Case Study 16.2. The Innova Programme at Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV)

CRITICAL AREA OF FOCUS 2: "Assessing IP potential, validating technologies and incentivizing for commercialisation"

BEST PRACTICE FOR: "Proof of Concept Programs"

AIMED AT: TTO/Researcher/Industry

UNIVERSITY: Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) (Spain) **TTO**: UPV CTT - Innova Spain

UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA

The context:

The **Polytechnic University of Valencia** is a Spanish University focused on Science and Technology. As a University, it was founded in 1971. Nowadays, it has 40,000 students enrolled and an academic staff of 2,600.

UPV's TTO is the Centre for Innovation, Research and Technology Transfer (CTT), with close to 40 employees. The Innova programme was established in 2000 in order to support activities to promote innovation within the university and is focused on technology validation. Since 2011, it is part of VLC/Campus, Valencia International Campus of Excellence, which continues the project, with a special (although not exclusive) focus on biotechnology and related sciences.

The problem:

In order for a researcher to place their research results into society, effective tools have to be put in place. At the same time, not every piece of research has a practical application or its IP might not have any value, furthermore a technical validation is required to determine the interest of the exploitation of these results.

The solution:

The UPV set up the INNOVA programme with the goal of facilitating the transfer of technology generated within the university towards the productive sector, and strengthening the relationship between research and industry.

The strategy is aimed at the research structures of UPV. Activities under the INNOVA programme are frequently linked to regional companies and help to create an innovative environment within the different research groups and centers belonging to UPV.

Founded in 2000, **INNOVA** has evolved since 2005 to encourage the actions related to proof-of-concept demonstration and valorization of IP and technology, as fundamental tools to support innovation. Initially, these actions were aimed at providing resources to research groups and research structures within the university, for the dissemination and management of technology and IP, such as attending trade shows, promotional materials, web page development, etc. Later in 2005, the programme evolved to encourage certain activities aimed at introducing the capabilities and research results from the UPV into the market, gradually giving greater weight to the actions related to proof-of-concept demonstration and valorisation of technology and IP, as a valuable tool to support innovation.

These 'proof-of-concept' projects, which are based on identified research results, are undertaken to favour technological validation, so to determine the potential for exploitation of these results. The **INNOVA programme** is a key instrument within the policy of the Vice-Chancellor for Research to enhance technology transfer performance at the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV). The programme finances innovative scientific proof-of-concept projects to help their maturation towards commercialization.

The **financial grants** offered by the INNOVA program mme are assigned on an annual basis through an open public call. INNOVA helps financing of proof-of-concept projects - aimed at validating the application of a technology through the construction of prototypes or demonstrators.

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The maximum grant per application for this line is €35,000 per project and the duration must be no longer than 12 months. The aid is intended to cover the costs of those projects aimed at technical validation through prototypes, demonstrators or similar, patents or other kind of industrial property of the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office (SPTO) or a similar office, or registered software on which exploitation rights for the UPV have been established,

The UPV subcommittee is responsible for the evaluation of applications to the POC programme. If necessary, the sub-commission may consider the necessity of seeking external assessment for the evaluation of the proposals. The commercial potential of each project applying for POC financing is always evaluated by external experts with experience in the market at which the invention is directed. They are paid €450 for their evaluation, and their feedback is much appreciated, not only by researchers, but also by the TTO professionals. In addition to the on-going monitoring of the project's progress, at the end of the project a final report will be created, in which the results obtained and the marketing activities undertaken are described.

In addition to POC funding, INNOVA also **grants funds** for participating in design and innovation competitions - in which an award has been obtained or has passed a competitive selection process. The maximum grant per application for participating in this kind of competition is €10,000. The aid is intended to reimburse the additional costs of the UPV from participating in a contest of innovation or ideas, designs or prototypes of a product related to an innovation process

Alignment to PROGRESS-TT:

This case is a good illustration of the "Proof of Concept programs" Best Practice in PROGRESS-TT Critical Area of Focus 2 "Assessing IP potential, validating technologies and incentivizing for commercialisation".

The positive feedback on the programme from actors of the regional context has encouraged its continuation by the University of Valencia. The programme has been developed steadily over 11 years, since 2000. Since 2011, the programme has been part of the VLC/CAMPUS, Valencia International Campus of Excellence, launched by the public universities of the City of Valencia and the research centres belonging to the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) from the autonomous region.

The programme has thus been developed steadily over the past 15 years. Over a period of 5 years, 80 PoC projects have been funded, 17 have been turned into business plans (technologies commercialized) and 9 are operating using licenses (valuable IP created). Thejg INNOVA program has become a basic foundation within the Vice-Chancellor for Research's policy.

There are several features regarding the UPV that contribute to the success of the INNOVA programme. First, we can observe that projects participating in the programme are based on research results clearly identified and subject to a rigorous technical validation. Furthermore, the wide research base of UPV provided enough quality projects to the programme to arouse the entrepreneurial interest of businesses of the region. Moreover, the program has received strong support from governing bodies of the University and it represented a cultural evolution among researchers who increasingly understand the importance of their research results in accordance with its application in the innovation process.

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