

ScreenME

Networking and Research
Collaboration with the Screen
Media Industry - Lessons
Learned from the University
Perspective

Deliverable 1.1

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Preface

This report serves as a public deliverable for the ScreenME project ¹(Horizon2020, grant agreement No 952156). It summarises the learning outcomes that the consortium achieved in terms of networking and collaborating with industry partners. The consortium members are Tallinn University (TLU), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VBU), Munster Technological University (MTU), Technische Universität Ilmenau (TUIL), Jönköping International Business School (JIBS), and LUT University.

The acquired knowledge included in the report is the result of the joint activities in Work Package 1 of the project. In this work package, the partners organised workshops in which they shared their experience and best practises in terms of networking and collaborating with established, as well as start-up, media organisations. In addition to the consortium partners, representatives from the media industries participated in the workshops, who shared their experience as well as expectations in terms of collaboration with university researchers². As a basis for the workshops, the coordinating partner, Tallinn University, also shared an online questionnaire among the consortium members, in order to collect information about their industry networking and collaborative activities.

1. Introduction

The changes that the media industry is undergoing are extremely dynamic and intense. They have their roots in changing technology, consumption behaviour, as well as new industry players utilising the new business opportunities that emerge in the process of media convergence. Both media professionals as well as media researchers see a great need to study the conditions, processes, and consequences of the tremendous changes in the media industry.

This report presents the collected experience of university-industry networking and collaboration shared by the ScreenME consortium members. A key interest of the ScreenME project lies in understanding the trends in the so-called screen media industry. Companies in the screen media industry include commercial and non-commercial organisations that are involved in the production, distribution and curation of user-created, as well as professionally created, content, which is shared on all kinds of screens, including in cinemas, on PCs, TVs, phones, and smart watches. The screen media industry encompasses all digital platforms as well as applications that may be used for connecting people, enabling access to content and the consumption of information and entertainment. Hence, the term screen media industry reflects the

¹ More information: <http://screenme.tlu.ee>

² In detail, these workshops included:

1) Workshop Bridging the Knowledge Gaps of Screen Media Entrepreneurship and Research (11-12 May)

https://screenme.tlu.ee/portfolio/knowledge_gaps/

2) Workshop: Trends in Media Industries and Society (19-20 May 2021)

<https://screenme.tlu.ee/portfolio/19-20th-of-may-workshop-trends-in-media-industries-and-society/>

3) Workshop: Collaboration with Media Start-ups (10 September 2021)

<https://screenme.tlu.ee/portfolio/10th-of-september-workshop-collaboration-with-media-start-ups/>

4) Doctoral/early career colloquium (27 September 2021)

<https://screenme.tlu.ee/portfolio/27th-of-september-study-visit-networking-and-research-skills-developemnt/>

convergent and dynamically changing sector that produces the majority of the media we consume today.

Although there may be a specific need for university-industry collaboration in the screen media industry due to the rapid changes that are underway, the nature of the networking and collaboration among individuals and teams at universities and in the media does not differ much from that of other industries. Hence, some of the examples and knowledge we present here are industry independent.

Research collaboration, as we see it, includes activities wherein both university researchers and industry professionals work towards a joint goal, for instance, creating business-related knowledge or solving societal issues. Cooperation, on the other hand, includes activities where one group helps the other to achieve its goals, without pursuing a common goal. This may be the case, for instance, when media researchers interview industry professionals for their research projects. In this report, we see networking as any interaction between researchers and industry representatives for the purpose of exchanging information or establishing a contact that may lead towards cooperation or collaborative activities.

Rohn and Evens (2020b) especially see media management as having great potential for being so-called engaged scholarship (see also Van de Ven, 2007), i.e., scholarship that creates valuable actionable and practice-relevant knowledge for the decisionmakers in the industry. In terms of the prevalence of university-industry collaboration among media management scholars, based on an international survey among scholars, Lowe and Picard (2020) found that in terms of the prevalence of university-industry collaboration among media management scholars, participation in collaborative research projects was not as common as one might expect. According to the authors, this was surprising since the academic fields related to media and business have stronger professional foci than many other scholarly fields. The authors also found that collaborative research was more common among more advanced scholars than among early-stage researchers, which the authors explained as resulting from the different professional demands and pressures at different stages of one's academic career.

