



ASTP
A World of
Knowledge
Transfer

**National
Associations
Advisory
Committee**

Strengthening the Knowledge and Technology Transfer Profession

recognition, competences and career pathways

Data Report from ASTP National Associations Advisory
Committee (NAAC) Working Group on Knowledge and Technology
Transfer Profession

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About NAAC

The National Associations Advisory Committee (NAAC) is one of ASTP's governing bodies, bringing together 36 National Associations from 28 countries. It serves as a vital link between European initiatives, regional Knowledge Transfer Offices (KTOs), and local innovation ecosystems.

By fostering collaboration across Europe, NAAC strengthens the European innovation system through knowledge exchange and synergy-building among national and regional stakeholders. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of knowledge transfer and innovation by:

- **EU representation** – Advocating for knowledge transfer at the European level
- **Knowledge exchange** – Facilitating staff exchanges and case study sharing
- **Regional capacity building** – Supporting expertise development in knowledge transfer
- **European surveys and impact measurement** – Enhancing data-driven decision-making
- **Professional development** – Offering training and capacity-building programs

Through these initiatives, NAAC enhances the efficiency and impact of knowledge transfer across Europe.

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Executive summary

The Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) profession is increasingly recognised as a key component of research and innovation systems, although its development remains characterised by significant heterogeneity across countries. The report aims to advocate the KT/TT profession in terms of competency frameworks, career pathways, professional certifications, training opportunities, and institutional support needed for its recognition.

To this end, the National Association Advisory Committee (NAAC) conducted a survey among its member National Associations to assess the current landscape of the KT/TT profession across different countries. The survey results show that, while KT/TT functions are widely implemented, there is no consistent standardisation of job titles or professional profiles. Roles related to technology transfer and innovation management are the most commonly identified, alongside a wide range of alternative or context-specific profiles reflecting different national environments.

Recognition of the KT/TT profession occurs at multiple levels, with a stronger consolidation at the institutional level, particularly within universities and research organisations. Formal recognition at national level through legislation or policy frameworks is emerging, but remains uneven across countries. KT/TT professionals are expected to perform a broad spectrum of activities, covering the entire knowledge and technology transfer process, from intellectual property management and market assessment to industry collaboration, commercialisation, and impact reporting. This confirms the multidisciplinary and complex nature of the profession, in alignment with the global evolution of the “Technology Transfer” concept towards “Knowledge Valorisation” bringing a more holistic and integrated approach to all KT/TT activities and creating a synergistic effect for improved performance.

Professional development is primarily supported through short courses and continuous professional development programmes, while more formal academic pathways remain less widespread. Training is delivered by a diverse ecosystem of actors, including international organisations, national associations, universities, and private providers. The cost of training is predominantly covered by employers, with additional support from public funding sources, highlighting the central role of institutions in building KT/TT capacity.

Overall, the KT/TT profession is undergoing a process of transformation. The findings do not point to the need for a single uniform professional model. Instead, they highlight the value of shared competency references, clearer and more sustainable career pathways, continuous and adaptable training, stronger institutional recognition and improved mobility across sectors. These elements should remain sufficiently flexible to respond to different national policies, organisational structures and innovation ecosystems. Strengthening these aspects could further enhance the effectiveness and impact of KT/TT activities at both national and international levels. KT/TT professionals are strategic enablers of innovation ecosystems, requiring recognised professional profiles, career pathways, and continuous development opportunities and supportive communities of practice.

Introduction

Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) profession plays a crucial role in transforming research results, capabilities, know-how into societal and economic value. As the innovation systems continue to evolve, the role of KT/TT professionals has become increasingly strategic in facilitating collaboration between academia, public research organisation (PRO), industry, and other stakeholders. Knowledge Valorisation represents a paradigm shift from managing intellectual property assets to fostering the wider creation, transfer and uptake of knowledge for societal benefit¹.

In this context, the National Association Advisory Committee (NAAC) conducted a survey among its member National Associations to assess the current status of the KT/TT profession across different countries. Invited guest National Associations also answered to the NAAC survey providing a broader view of the Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) profession.

The findings highlight a growing recognition of the KT/TT professional role, although significant differences remain across national contexts in terms of professional definitions, career pathways, training opportunities, and institutional support. While some countries have established structured professional frameworks and certification systems, others are in earlier stages of formal recognition.

Based on the survey results, this report identifies key trends, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening the KT/TT profession at the international level. It also outlines a set of recommendations aimed at supporting greater professionalisation, improving skills development and training, and fostering stronger institutional recognition of KT/TT professionals within research and innovation systems.

By providing a comparative overview of current practices and highlighting areas for further development, this report provides an overview of how the profession is currently understood, recognised, and supported within national innovation ecosystems. It further puts forward key considerations for future policy development and strategic actions aimed at strengthening and advancing the professionalisation of the KT/TT field.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H2415>

Results on National Association Surveys

In an effort to identify best practices for supporting the Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) profession, NAAC conducted a survey among its members, namely the National Associations (NAs), to assess the landscape across countries. A total of twenty-eight National Associations (n=28) members of NAAC responded to the survey. This report provides an overview and analysis of the collected data focused on the current state of the recognition of the KT/TT profession.

Recognition of the KT/TT Profession

The initial survey question explored whether a formal career recognition or dedicated professional position for Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) exists at the national level.

As shown in Figure 1, 32% of respondents indicated that the role of KT/TT professional is formally recognised at the national level. This suggests that in a number of countries, structured career pathways and official recognition frameworks for Knowledge Transfer Officers (KTOs) are already in place. However, the largest share of responses (39%) reported only partial recognition, typically at the institutional or sectoral level. This indicates that, while the importance of KT/TT activities is acknowledged, formalisation remains fragmented and often dependent on individual organisations rather than supported by a coherent national framework. Finally, 29% of respondents stated that no formal recognition currently exists. This highlights a significant gap in the professionalisation of KT/TT roles in a considerable proportion of countries.

TTO Flanders, Belgium (Flemish region)

The Flemish IOF Decree defines the profession of a 'valorisation professional'.

Overall, the data suggest that, although progress has been made, KT/TT is consolidating as a professional domain, yet its definition and institutionalisation remain uneven across countries. The absence of coherent national frameworks may limit standardisation, professionalisation, and long-term sustainability. However, such heterogeneity may also signal adaptive, context-specific trajectories shaped by diverse policy, legal, and innovation system conditions. Accordingly, a degree of variability should not be viewed solely as a constraint, but as an inherent feature of a field whose development is contingent on local demand and strategic relevance across territories.

Réseau CURIE, France

The French Ministry of Research uses a "Job Reference Guide for Research and Higher Education", which includes two job descriptions related to research valorisation: "Head of Partnerships and Research Valorisation" and "Partnerships and Research Valorisation Officer." The Ministry of Health also has a job description of a "Research Valorisation Officer" (Health Job Directory).

The more general "Public Service Job Directory" also includes this job description for "Partnerships and Research Valorisation Officer." However, these descriptions are somewhat outdated given the evolving nature of technology transfer roles.

In 2025, with the support of the Ministry of Research, Réseau C.U.R.I.E. published a new "Reference Guide for Research Valorisation Professions". This new document should allow to update the Public Service Job Directory and help to recognise the different roles in the TT structures (classified in 6 jobs families in the document: "Awareness and Detection", "Protection and Contract Negotiation", "Project engineering", "Technology Transfer", "Business Development" and "Entrepreneurship Support".

