

THE UNIVERSITY OF BONN TRANSFER STRATEGY

Excellence in research.
Impact through transfer.



1. VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION



By 2035, the University of Bonn will be a nationally and internationally recognized hub of excellence for knowledge and technology transfer. To achieve this goal, the university is proactively shaping its environment and taking dynamic steps to translate research findings more effectively into social, economic, and political processes.

OUR MISSION



We see ourselves as a hub through which the academic community interacts with civil society, private enterprises, politics, institutions and research organizations. Our engagement with these key stakeholders in transfer activities forms a foundation for sustainable innovation and social progress.

These activities focus on supporting startups and promoting entrepreneurship, particularly by providing higher education and training to prospective innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Additionally, we seek to expand the scope of the entrepreneurial ecosystem both within the academic milieu and in the external environment.



OUR STRATEGIC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Strengthening transfer as part of university culture:** As an integral, core task, transfer is embedded in our research and teaching mission. We proactively create a wide range of opportunities for participation and implementation and develop targeted support structures. We factor transfer potential into research project considerations from the start and give high-profile recognition to outstanding transfer results.
- Promoting entrepreneurship:** We educate students to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset early on in both a startup context and existing organizational contexts. We teach using real-world challenges to promote Future Skills such as self-efficacy, initiative and the ability to productively cope with uncertainty. We integrate entrepreneurship into our teaching as a recognized and visible contribution to innovation and sustainable transformation.
- Transferring research into applications:** We take focused action to ensure that research findings are transformed into real-world applications. We conduct proof-of-concept projects, technical validations, and feasibility studies to bridge the gap between basic research findings and socio-economic benefit. Research translation projects receive structured support at an early stage. Administrative structures are continuously expanded to accelerate knowledge and technology transfer.
- Enabling entrepreneurship and developing startup potential:** We empower students and researchers to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. The university offers targeted training and support programs for knowledge and technology-based startups. We create an inspiring environment in which ideas can emerge, entrepreneurial initiatives can be tested, and social impact can unfold.
- Establishing innovation ecosystems in the region and network internationally:** The University of Bonn is responsible for promoting innovation and growing startup ecosystems in the region. We draw upon reliable networks to actively shape and strengthen these ecosystems. At the same time, we promote global dialogue and impact by connecting local transfer actors with international partners, markets, and innovators.
- Research on transfer:** We conduct research both within and across various dimensions of transfer – from entrepreneurship, innovation management, and science communication to policy consulting, sustainability, and ethical conduct in dealing with new technologies. The insights gained are directly incorporated into practical implementation and strategic development efforts.