This report outlines the importance of university-industry collaboration. The report also introduces selected examples of how some of the ScreenME partners collaborate with the industry, including both established media companies and media start-ups. It presents some of the key challenges to fruitful collaboration between academic researchers and industry professionals. It highlights some examples of how such challenges can be overcome, including by presenting some of the partnering universities' support centres. After a summary of the key centres, research interests and questions that ScreenME partners and industry professionals shared, the report presents a summary that emphasises the importance of the independence of academic research.

2. The Importance of University-Industry Collaboration

The so-called 'third mission' or 'third role' of universities (e.g. Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2020; Frondizi et al., 2019; Zomer and Benneworth, 2011) has been a much-discussed topic in recent years. As such, it is widely understood that universities have a crucial role to play in today's knowledge society not only providing education and teaching (first mission), and by producing new knowledge through research (second mission), but increasingly, as their third mission, by becoming a relevant and impactful stakeholder in the development and

functioning of local and regional innovation ecosystems.

At the core this third mission are the partnerships between the universities and various societal actors, including the industry players. These partnerships can take various forms, from study-related cooperation to university spin-offs. Authors (see e.g. Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2020; Secundo, Perez, Martinaitis, Leitner, 2017; Lukovic and Zuti, 2017; Marhl and Pausits, 2013; Kaloudis et al. 2019) have distinguished three different purposes of these partnerships:

- **Overall societal engagement**

Overall societal engagement is achieved through various forms of social interaction, networking and communication between academia and various stakeholders, including industry players. Examples of activities of overall societal engagement include the involvement of academic staff with companies' advisory or steering boards, the involvement of company representatives in the design of study curricula, or in university decision-making bodies.

- **Knowledge transfer**

Whereas partnerships are mainly concerned with the transfer of knowledge, a key concern is the valorisation of research and development results. Ideally, research can contribute to current and upcoming societal challenges. For instance, knowledge transfer can be facilitated through joint research and development projects that often form the basis for contracts between a university and the industry. Examples include also the establishment of co-work spaces, incubators, or shared laboratories.

- **Development of entrepreneurial competences**

Universities play a key role in establishing and supporting a mindset change that acknowledges that academic knowledge can have important practical and/or societal value, especially in terms of being a crucial stakeholder in local and regional innovation ecosystems. Partnerships that aim to develop the skills and competences needed for an engaged and entrepreneurial exchange between universities and its stakeholders include, for instance, entrepreneurial training and further education, internships and other opportunities to engage students; mentoring and consulting activities.

In addition to these general aims of university-industry partnerships, various reasons for, and benefits of, such collaboration were discussed in our workshops. From the perspective of the university **researchers**, collaborating with the industry was seen as beneficial for the following reasons:

- **Access to data and information**

Industry partners often provide access to data and representatives of the industry serve as experts and sources of information for research projects.

- **Advancement of research**

The dialogue between researchers and industry professionals is seen as essential for finding appropriate and useful research questions and validating one's own research results.

- **Advancement of teaching**

A dialogue with the industry is crucial in order to adapt teaching offers to potential

industry needs, and in order to teach practice-relevant knowledge and skills.

- **The broader impact of scientific work**

The social impact of their scientific work is often a key motivator for university researchers. A possible result of the research work can be, for instance, new or adapted legal regulations and corporate policies, or new business models that contribute to the better functioning of the market.

- **Broader acknowledgement and visibility**

The achievement of broader acknowledgement and visibility of the researchers and their work is important for various reasons. Being acknowledged outside of the university for one's past and ongoing research results can also be gratifying. The related greater visibility can help to better market ourselves as researchers and increase the chances of future collaborative projects. In addition, it also satisfies the requirement by research project funders in terms of societal communication.

- **Access to financial resources**

Whereas industry players may sometimes provide financial resources for collaborative research projects, public research funding for research projects is also often based on the condition that industry collaboration be a key element of the project. In fact, in the new European Union programming period, a large part of the measures calls for cooperation with the industry and proof of impact on the industry and/or society as a whole.

- **Career requirement**

Industry collaborative activities are increasingly key performance indicators for researchers, and they are particularly important in career evaluation and career promotion assessments. However, they are still not considered to be as relevant as writing high-level scientific articles or the other key performance indicators used to evaluate scientific excellence.

From the perspective of industry professionals, collaborating with the university and its researchers was seen as beneficial for the following reasons:

- **Gaining an outsider's perspective**

In contrast to private consultancies, academics are perceived as factional, unbiased, and independent. Thus, industry professionals appreciate their opinions and approaches, as they are not players in the market themselves but instead provide for a neutral ground for dialogue and discussion.