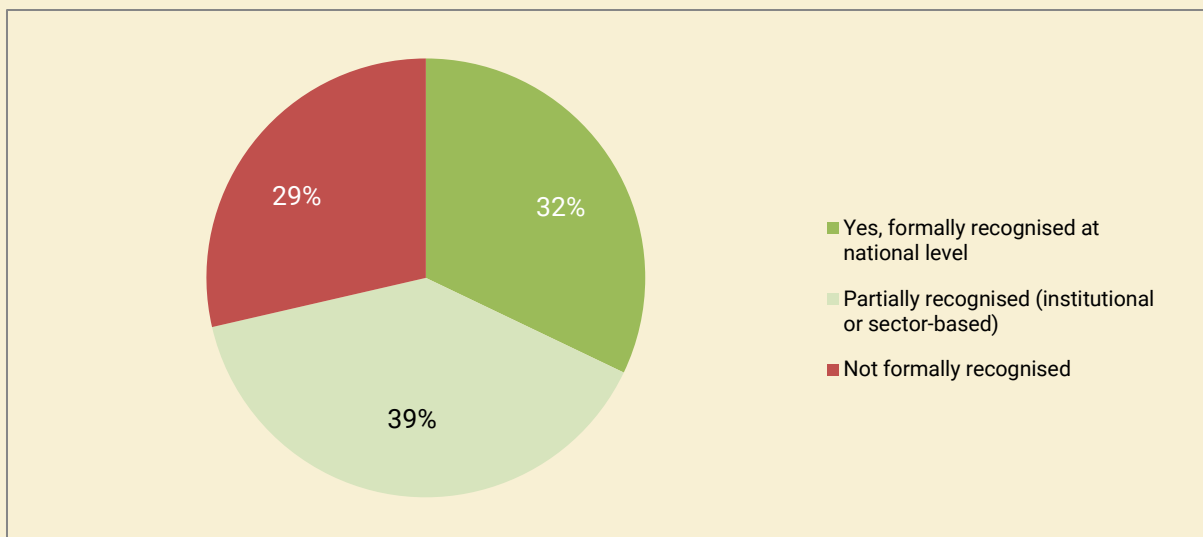


Figure 1: Recognition of the KT/TT profession. Among all the respondents (n= 28), the 32% of them indicated that the role of KT/TT professional is formally recognised at the national level, the majority (39%) reported only a partial recognition, typically at the institutional or sectoral level and the minority (29%) stated that no formal recognition currently exists.

PerfeTTO, Italy

The recognition of KT/TT profession varies depending on the Ministry overseeing the different Public Research Organisations (PROs). In the case of research hospitals (IRCCS), which fall under the Ministry of Health, the role of Technology Transfer Officer has been formally recognised in public IRCCS through a national law adopted in 2019. This framework defines a structured career path, including key performance indicators (KPIs) for evaluation and career progression. The universities, governed by the Ministry of University and Research, do not benefit from a formal national legal framework towards professionalisation. However, a “model of soft skills for knowledge transfer managers” has been developed in close collaboration with the Scuola Nazionale dell’Amministrazione (SNA, National School of Administration).

The survey also investigated whether officially defined job titles or professional profiles related to KT/TT exist at the national level, allowing respondents to select multiple options.

As shown in Figure 2, among the responses, “Technology Transfer Officer” emerges as the most frequently identified profile (18 responses), suggesting that this role is relatively well-established and recognised across contexts. Similarly, “Innovation Manager”, “Research & Innovation Manager” and “Knowledge Transfer Officer” (11 responses each) are also commonly acknowledged, highlighting a broader framing of KT/TT related activities within innovation and research management functions. Notably, a significant number of respondents selected “other” (15 responses), pointing to the existence of diverse or context-specific roles that may incorporate KT/TT responsibilities such as “Innovation Promoter Manager”, “Innovation Advisor”, “Partnership and Research Valorisation Officer”, “Assistant in Partnership”, “Research Valorisation and International Cooperation”, “Research Project Support Officer”.

Finally, a small number of responses (4) indicated that no official profiles exist, suggesting that in some national contexts, KT/TT related roles may be informal or not institutionally recognised. This is a clear sign that the profession has many facets and the identities in different ecosystems reflect the emphasis on the specific responsibilities that are considered as the key functions of a KT/TT Office.

Overall, the data suggest that while certain roles, particularly Technology Transfer Officer, are widely recognised, the broader landscape of KT/TT related job titles might indicate specialisation and a more developed approach of the profession, with substantial variability across countries and institutions. This variability in job titles is consistent with the data presented in the previous section, which highlighted an uneven level of formal recognition of KT/TT roles across countries. On the other hand, the fact that many national associations have marked multiple titles suggest that a holistic approach to KT/TT is gradually being implemented across different KT/TT Units in different countries.

KEEN-NL, Netherlands

In the formal set of functions for universities 'employee on knowledge valorisation' is a dedicated category (Categories adjoining the collective labour agreement documents, determined by federation of all universities in the Netherlands) This is a category and not a job-title, in practice there is a wide variety of categories where KT/TT professionals are placed (project manager, program manager, coordinator external relations) and a wide variety of job titles (innovation manager, business developer etc).

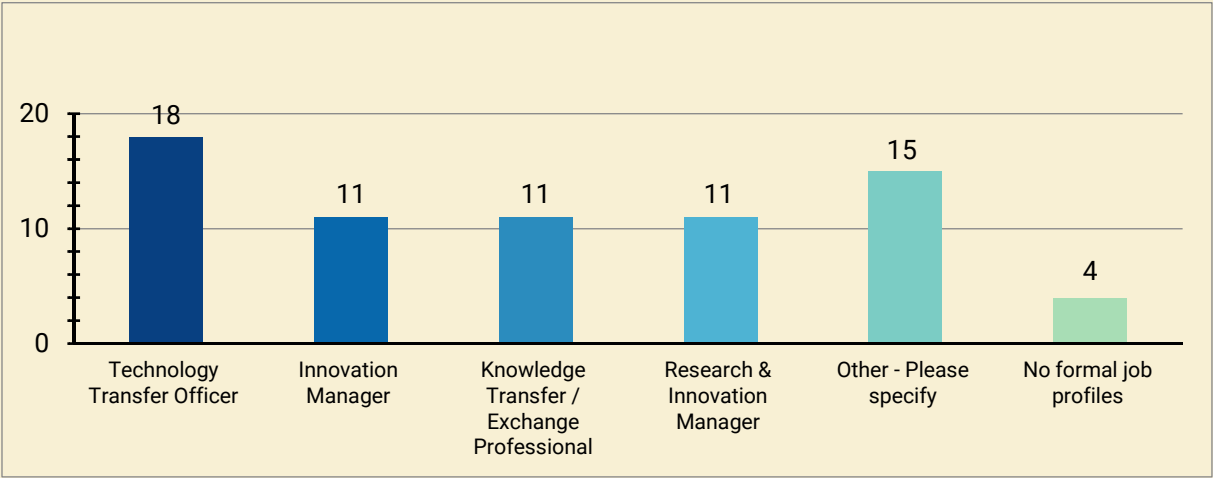


Figure 2: Officially defined job titles/profile related to KT/TT Professionals. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, “Technology Transfer Officer” emerged as the most frequently identified profile (18 responses), followed by “Innovation Manager”, “Research & Innovation Manager”, and “Knowledge Transfer/Exchange Professional” (11 responses each). A significant number of respondents selected “Other” (15 responses), pointing to the existence of diverse or context-specific roles that may incorporate KT/TT responsibilities. A small number of responses (4) indicated that no official title/profile exist.

PACTT, Poland

The KT/TT profession is not formally recognised in Poland. Although, the Science4Business project represents a national-scale initiative concerning the development of a competency model for technology transfer professionals for the purposes of implementing in Poland. Key features of the initiative are the development of a national competency model for KT/TT professionals (coverage of 16 competency areas) that will be included in the non-managerial staff. Implementation of training programs targeting approximately 400 professionals will also be included. There will be emphasis on remote and scalable definitions, reflecting geographical dispersion with a strong focus on adaptability, given the heterogeneity of participating organisations.

The survey further explored the levels at which the KT/TT profession is recognised, allowing respondents to select multiple options.

