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BOOST NEWSLETTER

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R&I Commercialization Gap

Eastern Europe: strong basic research, weak commercialization; Romania and Bulgaria, Emerging Innovators; 1.3% R&D in Widening countries vs EU 2.2%, low patents/startups.

Brain Drain and Low Attractiveness

Weak commercialization demotivates researchers: 61% dissatisfied in Widening countries; knowledge transfer 2.4 agreements per 100,000 people in Widening countries vs EU 6.9; 32% universities host technology transfer offices.

Sustainability challenges

Weak commercialization in R&I undermines environmental and financial sustainability. Despite R&D spending up to 1.6% of GDP, Slovakia and Hungary lag in green innovation. OECD data: Slovakia files 0.02 green patents per 100,000 people, versus EU average 0.17.

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R&I Commercialization Gap

Eastern Europe excels in research but commercialization lags. Many Member States in the region remain “Emerging Innovators,” with capable science but modest business outcomes. EU R&D intensity reached 2.26% of GDP in 2023, but several Widening Countries invest below 1%, and the gap shows up in weak intellectual assets and limited private-sector R&D. This is the commercialization gap: promising ideas stall before patents, spin-outs, and scale.

BOOST tackles that gap by investing in people and pathways. The project trains 60 researchers in business skills, pairs them with non-academic hosts through structured mobility and Personal Career Development Plans, and supports exploitation planning so results reach users and markets. An open Learning Platform and direct academia-industry collaboration further shift outputs toward adoption and impact.

In brief

- East Europe excels in research, commercialization lags; many are “Emerging Innovators”
- Widening countries spend under 1% R&D vs EU 2.2%
- BOOST trains 60 researchers through 12-month placements and career plans

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Brain Drain and Low Attractiveness

Talent is leaking from many Widening Countries. Universities flag demographic decline and outward migration as major threats, with Central and Eastern Europe especially exposed. Romania's researcher base even shrank over the last decade, an outlier in the EU. Low R&D intensity reinforces the pull factors abroad: in 2023 Romania spent 0.52% of GDP on R&D and Bulgaria 0.79%, both at the bottom of the EU. Career prospects are further weakened by poor routes from lab to market. On the European Innovation Scoreboard, Romania scores 6.9% of the EU average on "Linkages," and public-private co-publications remain far below EU norms, signalling weak university–industry collaboration.

Reversing brain drain means improving pay, tenure tracks and research conditions, while building credible commercialization paths: professional technology transfer offices, proof-of-concept funding, IP support and clear incentives for industry collaboration. Otherwise, early-career researchers will keep leaving and local innovation capacity will thin.

In brief

- Demographic decline and outward mobility strain Widening systems
- Underinvestment persists reinforcing talent outflows
- Weak university-industry links hinder careers

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Sustainability challenges

Sustainability falters when research stalls at the lab door. The commercialization gap slows both environmental gains and financial returns, especially in parts of Central and Eastern Europe. In 2023 the EU's R&D intensity was 2.2% of GDP, and several Member States still spend below 1%, thinning the pipeline of investable green solutions.
Outputs mirror inputs. On the European Innovation Scoreboard, a group of countries classified as Emerging Innovators perform below the EU average, and the framework explicitly measures environmental sustainability alongside other impact dimensions.

The policy signal is clear. Eco-innovation metrics span not only intellectual assets like eco-patents but also adoption and resource efficiency, so weak links to market undermine climate targets and public budgets alike.
Strengthening proof-of-concept funding, technology transfer, and demand-side tools such as innovation-friendly green procurement can turn solid science into measurable emissions cuts and resilient revenues.

In brief

- Underinvestment slows commercialization; EU R&D intensity at 2.3% (2023).
- Emerging Innovators perform below EU average; eco-innovation tracks sustainability outcomes.
- Proof-of-concept, tech transfer, green procurement accelerate adoption and impact.

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