- **Scientific validation for services and products**

The media industry offers ample opportunities for new business models. Having studied the changes and trends in the industry, including audience and competitor behaviour as well as the policy environment, university researchers are often well-equipped to discuss new ideas and existing services and products. This includes both economic feasibility as well as societal impact and underlying ethics.

- **Solving future challenges**

The complexity of the media industry and the speed in which it changes may pose a challenge to industry professionals who are caught up in their day-to-day routines and tasks. Identifying and solving future challenges not only demands a lot of time, but it

also calls for considering and integrating various perspectives and knowledge. Academic researchers can provide useful insights and be valuable partners in this process.

- **The acquisition of new ideas**

Universities can serve as experimental labs. Collaborative activities with students can be especially useful, by providing a fresh view that can lead to new ideas for value creation and provision. The dialogues and brainstorming activities with researchers that result in unexpected insights can also lead to new ideas.

In general, collaborative activities between universities and the industry have manifold benefits that serve the needs of both the universities and industry stakeholders.

3. Networking and Research Collaboration in the Screen Media Industry

Our ScreenME project is concerned with entrepreneurial activities in the screen media industries. As part of the project, the consortium members met to discuss their collaborative activities in the industry, which included not only their activities with start-ups and the wider start-up community, but also with established media companies. It was widely recognised that established, or legacy, media companies also need to engage in new ventures of an entrepreneurial character in order to adapt to the current market dynamics. The following presents some of the activities that the consortium partners are engaged in, including their experience related to these activities, as well as some general observations made by the consortium during the workshops.

3.1 Examples and Acquired Knowledge Related to Activities with Established Companies

Examples of collaboration and cooperation activities by the ScreenME consortium members with established media companies are manifold. The following is a list some of these activities:

Aarhus University (AU)

Aarhus University has long-lasting collaboration with Filmby Aarhus, a regional film media cluster that houses more than 60 companies from the audiovisual industry. The education Programme Multiplatform Storytelling and Production (MSP) program offered by VIA University College is also placed within Filmby Aarhus. The programme is a core educator for the audio-visual industry in Denmark. AU's media educators practice different forms of contact and exchange with the MSP program.

Jönköping International Business School (JIBS)

JIBS has strong relationships within the export industry, largely driven by the global Esports Research Network. The role of JIBS and its key researchers in the field have been pivotal in its creation.

LUT University

LUT University's School of Business and Management, for instance, has had longitudinal research projects with the Finnish public service broadcaster YLE and the regional news media company, Kaakon Viestintä, that have focused on issues related to

business renewal and innovations. It also cooperates with Finnish media companies YLE, Sanoma Oy, Alma Media, and Keski-suomalainen in researching how these companies define and implement media responsibility in their role as both business organisations as well as journalistic institutions. Jönköping International Business School and Tallinn University are also part of this project and investigate the same research question in their respective countries and by cooperating with media companies in their countries³.

Tallinn University (TLU)

TLU has a long tradition of cooperating and collaborating with the Estonian public service broadcaster, ERR. ERR experts are very much involved in the teaching at the university's Baltic Film, Media and Arts School. This collaboration takes place at all levels of university education. In the audiovisual media, journalism, and contemporary media curricula, students carry out their practical exercises in the ERR studios. Furthermore, Tallinn University has cooperated with ERR in several research projects. Within the framework of a project dealing with the public value of open cultural data⁴, Tallinn University is collaborating not only with ERR, but with various data owners and industry players in the European film industry, including Marché du Film, the business counterpart of the Cannes Film Festival. Furthermore, Tallinn University collaborates with the Ekspress Grupp on developing a machine-learning-based analytic engine to assess the ideological inclinations of media texts.

The information gathering and the workshop discussions among the ScreenME partners have revealed various trends in the activities between universities and established media companies. Based thereupon, we can say the following:

- The majority of the activities with industry partners are the result of individual researchers' active engagement with and personal contacts within the industry.
- The majority of the activities with industry partners resemble cooperative activities rather than truly collaborative activities.
- The majority of the activities with industry partners are short-term and are project-based.
- Industry partners see the greatest value in collaborative activities with university researchers in their independence and quality of their research.
- In order to ensure the independence of university research, the companies do not usually remunerate the researchers within the framework of their collaboration.
- Although a financial relationship between the companies and the university rarely exists, companies often provide key letters of support when researchers apply for external funding for their projects.

