

# Chapter 1

## Fostering Entrepreneurship at the Spanish University: Does Gender Matter?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this chapter we discuss the policies for fostering entrepreneurship at Spanish universities and how these policies may be related with the low participation of women in university spin-offs. Using our results from the first part of the EQUASPIN project<sup>1</sup>, we also discuss the effects of the gender division of labour on the creation of freelance work within the specific framework of knowledge-transfer companies. We also present some of our findings with regard to gender differences in both the creation of spin-offs and the role of the university system in the production and reproduction of gender inequalities.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Universities are strongly committed to fostering knowledge transfer activities and exploiting the results of research conducted on their premises. To aid this process in Spain, Spanish universities have created the OTRI (Offices for the Transfer of Research Results). These Offices play an important role in promoting the creation of enterprises linked to universities.

Since the participation of women in university entrepreneurship is low, it is important to review the relationship between the university system and the production and reproduction of gender inequalities. With this aim the *EQUASPIN project: women's participation in the labour market. The case of University spin-offs in Spain* was created with the participation of universities from four Spanish Autonomous Communities.

In this chapter we review the regulations of the OTRI that participate in EQUASPIN, describe their functions, and observe how they operate bearing in mind the principles of equal opportunities for women and men. We will also analyse the discourse of OTRI technical staff with special attention paid to how they deal with these issues, which we consider particularly important in the process by which enterprises linked to Universities (especially spin-offs) are created, maintained and sometimes dissolved. Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March, on the Effective Equality of Women and Men (hereinafter the LOIEMH) will serve as a guide on these issues. Although this Law has helped to make clear progress in the empowerment of women and their use of time, the end result has so far proved unsatisfactory.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1. The Enterprising University

Universities have taken advantage of their capacity for developing technology to become leaders in the creation of technology-based companies. The role of universities as knowledge incubators, realised in the creation of spin-offs, has been studied by authors such as Ussman and Postigo (2000) and Link and Scott (2005). Of course, entrepreneurship is not determined by these university activities alone but also by factors such as the impact of networks (Walter, Auter & Ritter, 2006).

The importance of the connection between society and the university and in particular the commitment to knowledge-based entrepreneurship have led to the invention of the term “entrepreneurial university” (Etzkowitz et al. 2000; Matkin, 1990). As well as becoming more involved in its economic environment and the commercialization of its research results, the entrepreneurial university welcomes the creation of companies in its laboratories and other facilities. In turn, this creates a new kind of university personnel and a new kind of researcher: the businessman/businesswoman-scientist.

This third function of universities (knowledge transfer), which has been added to the traditional functions of the university (teaching and research), is characterised by a stronger relationship between universities and the business world. Shane (2002) describes the following four main dimensions in the collaboration between companies and universities: 1) contracts, 2) consulting, 3) licenses and technology patents, and 4) the joint exploitation of commercial opportunities, i.e. the so-called “spin-offs”. On the EQUASPIN project we have concentrated on the fourth of these technology-transfer dimensions:

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