



EPO study confirms public research organisations' ability to innovate – VTT the most active Finnish research organisation

A study, published by the Observatory on Patents and Technology of the European Patent Office (EPO) with Fraunhofer ISI, highlights the role of Europe's public research organisations (PROs) in advancing innovation. Covering 39 member states, the report shows that between 2001 and 2020, PROs contributed to nearly 63,000 European patent applications.

“Public research is one of Europe's greatest strengths. This study highlights the vital role of our public research organisations and research hospitals, whose inventions boost Europe's competitiveness,” said EPO President António Campinos. “But to unlock their full potential, we must step up collaboration and accelerate the transfer of research into real-world technologies.”

The study confirms the ability of Finnish public research organisations to innovate

In Finland, the most active player has been VTT, which accounts for the majority of European patent applications produced by the Finnish public research. In 2001–2020, VTT was involved in 740 patent applications filed with the EPO.

In an international comparison, VTT ranked as the 14th most active public research organisation in Europe and is the only Nordic actor in the top fifteen. Another active Finnish actor has been the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), with 30 patent applications.

Research-linked startups punch above their weight

The study also highlights the commercial impact of research-linked startups. More than 2,800 European startups have patent applications involving inventors from PROs or research hospitals. These account for over 27% of all startups in Europe with patent applications at the EPO. Yet, despite making up only a quarter of the total, they secured about half of all startup funding and nearly a third of deals and exits, underlining their key role in bringing research to market.

There are 89 startups operating in Finland whose patent applications are connected to European research organisations or hospitals.

Hospitals as hubs of research and medical innovation

European research hospitals contributed to over 17,400 European patent applications during the same period. Their ratio of direct-to-indirect applications more than tripled, showing a gradual move toward owning patents while continuing to play a key role in collaborative clinical innovation and translating research into patient-focused technologies.

[Full report is available on the EPO website.](#)

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About the EPO

With 6,300 staff members, the [European Patent Office \(EPO\)](#) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 46 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.