A key question discussed in the workshops was how to establish long-term relationships that exceed the lifetime of single projects. The examples of long-term collaborative activities that the partners have engaged in featured the following characteristics:

³ More information: <https://mediacontradictions.com>

⁴ More information: <https://publicvalueofdata.tlu.ee>

- Value creation was bidirectional, i.e. both parties were very aware and clear about how they benefited from the collaboration.
- The university had become a meeting place for industry professionals and there was an awareness that the university had established itself as a meaningful stakeholder in the local or regional media ecosystem.
- One of the key elements binding the parties was the contributions made by industry professionals to teaching and their connection to the students and potentially future employees.
- Tangible outcomes were created for both parties (for the academics, research publications and academic conference presentations; for the industry partner a guided restructuring and reorganisation plan).
- Long-term collaborative activities often have a strong representation in the media, including in online and social media.
- The co-creation of a knowledge hub for more specialised industries, such as the eSports industry, is also likely to result in long-term relationships.

Relationships with industry professionals need to be established through networking activities, and even where such relationships already exist, these need to be nurtured. In this context, the partners highlighted the importance of **conferences and workshops where both academics and industry professionals meet**. The examples of such gatherings relevant for researchers interested in screen media industries are abundant. Tallinn University, for instance, organises an annual conference with the Estonian public service broadcaster ERR⁵. Other examples include the Copenhagen Future Television conference⁶, the series of EBU online seminars⁷, Nordicom RIPE conference⁸, the annual media forum organised by the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga⁹, and the annual networking festival Media Fast Forward¹⁰ organised by the Belgium public service broadcaster VRT. According to the ScreenME partners, participating in such events with industry professionals was key to the successful networking that is also described below in **chapter 5**.

3.2 Examples and Acquired Knowledge in Terms of Activities with Start-Ups

Start-ups play an increasingly important role in the screen media industry. As they are at the forefront of industry trends and changes, their behaviour as well as their perceptions represent a valuable source of information for research concerned with ongoing and future trends in media and society. Likewise, the university context with its business and entrepreneurial teaching programmes, as well as its large number of students eager to enter the business world, can be a fruitful environment for new business ideas and ventures. In fact, the universities can play a diverse and crucial role in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. The following lists some of the ScreenME consortium members and their activities with start-ups.

⁵ More information: <https://www.tlu.ee/en/mediaconference>

⁶ More information: <https://futuretv.dk/en/>

⁷ More information: <https://www.ebu.ch/home>

⁸ More information: <https://nordmedianetwork.org/latest/upcoming-conferences/>

⁹ More information: <https://www.reinventing-media.com/>

¹⁰ More information: <https://mediafastforward.be/>

Aarhus University (AU)

Aarhus University has a Start-up Hub which supports student start-ups and research spin-outs called “The Kitchen”¹¹. It is open to students and academics from various fields of study with varied business ideas. AU also collaborates with the Filmby incubator called “Ideas Lab”¹² on ad hoc projects and by leveraging the strengths of the two incubators. The Ideas Lab is a specialises in audio-visual media start-ups in Denmark.

Jönköping International Business School (JIBS)

JIBS collaborates with the local Science Park¹³ within the framework of various projects. For instance, the two partners collaborate, in the university’s Master programme for Strategic Entrepreneurship. As such, business developers from the Science Park conduct ideation sessions and participate as judges in the student’s pitch competitions. The Science Park also provides some of the seed funding that the students can win during this competition. In return, some of the student projects produce suitable candidates for the Science Park’s accelerator programme and often students continue developing their ventures at Science Park after finishing their studies.

LUT University

LUT University has a student-driven entrepreneurship society LUTES¹⁴. Its mission is to drive LUT student entrepreneurship and professional development on the regional level with events, community, network and training and workshop programmes. Together with other entrepreneurship societies and country-level start-up initiatives, the aim is to build a strong start-up ecosystem in Finland. For example, the Federation of the Finnish Enterprises with its 20 regional associations helps young entrepreneurs by organising seminars and events for networking and supporting in seeking funding opportunities.