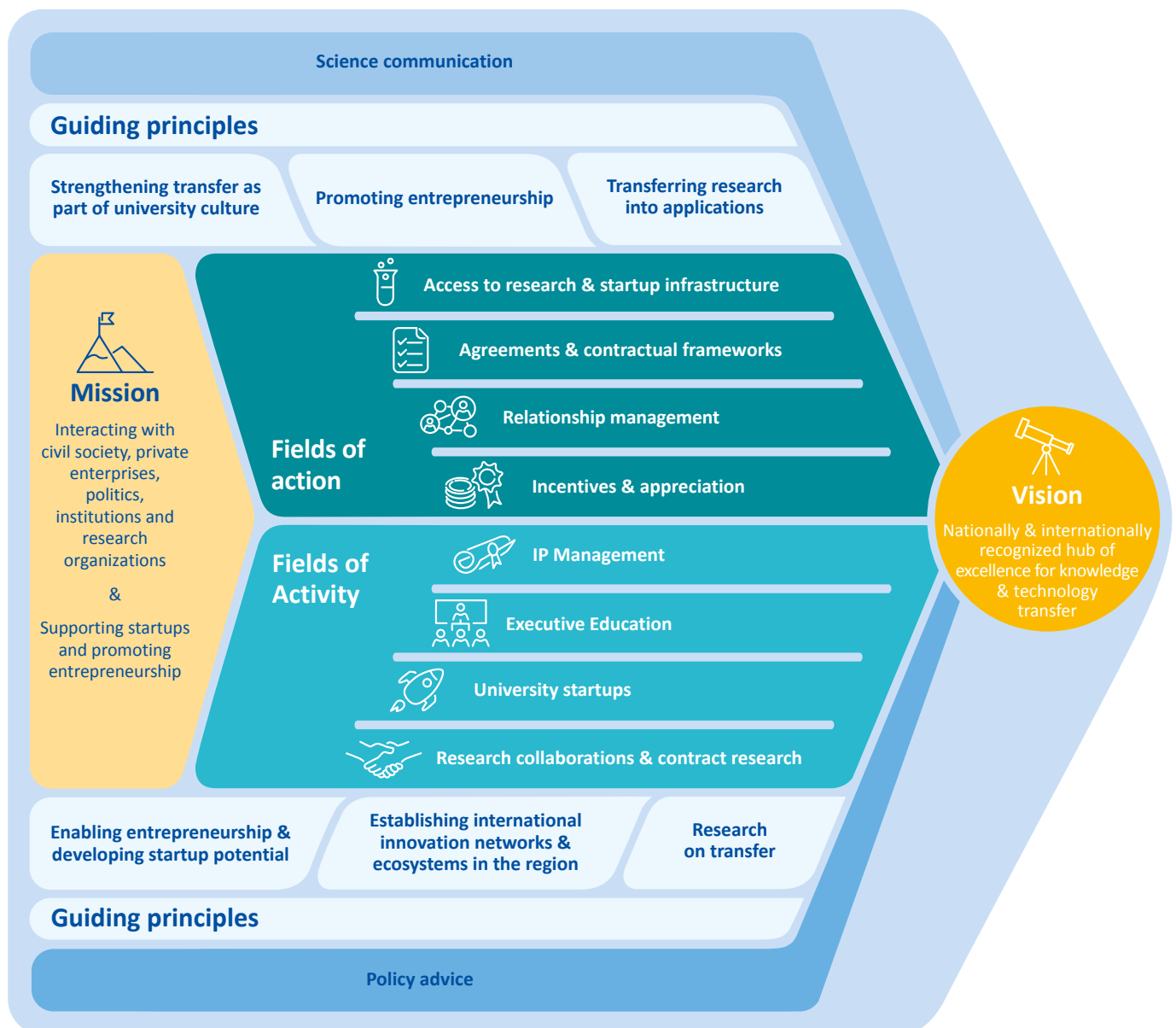
2. STRUCTURE AND ELEMENTS OF THE TRANSFER STRATEGY

The University of Bonn's transfer strategy aims to permanently embed and cultivate a vibrant transfer culture among students, staff, and researchers. In line with the "WE CREATE IMPACT" principle of the Excellence Strategy, the university provides comprehensive support for innovators and entrepreneurs. This support is part of a program that has been systematically expanded along the entire innovation chain in recent years¹. An important element of this program is the Transfer

Center enaCom, which was established as a central point of contact for startup projects and the transfer of knowledge and technology. Additionally, the Institute for Entrepreneurship, founded in 2022 and based at the Faculty of Agricultural, Nutritional, and Engineering Sciences, is gradually opening up its courses to students from all faculties. The existing funding structures and networks already form a solid foundation for further strengthening transfer within and outside academia.

¹ https://www.uni-bonn.de/en/research-and-teaching/research-profile/excellence-strategy/excellence-strategy?set_language=en

OVERVIEW



The **core of the strategy** consists of activities that effectively link theory with practice and connect research with the real world. These include:

- Tailored **startup support** as a driver for innovative spin-offs
- **Research collaborations and contract research** as catalysts for joint knowledge acquisition and the development of practical solutions
- Future-oriented **executive education** that qualifies specialists and managers for the challenges of a changing knowledge society.
- Further development of **intellectual property (IP) management**

These **four fields of activity** exemplify the strategic ambition of the University of Bonn to actively translate scientific findings into social impact. This creates a powerful space for innovation, where ideas take shape and social change can be instigated.

