

## **ProTon Europe - Rome Statement (30<sup>th</sup> September, 2011)**

### **“The role of networks in knowledge transfer from public organizations”**

**The 9th annual ProTon Europe conference took place in Rome on 28<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011.** It was co-organised by Netval, the Italian network of TTOs, and the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR). The Conference provided an opportunity for the participants, drawn from 20 different countries, to emphasize the importance of networks in the daily tasks of KTO's and to identify :

- new tools to maximize the interactions between different actors in innovation,
- key actions necessary to achieve effective collaboration and knowledge transfer,
- new tools to maximize the impact of publicly funded research on the European economy.

We could summarise our requests by highlighting these 5 points:

#### **1. Toward strong regional cooperation**

Regional cooperation can allow knowledge transfer and management functions to secure additional resources and can support TTOs in achieving critical mass. In many countries programmes are in place to reinforce cooperation between TTOs and other partners on a regional basis. Such initiatives can allow more efficient mobilisation of crucial financial support. This enhanced collaboration can accelerate support for priority projects, and can reduce the time to market for research results.

#### **2. Towards the European Innovation Union**

The European Research Area initiative includes a chapter for the mobility of researchers throughout the whole of Europe. This concept should be extended with specific programs to emphasize the mobility of TTO staff. ProTon has experience of organising staff exchanges and would be an ideal partner for implementing and managing such an initiative. This is a key requested from ProTon member TTOs.

**ProTon also endorses any commitment at government policy level to embed technology transfer activities in publicly funded research programmes,** in order to include the exploitation of results within the scope of those research program.

#### **3. Recognition of KT Professionals**

The EU funded project **EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER SOCIETY (EuKTS)** is establishing an accreditation system of training providers and certification of knowledge transfer professionals. The results of the project will be presented on 15 December 2011 to the knowledge exchange community. The next step will be the implementation of the system at European level, which must start in 2012. Meanwhile, there is a need for further public investment in order to capitalize on work already carried out and to launch the implementation process.

#### **4. Proof of Concept funding**

One of the key issues in the technology transfer process is the need for funding of Proof of Concept activities, at a stage when the technological risk is too high for the private sector to invest. It is recognised that many inventions arise from university research, but there is often a development gap and hence not enough research results are adopted by businesses. In particular, for TTOs and incubators, the availability of proof of concept funds is a critical element in the generation of successful new ventures. It is appropriate that an EC funding stream should be specifically dedicated to this crucial step in the innovation process.

#### **5. Impact of a regular, comprehensive survey of KT activities**

Through the organization of the annual survey of knowledge transfer office activities in Europe since 2005, Proton is in an excellent position to contribute to the evaluation of the economic impact of research. Proton is already working to extend the coverage of its survey by reinforcing its cooperation with additional national networks. We will also develop and select case studies, success stories to demonstrate the importance of research and innovation for the welfare of society.

**About ProTon Europe:** ProTon Europe is the pan-European association of national Knowledge Transfer associations linked to universities and public research organisations. The association was created in 2003 by the European Commission and is self-supporting since 2007. ProTon Europe's primary objective is to promote the economic and social benefits of publicly funded research and development throughout Europe by further developing the skills of the professionals working in this field. With over 160 members of knowledge transfer organisations ProTon Europe reaches out to almost 600 universities and public research organisations across Europe. For more information visit [www.protoneurope.org](http://www.protoneurope.org) or contact José Syne, Secretary General at [sg@protoneurope.org](mailto:sg@protoneurope.org)