanding tradition of academic excellence, but we sometimes struggle to turn research into commercial success,”* saidEPO President, António Campinos. “*This study sheds light on academic inventiveness across Europe to further inform policies and strategies. By leveraging patents through licensing, collaboration or spinouts, universities can amplify their impact driving both market and social value. As the recent Draghi report underscores, there is still significant work to be done to achieve a single market for research and technology in Europe, since 10% of startups with European academic patents are headquartered in the US”.*

**University patent ownership on the rise, but more Europe-wide collaboration needed**

Two-thirds of all patent applications originating at universities in the past two decades were not filed directly by the universities themselves, but by other entities, mostly companies, with small and medium-sized enterprises alone accounting for 30% of these filings. However, **European universities have substantially increased their patenting of academic inventions**, with the proportion rising from 24% of all academic patent applications in 2000 to 45% in 2019, indicating a significant shift in intellectual property practice and policy.

According to the study, **Germany, France, the UK, and Italy lead in total number of academic patents**. A small number of universities in Europe (5% of the 1 200 universities in the study, including for example University of Grenoble Alpes, Technical University of Munich, University of Oxford, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, University of Copenhagen, and Polytechnic University of Milan, among others) account for half of all academic patent applications. They focus more on science-based fields and are supported by dedicated knowledge transfer offices. In contrast, 62% of universities contribute only 8%. But this latter group of small universities who file fewer patent applications play an important role in their national innovation ecosystems. The report also looks at collaboration on academic inventions which are often still limited to local partners in the same country, suggesting there is more potential for cross-border connections in Europe.

**Finding universities and their spinouts**

The study, developed through the EPO’s Observatory on Patents and Technology in collaboration with the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (Fraunhofer ISI), is the first comprehensive, long-term mapping of patents stemming from European universities and the challenges they face in bringing their inventions to market. It addresses some of the areas of action proposed in last month’s report by Mario Draghi on European competitiveness[[1]](#footnote-2).

**Connecting investors with investment-ready startups in Europe**

The EPO has now upgraded its [Deep Tech Finder](https://datavisualisation.apps.epo.org/datav/public/dashboard-frontend/host_epoorg.html) tool to empower users to easily identify university patents and their spin-outs alongside other investment-ready startups with European patents or applications. This free online tool includes details of nearly 900 European universities as well as the business profiles and patent portfolios of over 1 500 spin-outs. The improved DTF streamlines connections between academia and the investment community like never before. This upgrade reaffirms the EPO's commitment to supporting deep tech innovation across Europe.

**Further information**

* Read the [full report](https://www.epo.org/university-innovation-study?mtm_campaign=Universities&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press)
* Join the [hybrid event on 22 October](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/events/patents-and-innovation-european-universities?mtm_campaign=Universities&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press) where the study’s key findings will be discussed
* Find universities with European patents - and their spinouts - using the EPO’s [Deep Tech Finder](https://datavisualisation.apps.epo.org/datav/public/dashboard-front)

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**About the EPO**

With 6 300 staff members, the [European Patent Office (EPO)](http://www.epo.org/?mtm_campaign=Universities&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 45 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.

1. [*The future of European competitiveness – A competitiveness strategy for Europe*](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en#paragraph_47059)*,* report by Mario Draghi (September 2024) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)