In order to actively shape the knowledge and technology transfer of the future, the university is consistently expanding the necessary framework conditions in **four supporting fields of action**:

- Open access to **research and startup infrastructure**
- Innovation-promoting **contracts and terms & conditions**
- Targeted **incentive systems** for transfer agents
- Strategically aligned **relationship management**

The fields of activity generate positive interactions. For example, increased collaborative research may result in more startup ideas being generated, and executive education programs may initiate new partnerships. Transfer efforts are supported by scientific communication and policy advising activities.

Implementing this strategy will foster an environment conducive to innovation, characterized by an increasing number of startups, patents, and partnerships, thereby amplifying social impact. Active participation from all stakeholder groups involved in transfer is encouraged to further foster a transfer culture. At the same time, the university's visibility as an innovation leader and its contribution to regional socioeconomic development and international competitiveness will increase.

3. TRANSFER ACTIVITIES

3.1 RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS AND CONTRACT RESEARCH



Strategic cooperation – with private-sector partners in particular – facilitates aligning research more closely with specific needs, translating existing knowledge, and converting scientific findings into marketable innovations. The University of Bonn aims to promote the implementation of research results in the form of innovative solutions in the Bonn/Rhine-Sieg region and beyond, together with partners from industry and society. At the same time, practical, market-based considerations will be increasingly integrated into research and teaching to provide inspiration and stimulate ideas.

This objective is supported by concrete measures: Purposeful networking between business and science, as well as focused cooperation, accelerate the path to market readiness for new technologies. The university will therefore strategically expand its contract research activities and research collaborations while highlighting joint achievements. There are also plans for closer cooperation with large companies in the region and with selected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The goal is to cultivate long-term partnerships through framework agreements as well as intensifying cooperation on the content level. Professional partnership management will ensure that stakeholders within the university have access to the resulting collaborations. Close ties to the business world create new opportunities for experience. Founders benefit from the expertise of established companies, while students and young researchers gain early insights into current social and technological challenges, spurring ideas and motivating them to develop solutions of their own.

3.2 UNIVERSITY STARTUPS



University startups provide key business stimulus, especially in the fast-moving tech sector. Established enterprises are often hesitant to back new ventures, creating a gap which universities can fill by incubating startups, thereby accelerating innovation.

The basis for successful startup support is the early sensitization and qualification of all relevant agents. The University of Bonn is committed to sustainably anchoring entrepreneurialism as part of our institutional culture, across all stakeholder groups. Students, researchers and regular staff members are to be empowered to recognize startup potential and actively pursue opportunities accordingly.

This includes the following measures:

- Curricular and extracurricular activities teach fundamental skills in transfer and entrepreneurship.
- The Institute for Entrepreneurship is continuing to expand its teaching and integrating practice-oriented formats.
- The new role of “Entrepreneur in Residence” will bring the experience of successful entrepreneurs directly into the university.
- A train-the-trainer program qualifies teachers to integrate aspects of entrepreneurship into their courses.

The Transfer Center enaCom places a special focus on “Sciencepreneurship”. Ideas and experiences from research often form the basis for successful startups. Therefore, specific workshops are offered to encourage young researchers to effectively contributing their knowledge to startup projects. These courses are also integrated into doctoral programs (like the Bonn Graduate Schools and the Argelander Program). The aim is to put entrepreneurialism into a new light as a career option of equal attractiveness to traditional careers in academia and the private sector. The range of qualifications on offer in innovation management and entrepreneurship will be expanded for all academic career levels – including topics such as intrapreneurship and mentor training.

In addition, the Transfer Center enaCom develops specialized offerings in line with the university’s strategic focus areas: Artificial Intelligence, Life Sciences & Health, Sustainability, and Social Entrepreneurship. The programs take industry-specific characteristics and regulatory frameworks into account and are specifically tailored to different target groups – for example, through measures to promote female entrepreneurship in order to break down gender barriers and provide support to female founders.

The university leverages its international network to develop new innovation-promoting courses in cooperation with strategic partner universities and leading startup ecosystems, some of which are integrated into joint master’s programs². The internationalization of the start-up context is being systematically expanded.

3.3. IP MANAGEMENT



Patents are a primary instrument for technology transfer within the University of Bonn, strengthening protected commercial exploitation of research findings through licensing agreements and spin-offs.