As shown in Figure 3, the most frequently reported level of recognition is within universities and research organisations (18 responses), confirming that KT/TT roles are primarily acknowledged and structured at the institutional level. This reinforces the central role of academic and research environments in shaping and formalising KT/TT activities. Recognition at the national level through legislation or policy (13 responses) and via ministries or public authority guidelines (16 responses) is also notable, indicating that in several contexts KT/TT is embedded within

broader strategic and regulatory frameworks. Funding agencies (11 responses) also contribute to the recognition of the KT/TT profession, likely by a local responsiveness to

RedOTC, Spain

Knowledge and Technology Transfer is not currently recognised as a distinct regulated profession at national level in Spain, and no common professional classification or career framework is consistently applied across universities and public research organisations. International professional credentials such as RTTP are held by a growing number of practitioners and are valued within the professional community, but they do not yet have formal recognition within national regulatory frameworks, public employment classifications or standard institutional career progression systems.

In 2026, the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities established a dedicated national working group on the recognition and valorisation of the function and talent of Knowledge Transfer professionals. The group brings together representatives from universities, public research organisations, technology centres, professional associations, accreditation bodies and private-sector organisations. Its work focuses on increasing the recognition and visibility of the profession, strengthening professional capabilities, attracting and retaining talent—particularly younger professionals—developing specialised training, supporting the specialisation of public-sector employees, exploring appropriate incentives and facilitating mobility and stronger links between public- and private-sector professionals. This initiative represents an important step towards developing a more coherent national approach while recognising the diversity of roles and institutional contexts within the Spanish Knowledge Transfer ecosystem.

In Spain, the recognition and professional development of knowledge transfer professionals should be interpreted within a decentralised governance framework. The Autonomous Communities hold significant responsibilities in science, technology and innovation policies, including the design and implementation of regional research and innovation strategies, funding instruments, and support structures for knowledge transfer. As a result, the level of institutional recognition, availability of professional development opportunities, certification schemes, and career pathways for knowledge transfer professionals may vary across regions. These territorial differences can influence both the visibility of the profession and the implementation of initiatives aimed at its professionalisation, generating a heterogeneous landscape that should be considered when analysing the current status and future evolution of the profession at the national level.

dedicated training programmes. Finally, a limited number of responses (3) indicate that the KT/TT profession is not recognised, suggesting that gaps in formal acknowledgment persist in some national contexts.

Overall, the findings underline that the recognition of the KT/TT profession remains uneven and distributed across multiple governance levels, reflecting significant variations in national legislative frameworks and local innovation ecosystems. Institutional recognition appears to be the most consolidated, whereas national and policy-level frameworks, although present in many countries, are not yet fully comprehensive or consistent.

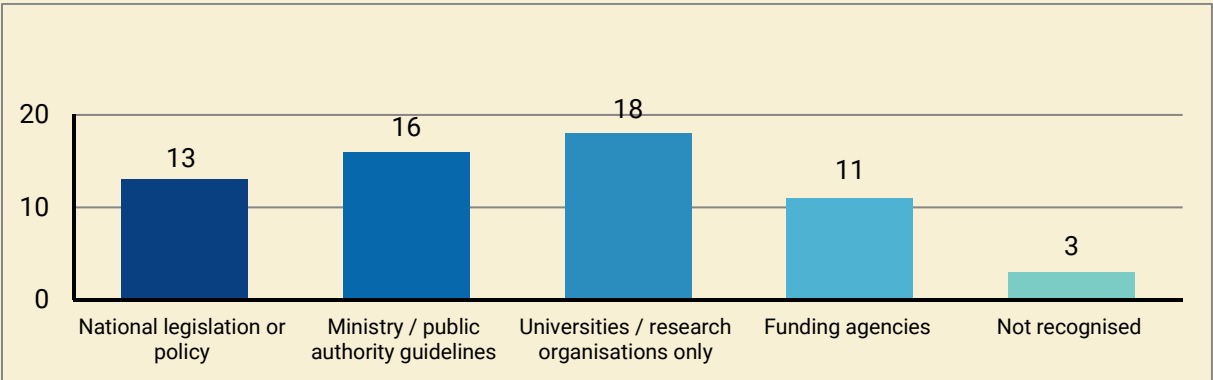


Figure 3: Levels of recognition of the profession. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the most frequently reported level of recognition is within institutions (universities and research organisations, 18 responses). Recognition at the national level through legislation or policy (13 responses) and via ministries or public authority guidelines (16 responses) is also notable. Funding agencies (11 responses) also contribute to the recognition of the KT/TT profession and a very limited number of responses (3) indicate that the KT/TT profession is not recognised at all.

USIMP, Türkiye

The process of defining the "Technology Transfer Specialist" occupation in Türkiye was initiated by USIMP in 2014, in line with the occupational recognition procedures of the National Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). The "National Occupational Standard for Technology Transfer Specialist (Level 6) (18UMS0677-6)" was approved by the VQA Board of Directors and subsequently published in the Official Gazette (www.usimp.org.tr/uploads/pdf/teknoloji-transfer-uzmani-04102017144532.pdf).

According to this official definition, a "Technology Transfer Specialist (Level 6) is a qualified person who develops technology and innovation-oriented collaborations between institutions / organisations and / or disciplines / sectors; enables researchers and entrepreneurs to benefit from support mechanisms; conducts commercialisation activities of the technology portfolio and provides support to entrepreneurs regarding incorporation and entrepreneurship. He/she carries out his/her work within the framework of occupational health and safety, environmental protection, organisational procedures, legal legislation and quality requirements; provides the establishment and update management of information systems related to technology transfer processes; carries out studies for the promotion and awareness of technology transfer services and professional development".

Subsequently, after a long journey, the National Competency Document for Technology Transfer Specialist (Level 6) was approved by the VQA, officially defining the skills and competencies for KT/TT profession in five main pillars:

- Ensuring the development and promotion of technology transfer services
- Ensuring the exploitation of R&D support mechanisms
- Developing technology and innovation-oriented collaborations
- Carrying out commercialisation activities for the technology portfolio
- Carrying out transactions related to incorporation and entrepreneurial activities.

Finally the expected learning outcomes of competency trainings, as well as measurement and evaluation procedures for candidates seeking to obtain the Vocational Competence Certificate for the profession were defined and approved in 2024.

Roles & competency framework

The survey investigated the core activities typically expected from KT/TT professionals across different countries, allowing respondents to select multiple options. As reported in Figure 4, the results highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the role.

Among the most frequently reported activities, "IP identification and protection" (28 responses) emerges as a central function, reinforcing the key role of KT/TT professionals in managing and safeguarding research outputs. Similarly, "licensing and contract negotiation", "spin-off/start-up creation and valuation," "researcher support and coaching" (27 responses each) are also highly recognised, highlighting the strong emphasis on collaboration with external stakeholders and the commercialisation of research results. Activities such as "market assessment" and industry engagement and partnerships" (26 responses) is also represented, indicating the importance of both evaluating the commercial potential of innovations and supporting researchers throughout the transfer process.

While slightly less selected, "funding and investment support" (20 responses) and "policy/impact reporting" (18 responses) remain significant activities, suggesting that KT/TT professionals are also expected to contribute to resource mobilisation and to the monitoring and communication of research impact.

Overall, the data confirm that the KT/TT profession encompasses a broad range of responsibilities, requiring a combination of scientific, legal, business, and interpersonal skills. This is again an indication of the evolving nature of the profession towards a holistic approach focusing on "Knowledge Valorisation" for increased societal impact.