Munster Technological University (MTU)

MTU established the Rubicon Centre¹⁵ in 2006. The Rubicon Centre is Ireland’s premier business incubation centre that operates as a separate legal institution and is situated on the university campus. The Centre encourages and provides support to individuals and students who present unique ideas or highlight market niches that they believe they can target. About half of the Rubicon Centre clients are involved with the university. The services that Rubicon provides include executive mentoring and coaching, assessing commercial feasibility, developing tailor-made solutions, access to financing and product development, connections to industry, partners and customers. The Centre is jointly financed by MTU Cork & Enterprise Ireland, which is a government agency. The finances are used to run various entrepreneurship training programs, to support start-ups at the incubator, arrange hackathons and/or business idea competitions for individuals and students, together with the university. The finances are also used to provide hot desks, office space, virtual offices, meeting rooms and product development resources to the start-ups that are based in the incubation centre. Every spring the university organises an Enterprise Month, when different business idea competitions, exhibitions, discussions and awards take place. The winners of these competitions acquire the

¹¹ More information: <https://thekitchen.io/>

¹² More information: <https://filmbyaarhus.dk/klyngeudvikling/inkubatoren-ideas-lab/>

¹³ More information: <https://sciencepark.se/english/>

¹⁴ More information: <https://lutes.fi/>

¹⁵ More information: www.rubiconcentre.ie

opportunity to avail themselves of the support and training provided by the Rubicon Centre programmes. The students receive payment for developing their projects during the summer months.

The incubator and university have a mutually beneficial relationship, whereby the incubator provides the university with strong links to the start-up community and access to the R&D test beds developed by the university. Thereby a group of companies interested in possible future partnerships, which could result in research income, is developed. This supports student entrepreneurship, provides placement for undergraduates and enables students to work on live case studies as part of their academic work. Thereby, the symbioses of the university and the incubator comprise a relevant part of the ecosystem for supporting economic development in Ireland.

Tallinn University (TLU)

Since 2016, TLU has offered a pre-incubation programme called STARTERTallinn to students - ¹⁶, which supports the development from idea to business model. The programme is financed by the Estonian Ministry of Science and Education with the help of the European Social Fund. STARTERTallinn, which presents the very first stage of the Estonian start-up ecosystem, is also a member of the national Estonian Start-up Ecosystem network led by Startup Estonia. Besides STARTERTallinn, TLU also organises the activities in subsequent stages of the entrepreneurial development phase, including with the incubators Tehnopol and Tallinn Creative Incubator ¹⁷.

Technische Universität Ilmenau (TUIL)

TUIL has a long history of being part of and key to the development of a local start-up ecosystem. As early as the 1990s, the Technology and Start-up Centre Ilmenau (TGZI)¹⁸ was founded, a service offered by the city and district in the immediate vicinity of the campus, which supports start-ups with office and laboratory space. The GET UP initiative started in 1998 and was active until the early 2000s¹⁹ and *aufтакт*. *Das Gründerforum Ilmenau* was founded in 2011 as a bottom-up initiative by students, doctoral students, professors and start-up alumni as well as the TUIL itself. *aufтакт*. *Das Gründerforum Ilmenau*²⁰ is an umbrella brand that unites various actors from TUIL, TGZI and the city of Ilmenau in order to create a vibrant start-up ecosystem. Since 2019, TUIL has started building up the Ilmkubator²¹ with the help of continued project funding from the EXIST programme (EXIST Potentials)²².

The TUIL initiatives focus primarily on the preincubation phase. In addition, a core component of TUIL's activities is raising awareness among students, as well as faculty members and interested parties, in entrepreneurially shaping one's own professional career -- for - is. Expert support is provided for those interested in setting up a business in the media sector, as well as other sectors. Along with raising awareness of entrepreneurial thinking and action, a major role is also played by networking, further education and counselling. Initiatives, e.g. Media Lab Bayern²³ or Next Media

¹⁶ More information: <https://starteridea.ee/>

¹⁷ More information: <https://www.tehnopol.ee/en/start-up-incubator/> and <https://inkubaator.tallinn.ee/en/>

¹⁸ TGZI, Technologie- und Gründerzentrum Ilmenau, <http://tgz-ilmenau.de/>

¹⁹ "GET UP" was founded with the participation of TUIL in association with other Thuringian universities through the first funding of the EXIST programme (www.exist.de) (EXIST I - model regions - funding period from 1998) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

²⁰ More information: www.aufтакт.org

²¹ More information: <https://www.tu-ilmenau.de/forschung/service/ilmkubator-gruenderservice>

²² More information: www.exist.de

²³ More information: <https://www.media-lab.de/de/>

Accelerator ²⁴. provide support and funding for specific initiatives in the media sector, in particular for media start-ups beyond the preincubation phase.

