Industry-University Collaboration:
The value of benchmarking policies, practices and tools

BIAC Statement to the OECD Higher Education Stakeholder Forum
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As our economies and societies face rapidly changing forms of production and increasing digitalization, it is simply not possible to wait for the next generation’s workforce to become better prepared.¹ Instead, it is critical to actively promote the continued education of employees. Coordinated actions are needed whereby businesses take an active role in supporting their current workforces through re-training, individuals take a proactive approach to their own lifelong learning, and governments create the right enabling environment, rapidly and creatively, to assist these efforts.

Companies recognize that their competitiveness hinges to a great extent on the talent of their employees. Education institutes worldwide seek to cooperate with industries. Thus industry-university collaboration, particularly for the development of education programs tailored to market demand, is an essential mechanism for labor market relevance and outcomes with strong societal impact. Such collaboration can be incentivized through appropriate funding systems as well as quality assurance and assessment systems. If carried out successfully, such collaboration can deliver great potential for creating win-win situations for all parties.

However, there is a need to better understand the factors for the success of industry-university collaboration policies, practices, and tools, and then share good practices. We therefore encourage OECD benchmarking in this area.

Importantly, such benchmarking should consider that university-business partnerships can take place in various forms: some are complex processes; others consist of some small, practical steps. For example:

- Foresight forums that co-create the foundations for curricula and future development of the learning space.
- Industry providing continuous input on content for university curricula and course development.

• Developing technological solutions and platforms for new learning methods for cooperation.

• Co-designing industry focused student projects and programs.

• Jointly providing internships.

• Inspiring teaching innovation through the sharing of insights into communication techniques from work-life settings.

• Industry experts as lecturers, mentors and tutors in universities.

• Universities helping companies in educating their employees.²

BIAC welcomes the OECD Higher Education Stakeholder Forum as part of the OECD's new work on higher education. We look forward to contributing to forthcoming OECD in-depth analysis and benchmarking of labor market relevance and outcomes of higher education systems.

² There are promising examples of industry-university partnerships in this field. Universities help companies in educating their staff, and this often starts with the university evaluating the prior learning outcomes of the staff. Expected learning outcomes of the degree programs are compared with the existing skills, and individual learning paths are then created. The courses may be underpinned by comprehensive work-based training programs, which allow trainees to put into practice what they have learned in university.