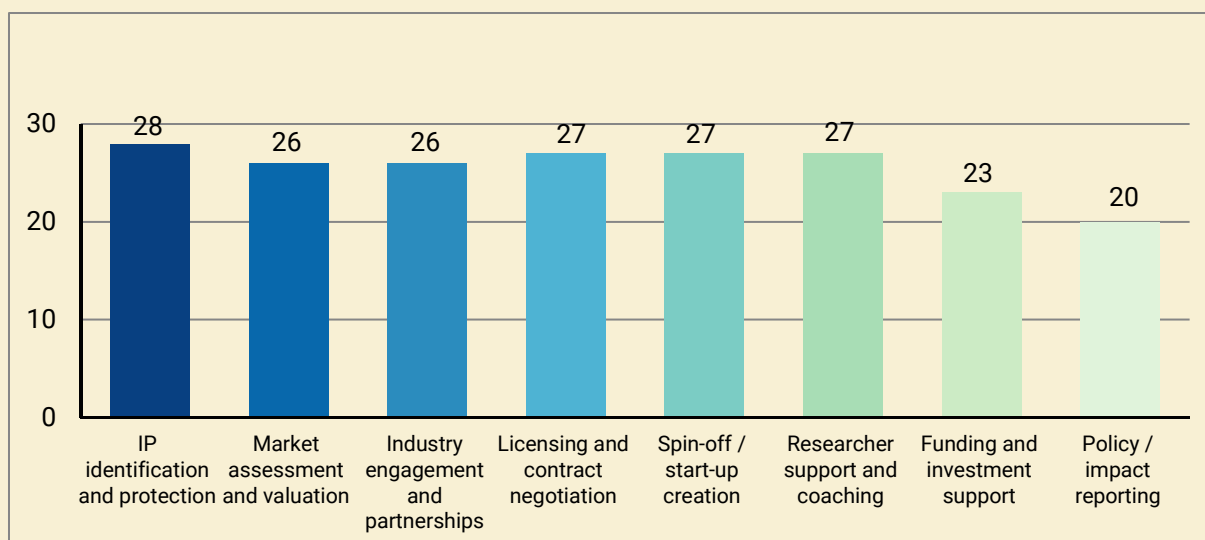


Figure 4: Core activities typically expected from KT/TT professionals. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the most frequently reported activities is IP identification and protection (28 responses), followed by licensing and contract negotiation, spin-off/start-up creation and researcher support/ coaching (27 responses each). Market assessment and valuation and industry engagement and partnerships (both with 26 responses) were also well mentioned. Slightly less selected, funding/ investment support (23 responses) and policy/ impact reporting (20 responses).

The survey further explored how KT/TT roles are characterised within different national ecosystems. The results point to a predominantly hybrid and flexible professional profile.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the majority of respondents (50%) describe KT/TT roles as part of a mixed model, combining both specialist and generalist functions. This suggests that, in many contexts, KT/TT professionals are expected to operate across multiple activities, integrating expertise in areas such as intellectual property, business development, and stakeholder engagement. A further 39% of respondents indicate that KT/TT professionals are mostly generalists, covering a broad range of functions. This highlights the versatility required in many organisations, where KT/TT roles are not narrowly defined but instead encompass diverse responsibilities across the innovation cycle. In contrast, only 11% of respondents describe KT/TT roles as mostly specialist, focused on specific areas such as legal, intellectual property, or business development. This relatively small proportion suggests that highly specialised roles are less common and may be more typical of larger or more mature knowledge transfer ecosystems.

Overall, the findings emphasise the hybrid nature of the KT/TT profession, where flexibility and interdisciplinary competences to effectively supporting the translation of research into impact. Their activities span both from internal institutional functions and external interactions with stakeholders, including government authorities, the private sector, associations and policymakers. The structure and specialisation of Knowledge Transfer/Technology Transfer Offices (KTO/TTO) depend largely on their size and capacity. While some offices include dedicated professionals in areas such as legal affairs, business development, negotiation and intellectual property, many KTOs are staffed by generalists who cover multiple functions across the entire transfer process.

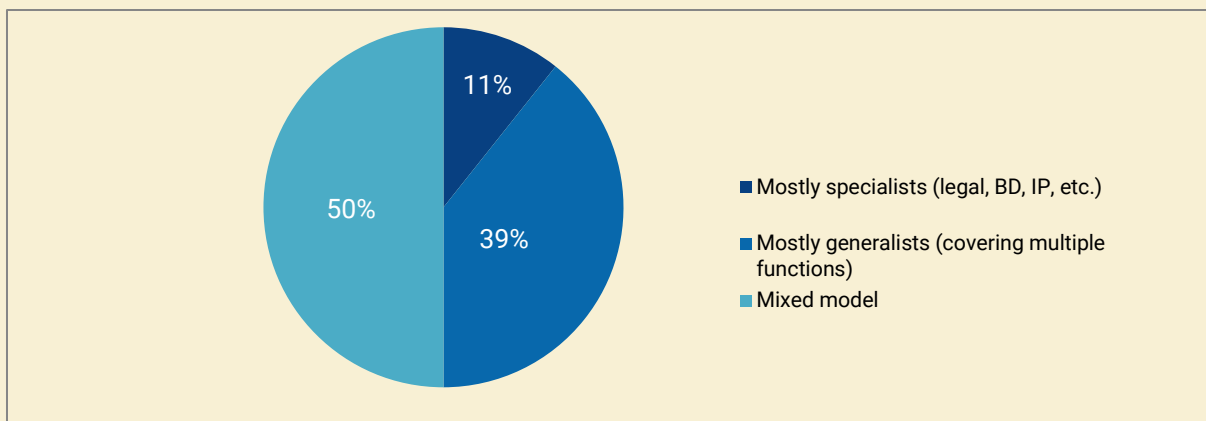


Figure 5: The KT/TT professional role in the national ecosystem. Among all the respondents (n= 28), the majority of respondents (50%) describe KT/TT roles as part of a mixed model, combining both specialist and generalist functions. The 39% of respondents indicate that KT/TT professionals are mostly generalists and only the 11% of respondents describe KT/TT roles as mostly specialist.

The survey further investigated whether a defined minimum level of activities is expected from KT/TT professionals in supporting researchers.

As shown in Figure 6, half of the respondents (50%) indicate that a defined minimum set of activities is in place. This suggests that in a number of contexts, there is already some level of standardisation in the services and support that KT/TT professionals are expected to provide. However, a significant proportion of respondents (39%) report being unsure whether such a framework exists. This may reflect a lack of clarity, limited visibility of formal guidelines, or variability across institutions within the same country. In addition, 11% of respondents indicate that such frameworks are currently under development.

Overall, the findings suggest that while progress has been made towards defining minimum activity levels, a widely recognised framework is not present. Such heterogeneity may also be partly explained by structural differences across TTOs, particularly in terms of size and resource capacity, with smaller offices often concentrating multiple functions within limited teams, while larger organisations tend to exhibit more specialised and diversified competence profiles. This may have implications for the standardisation of services, the comparability of roles, and the overall professionalisation of the KT/TT field.

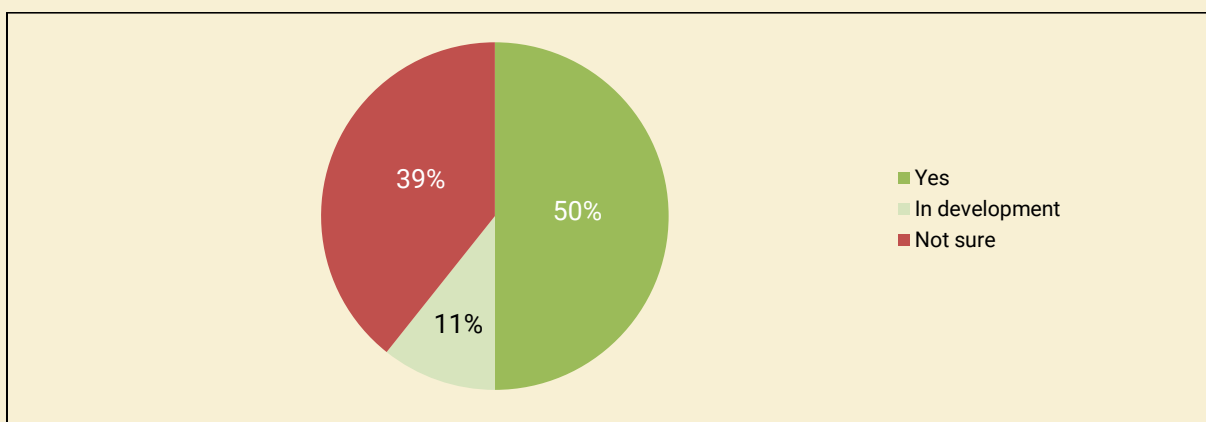


Figure 6: A minimum level of activities is expected from KT/TT professionals. Among all the respondents (n= 28), the majority (50%) indicated that a defined minimum set of activities is already in place. A substantial proportion (39%) reported uncertainty regarding the existence of such a framework, while a smaller share (11%) indicated that these frameworks are currently under development.

