

# UK-PACIFIC ALLIANCE SEMINAR

## Strengthening the innovation ecosystems of the Pacific Alliance: putting higher education at the heart of successful innovation policy and practice

### BACKGROUND

The Pacific Alliance (PA) was created in 2011 to further free trade and strengthen economic integration among four Latin American countries bordering the Pacific Ocean: Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

The Pacific Alliance does not have a technical secretariat; instead Working Groups (WGs) covering more than 25 different topics, including innovation and education, have been established. These WGs meet on a regular basis to discuss issues that interest all four countries.

The presidency of the Pacific Alliance rotates; currently the Chilean government holds the presidency.

Although it only has four member states, the Pacific Alliance has over 40 observers, including the United Kingdom, which has prioritized the areas of innovation, education and competition for its engagement with the PA.

As major producers of high level knowledge and human capital, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are critical players in building strong innovation ecosystems. Higher education reform, how to promote linkages between scientific research carried out by HEIs and industry, and how to measure the return on investment in scientific research in terms of societal impact are topics of particular interest for all four PA countries.

The UK through its research and higher education institutions has an excellent track record of research and innovation. It is the world's third largest producer of research and ranks highly on indicators of quality. Its research system is highly efficient - with 0.9% of the world's population, 3.2% of global R&D spend, and 4.1% of researchers, the UK accounts for 9.5% of article downloads, 11.6% of citation and 15.9% of the world's most highly cited articles. Moreover, The UK ranks second in the Global Innovation Index.<sup>1</sup> The UK is also ranked one of the best countries in the world for university-business links with a national infrastructure which aims to create and exploit knowledge and to enable and support innovation. This includes:

- 130+ universities, 60+ public sector research establishments, 7 thematic Research Councils, and 4 Higher Education Funding Councils involved in creating knowledge;
- 100+ science and innovation parks, 50+ university technology transfer offices, and 9 Catapult Centres involved in exploiting knowledge;
- 4 national academies, 1 national intellectual property office, and 1 national standards body involved in enabling innovation;

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/>

- 1 national innovation agency (Innovate UK<sup>2</sup>) and its Knowledge Transfer Network with over 70,000 members involved in supporting Innovation; and
- A range of think tanks and organizations working with government, industry and higher education.

The UK has already begun to share some of this expertise with PA member countries. For example, through the Newton-Picarte and Prosperity Funds, Satellite Applications and Future Cities Catapults have engaged with Chile. Additionally, the Chilean Corporation to Promote Production (CORFO in Spanish) has introduced innovation vouchers, based on the UK model.

In both Mexico and Peru, the UK (in many cases in partnership with the British Council) has supported bilateral industry-academia consortia to implement R&D projects tackling key development challenges in health, food and environmental security, aquiculture, clean energy and sustainability, smart cities, geohazards, natural disaster prevention, and nanomaterials, among other areas. Also, the Royal Academy of Engineering has trained two cohorts of Mexican researchers in commercialisation of science through its Leaders in Innovation Fellowships.

Additionally, through the Newton Fund, Innovate UK commissioned a PA-wide innovation policy scoping study and an innovation policy capacity building programme - the Global Innovation Policy Accelerator (GIPA) - for the next generation of PA policymakers<sup>3</sup>. Beginning in July 2016, this is being delivered by the UK's Nesta in collaboration with UK and PA partners. Policy teams taking part in the programme are working on four country-specific projects:

- Ensuring curricula in technical colleges include more skills, tools and techniques around innovation and creativity (Chile);
- Developing more effective models for accelerating innovation through technology transfer between universities and business (Colombia);
- Creating a “one stop shop” for government support for innovation in industry (Mexico); and
- Creating a new national framework for the evaluation of completed university-industry collaborative projects (Peru).

Another related area of particular interest for the PA countries is how national frameworks for the funding and assessment of research help to drive scientific research and innovation. The UK has a dual public funding system through its Research Councils that provide competitive funding for specific projects and programmes and through the higher education funding councils that provide block grant funding on the basis of assessed quality. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) was the first exercise to assess the impact of research outside of academia. In this sense, the UK's experience can have a key role in helping to structure new frameworks for the more than 8,000 universities present in the Pacific Alliance countries to foster innovation and scientific research, with demonstrated societal impact.

The proposal outlined below builds on learning from these programmes and activities:

---

<sup>2</sup> Innovate UK has a series of programmes and models to support linkages between science and industry, including the Catapults Network and innovation vouchers.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/global-innovation-policy-accelerator>

## Proposal

The UK proposal to the Innovation Working Group of the Pacific Alliance is to develop a two-day seminar focused on strengthening the PA members' knowledge-based economies and building sustainable innovation ecosystems by sharing good practices in fostering linkages between academia and industry and promoting greater research and innovation through the application of enabling frameworks for their higher education institutions. The seminar will promote knowledge exchange among the four PA countries and the UK.

An important aspect of the conference is that it will include and build on learning from the Global Innovation Policy Accelerator (GIPA) programme. Policy working groups from each of the four PA countries will play an important role in working with conference delegates to develop strong links between policy development and institutional practice with the aim of driving greater innovation.

The target audience for this seminar includes policymakers from the UK and PA countries involved in promoting linkages between industry and HEIs, including through the application of enabling frameworks for HEIs in the areas of research and innovation, and practitioners from the HEIs themselves, as well as representatives from businesses that have developed robust partnerships with HEIs.

In order to deliver the activity, the Innovation Working Group will propose participants from each PA country to the FCO and the British Council, which will then compile the final list of participants and extend the invitations

We would initially suggest inviting representatives from the Ministries of the Economy and Education, National Accreditation Bodies, Councils of Rectors of HEIs, and National Funding Agencies for Science and Innovation, in addition to practitioners from a range of HEIs. Representatives from the private sector, who can share their experience of including university-led innovation processes into their businesses, will also be included in the agenda.

UK expertise would be drawn from government and national policy bodies (e.g., the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Innovate UK), as well as from representatives of UK industry and HEIs.

The seminar will take place over two days from March 22-23, 2017 in Valparaiso, Chile with approximately 150 participants.

By the end of the seminar, it is expected that:

- Policymakers can draw on best practices from the UK and from other Pacific Alliance countries in terms of strengthening the role of HEIs in the innovation ecosystems of their countries
- Policy makers and practitioners will have explored ways in which policy development and practice can be better integrated to enable more rapid innovation
- At an institutional strategy level, a network of practitioners from all four PA countries and the UK will be established to continue to share experiences and collaborate on areas that will enhance and facilitate HEIs' contribution to national, regional and international innovation ecosystems. Areas could, for example, include HE-industry links, capacity building of academics and researchers, and the inclusion of entrepreneurial skills in postgraduate training.
- A proposal for further UK-PA collaboration in this area will be developed.

Day 1 (Open Day)	
Opening Ceremony	
Keynote Speaker on the key role of HEIs in building innovation ecosystems and strengthening knowledge economies	
Sessions on how national framework conditions, together with targeted policies, programmes and instruments, can facilitate HEI-led innovation and academy-industry links. Examples from the UK and PA countries will be explored and analysed.	
Day 2 (Closed Day)	
Structured working groups for policymakers	Structured working groups for practitioners
Closing Ceremony	