Charles University founds subsidiary

By Jan Velinger

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Charles University (CU) has become the first university in the Czech Republic to found its own 100 percent-owned subsidiary, called CUIP (Charles University Innovations Prague), taking inspiration from a number of cutting-edge international institutions.

The aim of the firm will be to transfer research results into practical applications in the commercial sphere. Innovation, and the benefit of the broader public, are the point.
Hana Kosová, the director of the Centre of Knowledge and Technology Transfer, an antecedent to CUIP, explains how the new daughter company will work moving forward.

"I can comment from the perspective of the Centre of Knowledge and Technology Transfer where I have been a part of the team for the last five years or so. My understanding is that we had reached a limit to what our centre could do as an internal part of the university. That is the reason we began discussing other options and next steps we could take – and creating a subsidiary was one of them and, in the end, I think the correct step."

At CU, a lot of work goes into research and the idea is to go from results to eventual practical applications. The university’s Vice-Rector for Research Jan Konvalinka pointed out at the presentation of the new company that often it takes a year or a year-and-a-half to see successful research results, but much longer to see that transferred into the commercial sphere...

"Well we are a very broad university covering many different fields, from the Humanities and Social Sciences to Life Sciences and Medicine, Biotech, and some IT. However, we are not a technical university, so it can take a very long time, years or even dozens of years in biotech or pharma, to get results from the lab into commercial firms.

"It is important to point out that communicating with private firms revealed at the start that they were a little bit ‘afraid’ of us as a university body. We are, after all, a large and complex academic institution with quite lengthy administrative processes. So the subsidiary will serve as an intermediary between the university as a large academic ‘creature’ and will be able to talk to private industry representatives in a language they recognise and understand."

CU Rector Tomáš Zima made clear that each project assessed or entered into by CUIP and the university will be case-by-case. Percentage of involvement will depend on how many different players there are and so on.

"Most definitely. It will depend on the interest of private investors and risk assessment, depending on the field. There are fields that are low risk, like IT or perhaps AI, but biotech is much more unpredictable and there are more things that can wrong which are hard to foresee. So there is certainly no one-size fits all approach: everything has to be judged on its own merits, from case to case."

You can find the official press release [here](#).