Education & Training Pathways

The survey further examined the availability of formal education pathways for KT/TT professionals, allowing respondents to select multiple options.

The results shown in Figure 7 indicate a strong prevalence of short-term and continuous professional development opportunities (24 responses). This highlights the importance of flexible, practice-oriented training formats, such as accredited courses (e.g. ASTP programmes with continuing education points), in supporting the ongoing development of KT/TT professionals.

More structured academic pathways appear less widespread. Master’s degree programmes in areas related to KT/TT, innovation, or intellectual property are reported by 13 respondents, suggesting that while formal higher education options exist, they are not yet the dominant route into the profession. National professional training programmes are mentioned by 7 respondents, indicating that in some countries there are dedicated initiatives aimed at developing KT/TT competences at the national level, although these remain relatively limited. Finally, only 2 respondents indicate the absence of any formal education pathways, suggesting that, in most contexts, at least some form of training opportunity is available.

Overall, these findings confirm that while opportunities for KT/TT education and training do exist, they are predominantly offered through short-term and continuing professional development formats, with more formal and standardised educational pathways remaining less consistently available across countries.

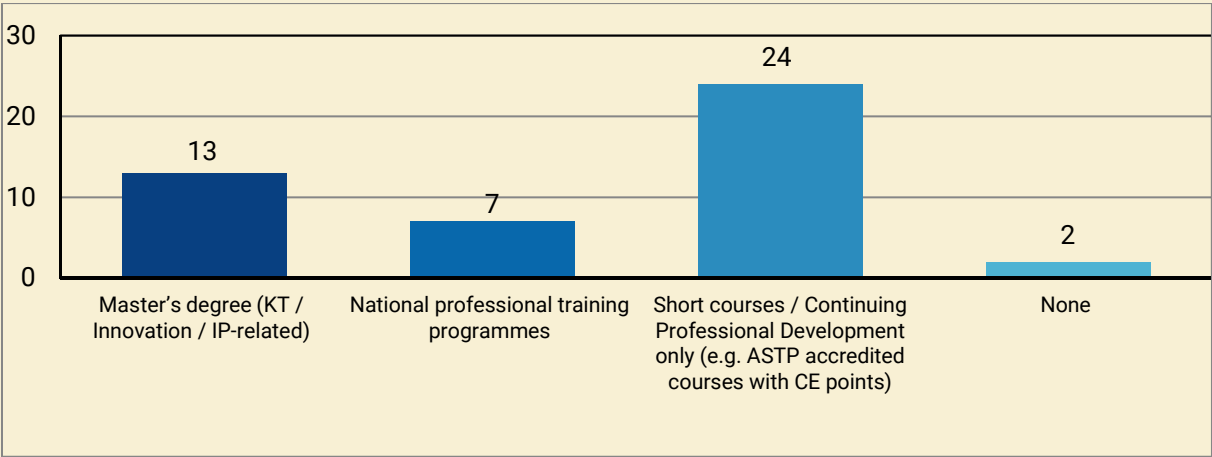


Figure 7: Formal education pathways for KT/TT professionals. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the most frequently option was short courses and Continuing Professional Development programmes (24 responses), a notable number of responses pointed to the existence of Master’s degree programmes related to KT/TT (13 responses). National professional training programmes were mentioned in a more limited number of cases (7 responses) and only a small number of respondents (2) indicated that no formal education pathways exist.

The survey investigated further who typically provides training for KT/TT professional. As shown in Figure 8, the results indicate that KT/TT training is delivered by a diverse range of actors, reflecting a distributed and multi-stakeholder training ecosystem and a strong influence of international and professional networks in shaping KT competencies.

The most frequently reported providers are international organisations (23 responses) and national associations (20 responses), highlighting their central role in delivering structured training opportunities and setting professional standards across countries.

This suggests a strong influence of supranational and professional networks in shaping KT/TT competencies. Universities also play a significant role (19 responses), confirming their contribution not only to research and innovation but also to the development of KT/TT related skills through educational programmes and training initiatives. A smaller yet notable contribution comes from private providers (14 responses), indicating the presence of specialised, often practice-oriented training offerings in the KT/TT domain.

Finally, government agencies were mentioned less frequently (9 responses), suggesting a more limited direct involvement in the provision of KT/TT training, despite their broader role in policy and funding frameworks.

Overall, the results indicate that education and training opportunities for KT/TT professionals are widely available but largely driven by international and professional networks rather than by formalised, nationally coordinated education systems. This further highlights the need for more structured and integrated approaches to KT/TT capacity building.

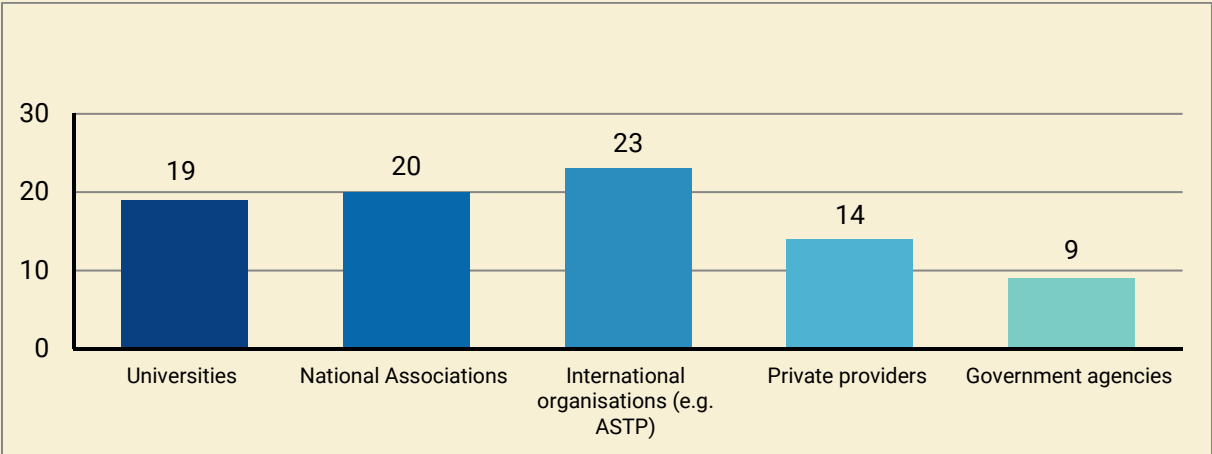


Figure 8: Providers of training pathways for KT professionals. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the most frequently option (23 responses) is an international organisation (e.g. ASTP). National associations (20 responses) and Universities (19 responses) also play a key role; private providers (14 responses) and government agencies were mentioned less frequently (9 responses).

The survey also investigated who typically covers the training costs for KT professionals. As shown in Figure 9, the results indicate that the costs of training for KT/TT professionals are primarily covered by employers, highlighting a strong institutional commitment to capacity building in this field.

The most frequently reported source of funding is the employer (25 responses), suggesting that organisations, particularly universities and research institutions, play a leading role in investing in the development of KT/TT competencies among their staff. Government funding also represents a significant source of support (13 responses), indicating that public investment contributes to strengthening KT/TT capabilities, likely through dedicated programmes or funding schemes. A smaller number of respondents identified self-funding (10 responses), pointing to cases where individuals take personal responsibility for their

professional development. Meanwhile, international funding sources (5 responses) and national associations (4 responses) appear to play a more limited, though still relevant, role in supporting training costs. Finally, a minimal number of responses (2) fall under other sources, suggesting the presence of additional, less common funding arrangements.