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

VUB established the Start.VUB²⁵ incubator for its entrepreneurial students, which provides training, education and workshops. VUB also has 41 spin-offs, including in the media field, which indicates the existence of a culture that favours general entrepreneurship at VUB. Located in Brussels and Flanders, the Flemish-speaking community of Belgium, the media researchers and students benefit from various media-oriented initiatives that support the development of the screen media sector:

- B-Sprouts²⁶ is an international incubator and accelerator targeting start-ups (notably media);
- The Future Media Lab²⁷ is an open forum that brings together media professionals, tech innovators, journalists and policymakers to create a new level of knowledge and unique insights into the interface of media and tech innovation and public policy.
- As the media sector is one of the priorities in the Brussel region, there are several incubation and funding programs available, e.g. screen.brussels²⁸, that provides support tailored to all the links in the value creation chain, i.e. the producers, post-producers, distributors, screenwriters etc.
- Incubators such as EEBIC and ICAB²⁹, fund and support start-ups, notably in media fields.

At the Flemish level, there are very strong media development initiatives, which benefit VUB students and researchers. VRT, the Flemish public service broadcaster, has a special programme called VRT Sandbox ³⁰, that introduces new ideas and technologies into the VRT ecosystem by organising innovative collaborations between the VRT, start-ups and entrepreneurs. Funding for media start-ups and scale-ups in Flanders and Brussels is provided by MIV (Media Investments in Flanders). Another programme to foster the development of next generation media solutions in Europe is STADIEM (Startup Driven Innovation in European Media)³¹. It offers a four-stage piloting and acceleration programme that brings together start-ups, scale-ups, investors and media organisations in Flanders and beyond. Finally, the international research institution IMEC organises Smart Media Meetups³² that aims to provide insights into policy instruments developed by Brussels, Flanders or Europe and to ensure knowledge exchange between its participants and the local and international partners and members. It targets stakeholders from the media industry and related sectors, as well as representatives from the various governmental levels and researchers.

In conclusion, the exchange of knowledge and experience among the ScreenME partners provided the following insights regarding the university activities with the start-ups:

²⁴ More information: <https://nmavc.super.site/about>

²⁵ More information: <https://start.vub.be/>

²⁶ More information: <https://www.b-sprouts.com/>

²⁷ More information: <https://www.facebook.com/FMLabEU/>

²⁸ More information: <https://screen.brussels/en>

²⁹ More information: <https://www.eebic.be/en/> and <http://www.icabrussel.be/>

³⁰ More information: <https://sandbox.vrt.be/>

³¹ More information: <https://www.stadiem.eu/>

³² More information: <https://www.imec-int.com/en/what-we-offer/development/smart-media-meetups>

- **Universities act as facilitators, supporters, and active members of local start-up ecosystems**

In contrast to cooperative and collaborative activities with established companies, the universities play a more active role with the start-ups. Instead of being removed and observing the entities from the outside, as they do with established media organisations, they take an active role in the local and regional, or even, national ecosystem of start-ups.

- **Study and student programmes are key elements in the collaboration**

All of the successful initiatives include student activities in the form of encouraging entrepreneurial activities. As such, the university activities are crucial for the sustainability of a lively start-up ecosystem, and even for building it up.

- **Long-term commitment is necessary and commonplace**

In contrast to the cooperative and collaborative activities with established media organisations, most of the ScreenME consortium members' activities with start-ups reflect their long-term commitment in the area. Instead of ad hoc and project-based activities, which are very common when working with established media organisations, universities often invest years into working with start-ups in order to build up a network of support for the start-ups and becoming a key player in the ecosystem for innovation.

- **Financial support is made available**

Very often, it is local, regional or national financial support that enables the universities to support these entrepreneurial activities. As entrepreneurial activities play a crucial role for the economy in general, the universities' activities are greatly valued by governmental authorities, which is expressed by financial support being made available.

- **The importance of the university campus as a locality**

Based on the fact that universities themselves are important players in the local start-up ecosystem, the successful examples start-up collaboration prove that the geographic proximity of the incubators to the university is an important factor. Ideally, the incubators are located on campus, thereby enabling rapid communication and joint activities.