The University of Bonn has explicit plans to significantly increase the number of invention disclosures, patent applications, and license agreements.

To this end, awareness-raising measures on the subject of intellectual property (IP) will be intensified and explicitly anchored within doctoral programs and teaching. The Patent Strategy will be revised to make it more startup-friendly – for example, through models such as IP4Shares or an accelerated fast-track procedure for spin-offs³.

At the same time, the transfer to established companies will be made more efficient in order to allow more traditional industries to benefit from the university’s innovation potential.

² The European University Alliance NeurotechEU <https://theneurotech.eu/> is a key example for the creation of innovative teaching formats in the field of neurotechnology.

³ https://www.uni-bonn.de/de/forschung-lehre/forschung-und-lehre-medien/transfer-center-enacom-medien/ubo_patentstrategie.pdf

3.4 EXECUTIVE EDUCATION



As a “mind-based” channel for transfer, executive education is a key element for effectively transferring research results into society and the economy. The University of Bonn executive education program will be research-based, application-oriented, and designed to address contemporary social challenges and labor market needs.

The aim is to develop strong personalities who take responsibility and promote the university’s values to the outside world. To this end, existing structures are to be further developed and new formats created. In addition to leveraging academic excellence and regional networks, it is essential to pro-actively address the transformational needs of our time, such as digitalization, sustainability, and climate protection.

This is done specifically by offering:

- Certificate courses for ECTS credits (micro-credentials)
- Study programs for working professionals with and without management experience
- Open-access courses and corporate in-house training seminars
- Participation in external continuing education programs

Executive education is specifically designed to provide specialists and managers with the knowledge they need to actively shape processes of transformation – whether in relation to digital business models, the circular economy, resilient companies or climate-neutral business practices.

As an added value, executives engage in direct exchange with university researchers. This creates personal contacts, new trust, and the basis for future cooperation.



4. TRANSFER-PROMOTING ACTIVITIES

4.1 ACCESS TO RESEARCH AND STARTUP INFRASTRUCTURE



The use of the University of Bonn's outstanding research infrastructures is of central importance beyond the academic community, especially for research-related startups and industry partners. Specialized equipment, laboratory facilities, and technologies are key factors for bringing innovations to market readiness.

The university's goal is to make these resources even more efficient, broader, and more accessible in the future – both for internal stakeholders and for startups, corporate partners, and external research institutions.



To this end, access to core facilities and technology platforms will be further opened up⁴. Pre-startup projects will also be given the opportunity to access high-performance computing (HPC) capacities – an important support in early development phases⁵. Together with the Transfer Center enaCom, the active use of these infrastructures will be promoted. The offerings will be expanded in a purposeful manner through the establishment of additional innovation spaces and collaborations with regional innovation hubs.

4.2 AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTUAL FRAMEWORKS



Efficient collaboration with external partners requires lean contract processes that are transparent and time-sensitive. The competitive pressures that both established firms and startups face make swift, unburdened access to scientific know-how and university resources a necessity. Accordingly, the University of Bonn is committed to significantly shortening the time between project ideation and operational project launch. For this purpose, internal processes will be further developed and communication regarding contract content will be intensified.

Standardized contracts are a key instrument defining the legal and financial framework for interactions, and are structured so as to uphold the interests of the University and its industry partners. Beyond that, framework agreements with major corporations are also pursued as a basis for long-term cooperation, accelerating operations.

⁴ Bonn Technology Campus, Core Facilities <https://btc.uni-bonn.de/core-facilities/>, Computer Vision Incubator www.uni-bonn.de/vci

⁵ High Performance Computing <https://www.hpc.uni-bonn.de/en>

Particular focus is being placed on regulations governing the handling of intellectual property (IP) – both for legal protection and to enable the effective transfer of innovative ideas.

4.3 INCENTIVES AND APPRECIATION



A vibrant transfer culture is created not only through structures, but also through recognition, visibility, and targeted incentives. The concept of transfer should be anchored in the university's mission and perceived as equal in importance to research and teaching.

The University of Bonn is committed to attracting even more transfer-oriented researchers and cultivating a new generation of professionals who directly combine scientific excellence with social impact.