Overall, these findings confirm that KT/TT training is largely institutionally supported, primarily by employers and, to a lesser extent, by government programs, while individual and external funding sources play a secondary role. This further reflects the shared responsibility between institutions and broader funding ecosystems in fostering the professional development of KT/TT practitioners.

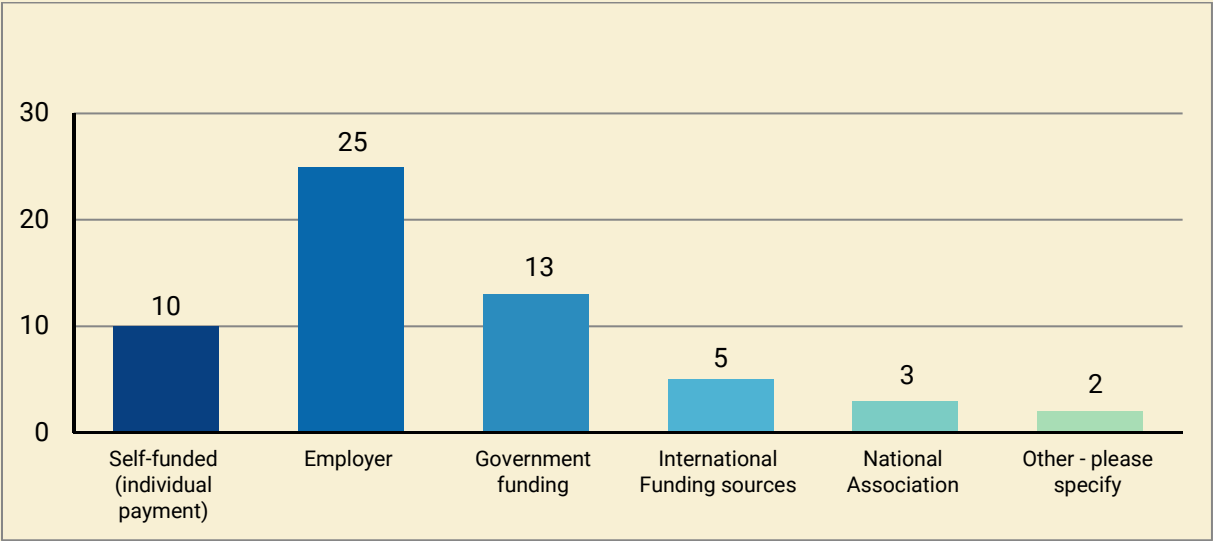


Figure 9: Course funding of KT/TT professional training. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the majority (25) indicate that employers cover the costs; government funding (13 responses) and self-funded (10 responses) ; international funding sources (5 responses) and national associations (3 responses) appear to play a more limited role along with other funding (2 responses).

Accreditation & Certification

The survey also explored whether KT/TT professionals are encouraged or required to hold professional certifications. The results reveal a nearly balanced situation across countries.

As shown in Figure 10, the majority (50 %) of respondents indicate that KT/TT professional certification are neither encouraged nor required. At the same time, a slightly lower proportion (46%) report that certifications are encouraged or required to obtain certifications, suggesting that in a significant number of contexts there is recognition of the value of formal credentials in supporting professional standards and competence development. Only a very small minority (4%) indicated that were not sure about the importance/ requirement of professional certifications.

This indicates that, in many countries, the profession continues to rely more on experience-based skills and informal recognition rather than on structured accreditation systems.

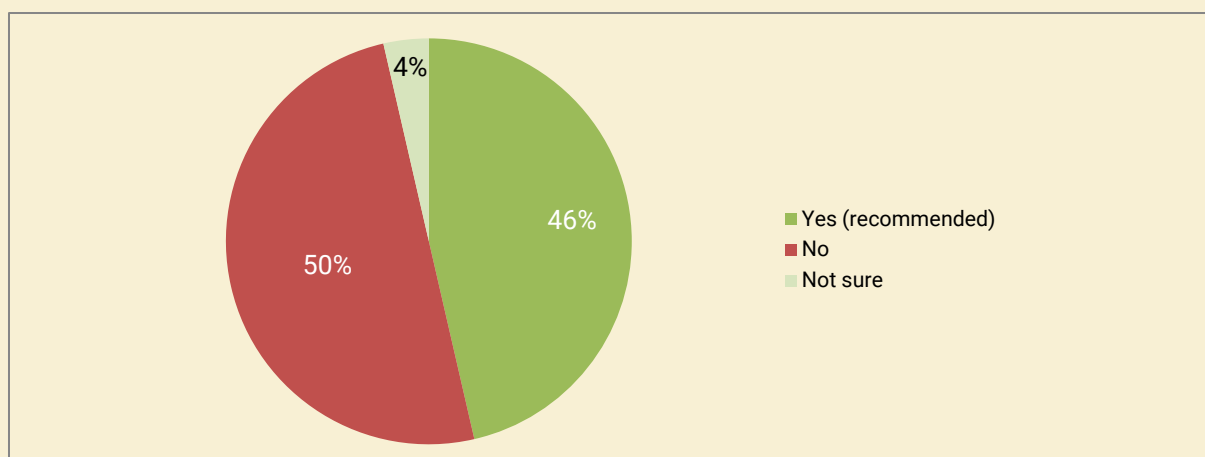


Figure 10: Importance of a professional certification. Among all the respondents (n= 28), the majority (50%) indicated that it's neither encouraged nor required; a slightly minor proportion (46%) indicated that is required and only a very small minority (4%) indicated not to be sure about the importance/ requirement of professional certifications.

Overall, the findings point to a transitional phase in the professionalisation of the KT/TT field, where the adoption of certification frameworks is gaining traction but has not yet become a widespread or standardised practice. This may also reflect differing levels of maturity across national ecosystems, as well as varying degrees of institutional and policy support for formal accreditation.

The survey further investigated which certification is recognised at the national level. The results presented in Figure 11 show that the Recognised Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP) certification from Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals (ATTP) stands out (15 responses) as the most recognised (or valued) professional designation among respondents. The Academic degrees also received significant recognition (12 responses) showing that traditional education plays an important role, though it is not dominant. The Certified Licensing Professional (CLP) from Licensing Executives Society International (LESI) has moderate recognition (8 responses) . Nearly a quarter of respondents (6 responses) feel that no specific certifications are particularly recognised in their country. The national certifications appear to have limited impact (4 responses), possibly reflecting lower visibility or perceived value compared to international credentials.

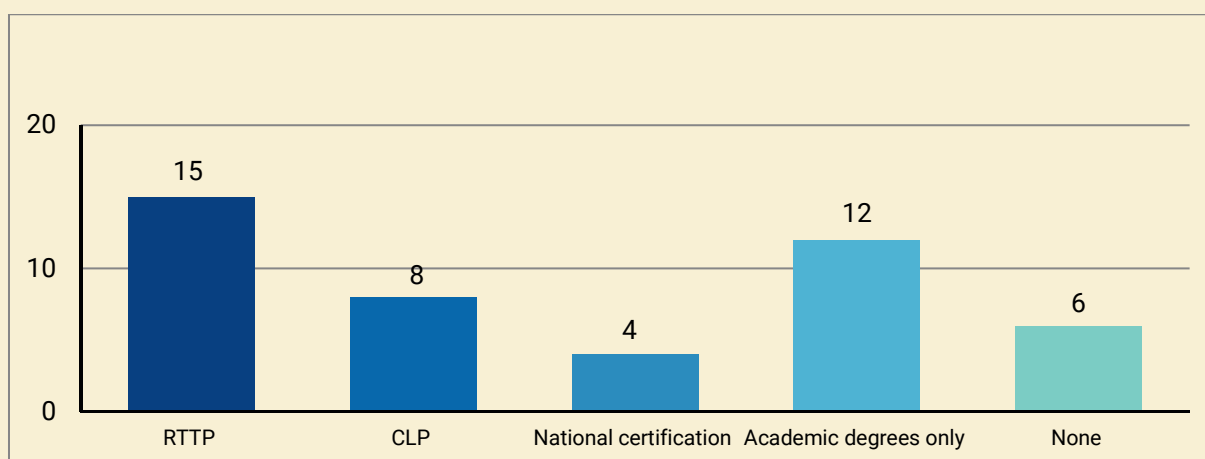


Figure 11: Certification for K/TT professionals in the countries. Allowing respondents (n= 28) to select multiple options, the majority (15) indicated the Recognised Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP) certification and a

moderate group (8) selected Certified Licensing Professional (CLP) recognition. The Academic degrees also receive significant recognition (12 responses). A quarter of respondents (6 responses) indicated none and the minority (4) selected national certification.

