THE R&D WE DON'T USE: OUR OPPORTUNITY

Posted on 15/04/2010 by Naider

It is necessary for Spain to increase its commitment to Research and Development, but the use and enhancement of the R&D developed must also be promoted. While significant progress has been made in scientific production, the country is still far behind in terms of innovation. One of the keys to solving the problem: let's get our R&D out of the drawers.

Scientific production in Spain has advanced considerably in recent decades, reaching a leading position in the world ranking according to National Science Indicators from Thomson Reuters. This data translates into a scientific production per capita that is still mediocre (6.5 articles per thousand inhabitants) compared to countries like Sweden or England (18.7 and 13.25) but in significant growth.

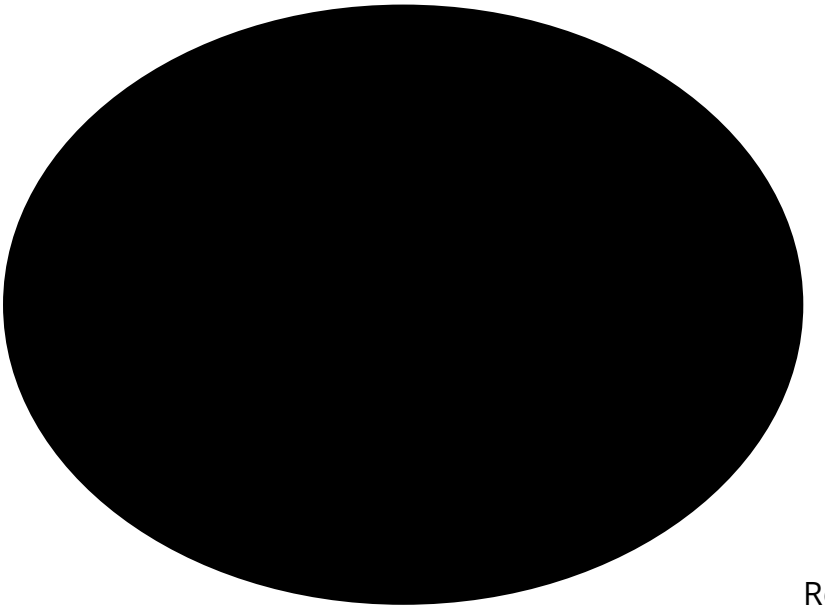
But if these data do not invite optimism, even less do the data related to innovation, that is, to the transformation of this Research into results. Indicators such as venture capital or the generation of patents offer us an almost bleak scenario. For example, Venture Capital represents only 0.123% of Spanish GDP while this figure reaches 0.88% in Denmark or 0.483% in the United Kingdom; and the Spanish production of European patents is 29.3 per million inhabitants, a figure that makes us tremble compared to the 174.6, 275 and 267.6 of Denmark, Germany and Finland (EIS2008 data).

Innovative financing, intellectual property and human resources: key capacities for innovation

At the height of the crisis and its consequences, the Government is desperately seeking a change in the economic model in search of a new sustainable economy. In this sense, in the scientific-technological field, the criticisms are mainly leveled at the inconsistency of reducing the already insufficient public spending on R&D. Although increasing this spending is more than necessary, we must not lose sight of the fact that spending on R&D in itself will not change the economic model and that innovation should also be promoted, after all, the transformation of that R +D in value for society and companies. For this, it will be crucial to facilitate the valorization of R&D through measures that allow Spanish companies to appropriate its benefits.

The valorization of R&D must rely heavily on companies that, first, must approach the agents that generate it. In this sense, it is important that the central government commits itself to the creation of infrastructures and programs that promote the transfer of technology from Universities, Technology Centers and Research Institutes. These infrastructures and programs should act as "knowledge bridges" with companies. Progress should be made in initiatives such as the INNOCASH program, launched by the Ministry of Science and Innovation, providing them with sufficient structure and greater financial support.

In order to value R&D, and for these bridges to transform knowledge into economic and social value, it is also necessary to have sufficient capacity for innovative financing. Elements such as venture capital or Business Angels networks must rise as protagonists of the innovation process. In Spain, their role is still secondary: Business Angels made investments for a total of 13 million euros in Spain, a figure that contrasts with the 157 million euros mobilized in the United Kingdom according to Antonio Abad, president of the Spanish Network of Business Angels (ESBAN). On the one hand, it is necessary to mobilize sufficient private financing through specialized funds for innovation, and on the other, to eliminate the existing obstacles to the takeoff of the Business Angel figure, since the current fiscal framework does not help its development.



Regarding intellectual property, we must be able to compete with other countries and regions of the world on equal terms and for this the existence of a favorable regulatory environment is vital. For example, the high cost of generating patents in Europe compared to the United States (at least five times higher) is well known. In addition to a drastic reduction in these costs in Europe, Spain needs an even bigger boost. For example, in 2008 Belgium passed a powerful deduction measure for 80% of revenue from patents to boost R&D protection.

Finally, in order to get companies closer to these agents of the R&D supply, they need to be adequately trained. In order for companies to innovate, they must bring together the necessary capacities, and these come mainly from human capital with scientific-technological knowledge and innovation. Betting on the valorization of R&D means betting on a massive incorporation of this type of people in companies. The Torres-Quevedo program for The hiring of researchers by companies is a reference in this regard, but it is also necessary to promote the incorporation of technologists and experts in innovation processes.

Yes, **Spain has to increase its spending on R&D but also its efforts to put that R&D on the market**, to obtain results from it. Let's open the drawers of technology centers, universities, research institutes, etc. and transfer that knowledge to companies and society because it will provide us with a double opportunity: economic, since it will contribute to the economic transformation of our productive model; and awareness, because it will help improve the perception of R&D in society.

References

Deloitte, 2007. "Patent Income Deduction." Available online at http://www .deloitte.com/view/en_BE/be/services/tax-services/corporate-tax/patent-income-deduction/index.htm

Ministry of Science and Innovation, Government of Spain.http://www.micinn.es

Proinno-Europe 2008, "European Innovation Scoreboard 2008". Available online at http://www.proinno-europe.eu/EIS2008/website/docs/EIS_2008_Final_report .pdf

Innocash Program, Ministry of Science and Innovation, Government of Spain. http://www.innocash.es

Torres-Quevedo Program. http://web.micinn.es/ content.asp?dir=03_Plan_IDI/00-LIAs/00@LIARRHH/02-Contratacion/03@TQuevedo

Spanish Network of Business Angels. http://www.esban.com

ScienceWath, Thomson Reuters, "COUNTRY PROFILES - 2009, Top 20 Countries in All fields; Science Indicators." December 2009. Available online at http://sciencewatch.com/dr/cou/2009/09decALL/

(Creative Commons images from fdcomite's via Flickr)

There are no comments yet.