This commitment involves:

- Transfer as an evaluation criterion for professorial appointments
- Monetary incentives and beneficial time-management measures (startup semesters, release from other commitments, etc.)
- Performance-based compensation for successful transfer activities (e.g. in analogy to ERC PoC grants).

Researchers and employees who are actively involved in technology transfer should receive financial recognition. This recognition applies not only to individuals, but also to the equipment available to their working groups.

Another key element is earlier financial incentives in the patent application process. Until now, inventors have only been remunerated in the context of later commercialization. In the future, patent specifications will also be awarded upfront in order to bring innovations directly to the application stage.

The university will furthermore

- allow temporary leave for startup projects
- award transfer and patent prizes
- and communicate these publicly as part of a central Innovation Day.

4.4 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT



Sustainable transfer is based on viable relationships that are often independent of specific projects. Establishing and maintaining networks with non-scientific stakeholders is therefore a strategic goal.

The University of Bonn intends to systematically deepen its diverse collaborations with politics, business, civil society and alumni. The goal is to identify practical issues at an early stage and jointly

develop new formats – for example, in the areas of patent exploitation, practical teaching, endowed professorships, or executive education.

The implementation steps to be taken include:

- Interactive formats such as matching events and transfer workshops
- Exclusive alumni networking events
- Cooperation with regional industry clusters.

In addition, the university will enter into new alliances in order to play an active role in shaping regional transformation processes through technological and social innovations.

One strategic component is the Future Transfer Alliance – an inter-university platform for strengthening transfer in the Bonn/Rhine-Sieg region. It bundles activities around entrepreneurship and transfer, creates spatial and thematic synergies while specifically promoting startup activities. Cooperation with international partner institutions and leading global startup support initiatives will further reinforce this effect.



5. SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

The University of Bonn actively supports its scientists in communicating research findings to the public in a way that is understandable, accessible and at the same time sophisticated. The aim in this is to promote dialogue between science and society in an innovative, multifaceted, and equal manner.

To this end, the university is continuously developing new formats for science communication, both centrally coordinated as well as decentrally based on outstanding individual projects. These formats range from interactive presentations and escape rooms to musicals, modern exhibitions, and participatory dialogue formats.

Particular emphasis is placed on creative and low-threshold approaches that reach broad target groups and encourage active engagement with science. In doing so, the university sees itself not only as a mediator of content, but also as a co-creator of open science dialogues.

At the same time, research on science communication is being specifically strengthened. The University of Bonn is investigating the mechanisms, methods, and potential of dialogical science formats and incorporating these findings into the further development of its communication strategies.

The University of Bonn museums and special exhibitions, which bring research-based topics to life in a visual and interactive way, serve as a central showcase for society. These offerings contribute significantly to the university's external image.

The university uses its inner-city locations to create visible spaces for science. The aim is to design innovative and creative meeting places where urban society and the university can interact in new ways. A separate sub-strategy is being developed for science communication.

6. POLICY ADVICE

The University of Bonn sees itself as a politically neutral institution and a place for critical reflection, open debate and lived diversity.

It actively promotes academic freedom and freedom of expression, thereby contributing to democratic culture. The university has a long tradition of political consulting, which has grown historically through its role in the context of the former federal capital. Building on this special location, it is now specifically strengthening its expertise in political knowledge transfer.

The intent is to provide scientifically grounded contributions to political decision-making processes – responsibly and in a nuanced manner, concentrating on practical applications. A particular focus is placed on promoting young academics in the field of policy advice. Offerings are in place to specifically encourage and enable doctoral students as well as postdocs to get involved in political contexts.



This includes:

- Workshops are offered for preparation and qualification,
- Research findings are prepared and communicated for policy advice,
- Contributions are supported in various phases of political processes – from information and advice to critical reflection.

The focus is not only on imparting knowledge, but also on understanding social relevance, communicative effectiveness, and dealing with complex political decision-making processes.

In this way, the University of Bonn specifically strengthens the role of science in democratic negotiation processes – independently, analytically sound, and with social impact. A separate sub-strategy is being developed for policy advice.



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