The survey also investigated how valuable is the professional certification for career progression at the national level. The data shown in Figure 12 indicate that, to date, certification is generally perceived as having limited impact on career progression.

Only the 11% of respondents consider professional certification as a very valuable requirement for the KT/TT profession. A clear majority of respondents (50%) consider certification to have nowadays a limited value, suggesting that it is not seen as a key driver for advancing careers in this field. For another 25% rate it is somewhat valuable, indicating that while certifications may provide some benefit, they are not decisive or essential. Only a small proportion (14%) believe certification has no value at all, meaning that outright dismissal of certification is relatively uncommon.

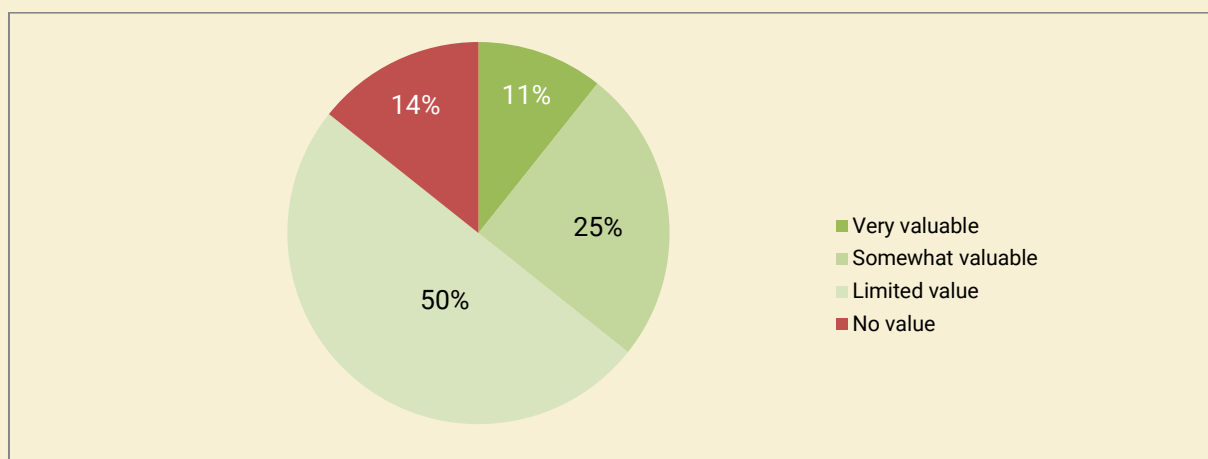


Figure 12: Importance of certification for KT/TT career progression. Among all the respondents (n= 28), a clear majority (50%) currently consider certification to have limited value, another 25% rate indicated it as somewhat valuable, a small proportion (14%) believe certification has no value and only the 11% of respondents consider certification as a very valuable requirement for the KT/TT profession.

While the data suggest that certification is not currently a formal requirement within most of the European KT/TT community, they also indicate a growing awareness of the value of internationally recognised standards for professional certification and accreditation. The Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP) designation, managed by the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals (ATTP) is progressively gaining relevance within the profession and it is the only international professional standard for knowledge and technology transfer (KT/TT) professionals working in PROs, industry and government labs.

While certifications are gaining visibility and recognition, their role as a formal benchmark for career progression and professional recognition within KT/TT remains under development.

Results and examples from international NAs guest of NAAC

The NAAC survey has been also filled in by three international National Associations, guest of NAAC, from South Africa, New Zealand and Chile. Data from these international guest associations further broadens the analysis of the KT/TT profession, enabling a more comprehensive overview of how the profession is recognised across different countries. This

wider perspective highlights both shared trends and key differences, strengthening the overall assessment of the current state of professional recognition. Two-thirds of the international respondents indicated that the KT/TT profession is only partially recognised at institutional level, where universities and public research organisations value in-house KT expertise and roles. One-third reported formal recognition also at the national policy level.

In South Africa, the KT/TT profession is formally recognised through the *Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act (No. 51 of 2008)* (IPR-PFRD Act), which mandated all publicly funded research institutions to establish Offices of Technology Transfer (OTTs) and employ qualified personnel (South Africa, 2008). The National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO), created under the same Act, provides financial and capacity-building support to these institutions (NIPMO, 2024). At the policy level, the 2019 *White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation* explicitly positions technology transfer as a critical professional driver within South Africa's National System of Innovation. (Department of Science and Innovation, 2019). South Africa stands out as the advanced ecosystem, supported by legislation, dedicated regulatory infrastructure, defined job profiles, and training pathways.

The data also highlighted that the most frequently used job title is *Innovation Manager*, although several other definitions are adopted (e.g., Intellectual Property (IP) Manager, Business Development Manager, Tech Transfer Specialist, Commercialisation Manager, Business Partnership Manager, Venture Manager). The coexistence of multiple professional definitions reflects that, also internationally, the evolving scope of KT/TT activities, encompassing diverse competency profiles. KT/TT professionals perform a broad range of activities spanning IP identification, evaluation and protection, market assessment and valuation, licensing and contract negotiation, spin-off and start-up creation, researcher coaching, support sourcing funding, and policy advocacy and impact reporting. Despite these specialistic competences, the current landscape is best described as a hybrid model that gravitates mainly towards the "generalist" competence framework approach, because KT/TT offices are often lean (1–3 people), and a single individual is expected to manage a broad range of competences.

Regarding the education/training opportunities for KT/TT professionals, all the respondents indicate a strong prevalence of short-term and continuous professional development opportunities, delivered mainly by the Universities and the NA.

Professional certification is considered valuable by all respondents, although it is not yet perceived as a mandatory requirement for entering or progressing within the KT/TT profession. Traditionally, the field has been driven primarily by practical experience and demonstrated ability to deliver successful knowledge and technology valorisation outcomes, rather than by formal certification pathways. However, there is growing recognition of certification as a tool to acknowledge professional excellence, strengthen the identity of the KT/TT profession, and support career development, particularly for senior management and executive roles within KT/TT Offices.

The RTTP designation, managed by ATTP, is increasingly recognised and gaining relevance among the international KT/TT community represented by the guest NAs.

As a practical case, in New Zealand, a key challenge for professional recognition is that KT is often seen as a function rather than a distinct profession, and is often not well understood nor visible within the wider innovation ecosystem. Career pathways are often informal, with practitioners typically entering the profession from adjacent fields, and there is limited visibility or shared understanding of the specialist skills required to translate research into impact the diverse career opportunities.

To address this gap, initiatives such as career frameworks mapping different roles, career stages, and required competencies are emerging as valuable tools to support professional development and increase awareness of the diverse opportunities within the commercialisation ecosystem.

Main conclusions: key challenges for the professional recognition of KT/TT professionals

The survey data depict a **complex, evolving, and heterogeneous landscape** for the Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) profession across countries, both in terms of career path, roles and competency framework, and professional development pathways.

From a structural perspective, while KT/TT functions are widely present in academia and public research organisations (PROs), the analysis reveals a **limited level of standardisation** in officially defined job titles and professional profiles. Roles such as Technology Transfer and Innovation Manager are relatively well established, yet a wide variety of alternative or context-specific profiles continues to exist, reflecting the diversity of institutional and national ecosystems and/or the evolution of the profession with specialisations within it.

This heterogeneity is further confirmed by the **multi-level recognition of the KT/TT profession**, which appears to be more consolidated at the institutional level, particularly within universities and research organisations, and less consistently embedded within national legislation or policy frameworks. Although ministries, public authorities, and funding agencies contribute to shaping the profession, their role remains more variable across contexts.

At the same time, the results clearly show that KT/TT professionals are expected to perform a **broad set of activities**, spanning the entire knowledge transfer spectrum from intellectual property management and market assessment to industry collaboration, commercialisation, researcher support, and impact reporting. This breadth of responsibilities highlights the **complexity and interdisciplinary nature** of the profession and move to a more holistic approach to economic and social value.

In terms of professional development, the findings point to a **predominance of practice-oriented training pathways**, with short courses and continuing professional development programmes being the most common form of education. More formalised academic routes, such as dedicated Master's programmes, are available in some country but not yet widespread, while nationally coordinated training initiatives remain relatively limited.

The **provision of training** itself reflects a distributed ecosystem, involving international organisations, national associations, universities, and private providers, rather than a single centralised actor. This diversity of providers contributes to the richness of training opportunities but also reinforces the lack of harmonisation across countries.

Finally, the **funding of training activities** is largely driven by employers, complemented by public funding and, to a lesser extent, individual or external contributions. This underscores the key role of institutions in supporting the professionalisation of KT staff.

The survey results reinforce the view that the professionalisation of knowledge transfer is evolving, with significant differences in how roles are defined, recognised, and structured at both national and institutional levels.

Taken together, these findings suggest that, although the KT profession is increasingly recognised and strategically important, it is in the process of **consolidation and formalisation**. This evolution is inherently shaped by national contexts, institutional frameworks, and ecosystem maturity, and therefore does not necessarily require a one-size-fits-all approach. Clearer recognition at policy/government level, and more structured education and training pathways based on a needs analysis of specific ecosystems, could further strengthen the development and impact of KT activities across different national contexts.

Definition of KT/TT professionals: competence framework, training and certification, and career development pathway

The KT/TT profession is rapidly evolving in response to major societal transitions, technological advancements, and changing economic models. This evolution requires professionals to work more closely with researchers, strengthening awareness-raising and opportunity-detection capabilities. At the same time, increasing pressure on universities/PROs to secure funding is driving the need for stronger business development skills and greater capacity to access non-competitive funding dedicated to fostering/exploitation of the innovative results derived from research projects.

Emerging technologies, such as AI, are also reshaping daily practices and skill requirements, while there is a growing demand to demonstrate the societal and economic impact of KT/TT activities. In parallel, the specific nature of entrepreneurship based on research results calls for more targeted recruitment strategies and tailored competencies.

KT/TT professionals are increasingly contributing across a wider range of sectors and their interdisciplinary capacity frameworks and are therefore becoming critical to addressing these complex societal challenges. To support this evolution, training programmes must continuously adapt to reflect the growing diversity of required competencies. At the same time, clearer and more flexible career pathways are needed, including greater mobility between the public and private sectors, and improved job attractiveness to retain talent within the field.

The following recommendations identify key areas where further action could support the consolidation, recognition, and long-term development of the KT/TT profession. While acknowledging the diversity of national and institutional contexts, these actions aim to strengthen the capacity of KT/TT professionals and enable knowledge valorisation ecosystems to evolve according to their specific needs and maturity levels.

Promote institutional capacity-building and strategic recognition of KT/TT functions within organisations:

- Embedding Knowledge Valorisation as a core institutional mission also requires recognising KT/TT professionals within organisational talent strategies, rather than treating them solely as general administrative or support staff.
- Support the professional recognition and consolidation of KT/TT roles, while preserving flexibility to accommodate different national contexts.

Enhance societal recognition and visibility of the KT/TT profession:

- Promote greater awareness of the role and contribution of KT/TT professionals among researchers, institutional leaders, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and society at large.

Foster competence framework and training ecosystems:

- Support continuous, modular, and interdisciplinary training programmes aligned with the evolving requirements of KT/TT professionals and the broader Knowledge Valorisation landscape
- Incentivise the development of new competencies, including business development, entrepreneurship support, stakeholder engagement, data management, and artificial intelligence-related skills.

Facilitate cross-sector mobility and career development:

- Promote policies enabling mobility between public and private sectors.
- Encourage frameworks that improve career stability and attractiveness for KT/TT professionals.

Embed Knowledge valorisation and impact assessment in R&I policies:

- Integrate Knowledge Valorisation objectives, indicators, and impact assessment approaches into national and European research and innovation frameworks.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The concept of Knowledge Valorisation reflects a significant evolution from the traditional Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KT/TT) model, historically focused primarily on intellectual property protection and commercialisation, towards a broader and more holistic approach aimed at maximising the societal, economic, and policy value generated by research and innovation activities.

This evolution has significantly expanded the scope and complexity of KT/TT activities, requiring a diverse and interdisciplinary combination of competencies across legal, financial, scientific, business, and relational domains. Knowledge Valorisation professionals are increasingly expected not only to manage intellectual property and contractual frameworks, but also to identify innovation and market opportunities, support entrepreneurship and investment pathways, assess impact, foster ecosystem engagement, and facilitate interactions among researchers, industry, public institutions, investors, and society.

The changing nature of the profession is reflected in the progressive expansion of the role of KT/TT professionals, who are becoming key facilitators of collaboration, co-creation, responsible knowledge governance, and innovation ecosystems. In this context, professional definitions are also evolving. For example, the Turkish Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA, 2018) describes a Knowledge and Technology Transfer Specialist as a qualified professional who develops technology- and innovation-oriented collaborations across institutions, organisations, disciplines, and sectors; supports researchers and entrepreneurs in accessing relevant mechanisms; manages technology transfer processes and services; and contributes to the development and promotion of the profession.

Given the increasing breadth and diversity of Knowledge Valorisation activities, it is unrealistic to expect a single professional to master the full range of specialised expertise required. Effective Knowledge Valorisation therefore relies on multidisciplinary teams, where professionals with complementary skills and backgrounds collaborate to address the different dimensions of the valorisation process, from intellectual property management and business development to entrepreneurship support, stakeholder engagement, and impact creation, while being aware of the complexity of required skill sets. Though we see the profession strongly developing and progressing in different nations, with job descriptions that cover every single aspect of knowledge valorisation and technology transfer, ATTP offers with its RTTP a global recognition of everyone working within this profession (ref ATTP paper). Therefore, the RTTP should be used and encouraged on the road to guiding people working in knowledge and technology transfer into the profession it deserves to be.

Building effective Knowledge Valorisation capacity goes beyond the internal organisation of Technology Transfer Offices. Equally important is the existence of institutional strategies that recognise the strategic value of Knowledge Transfer Offices and empower them to fulfil their mission effectively. This includes providing adequate resources, positioning knowledge transfer as a core institutional function and strengthening the role of KT/TT professionals. No single office or institution can independently provide the full spectrum of expertise, resources, and connections required to support complex valorisation pathways. Successful ecosystems

therefore depend on enabling conditions, including strong internal and external networks, access to specialised expertise, collaboration platforms, and effective connections with innovation, investment, policy, and societal actors.

Competence frameworks represent important instruments to support the professional development, recognition, and mobility of KT/TT practitioners. However, they should be considered as part of a broader ecosystem approach, where individual capabilities are complemented by appropriate organisational structures, institutional commitment, and collaborative environments that enable these competencies to be effectively deployed and translated into impact.

Looking ahead, the effectiveness and sustainability of Knowledge Valorisation ecosystems will increasingly depend on the recognition of KT/TT professionals as strategic actors within research and innovation systems. Strengthening professional recognition, career sustainability, continuous skills development, and institutional support will be essential to attract and retain the expertise required to transform research outcomes into meaningful societal and economic impact. Embedding Knowledge Valorisation as a core mission of research organisations requires long-term investment not only in processes and structures, but also in the people who enable this transformation.

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