4. Creating Successful Collaboration between Universities and the Media Industry

Despite being very important, university-industry collaboration does not always come naturally to university researchers. This chapter focuses on the key challenges to successful collaborative activities and how these challenges can be overcome.

4.1 Key challenges to successful collaborative activities

The discussions at the ScreenME workshops highlighted various key challenges to successful collaborative activities, which mostly coincide with the key obstacles for successful university-industry collaboration compiled by Rohn and Evens (2020). The ScreenME consortium discussed the following challenges in detail:

- **The nature of the academic incentive system**

Although in most universities, social impact and outreach activities play an important role in career evaluation and the assessment of promotions for academics, in reality academic publications are much more important to one's career development. Discussions during our workshops showed that, when evaluating academics, academic publications are more important than teaching activities, only then is industry collaboration considered.

- **A great need for time and financial resources**

The comparatively low importance of industry collaboration in academic incentive systems is of even greater consequence, considering the fact that networking with industry partners is extremely time-consuming. In addition, financial resources are needed for the many networking activities required for setting up collaborative activities with established companies.

- **Difference in the jargon used by academics and industry professionals**

A great challenge lies in the fact that researchers and practitioners very often speak different languages. Researchers often use terminology and abstract concepts that may alienate practitioners who find the language too vague to be applicable to real-life situations. As a result, communications between partners may be difficult, and the expectations of each side may not be clearly formulated. That is why the facilitators, or so-called middlemen (e.g. knowledge transfer offices or other types of mediators), play a crucial role in bringing both parties together.

- **Different understandings of and expectations for the project**

If partners have different understandings of the project, disappointment may occur.

- **Temporary work contracts**

What makes it difficult to build long-term relationships between academic researchers and industry professionals is that neither may have worked for very long in their organisations. Many research contracts are short-termed, and even in the media industry, people may not work for more than three to five years in their position and/or organisation. As a result, networks are fragile and long-term commitment is difficult. This weighs especially heavily as collaboration between researchers and industry professionals very often requires a very long preparation time, in order for the partners to get to know each other, before they can even discover where their journey might take them.

- **The weak institutionalisation of networks**

The experience of many project partners shows that university-industry collaboration may be hindered due to a weak capacity to support networking with necessary institutional arrangements. Although personal contacts are important for initiating and building networks, the institutionalisation of networking is needed to maintain partnerships. People-led networking, especially networking led by only one person, can survive as long as that person remains in the organisation and usually ceases if that person leaves the organisation. This applies to both the university and the industry.

- **The identification of relevant partners**

In terms of collaborating with start-ups, our partners found another challenge for networking

and collaboration, i.e. the identification of relevant start-ups. This is a particular challenge to researchers when dealing with screen media start-ups. Very often, public databases do not break down the selection of start-ups and indicate which ones operate in the media industry. Although incubators and accelerators that offer their services to new ventures in the media sector do exist, such focused start-up support is rare and the services provided by most incubators and pre-incubators do not focus on specific industries.

In conclusion, collaboration with industry partners can be interesting and potentially very useful both for the research and university partners, this is very often not a natural component of an academic's work. The lack of time, finance and human resource combined with an academic incentive system that seems to disadvantage industry collaboration, very often lead to a lack of motivation by researchers to engage in time-intensive networking and collaboration. Given the great potential benefit of university-industry collaboration for improved research and teaching, motivating and supporting university-industry collaboration is crucial.

4.2 Institutional Support for a Successful Collaboration: University Support Centres

4.2.1 Examples of University Support Centres

Our workshops showed that university support centres are useful as facilitators and so-called “middlemen” in helping to make collaboration possible and the related processes smoother. The following is a list of examples of the university support provided by the ScreenME consortium members.

- **LUT University**

At LUT University, Green Campus Open (<https://gco.lut.fi/en/eng-green-campus-open/>) promotes the commercialisation of research and focuses on the development of collaboration between researchers and business enterprises. It also helps researchers apply for so-called ‘Research to Business³³’ funding.

- **Munster Technological University (MTU)**

At MTU, fostering cooperation and collaboration with industry partners is the main task of the **MTU Extended Campus**³⁴. The MTU Extended Campus was established in 2011. It is managed by a customer relationship management system (CRM), and includes active connections for 2,500 organisations on the system. As an interface or facilitator that creates, supports and develops links between the university, enterprises, and community groups, the Extended Campus matches individual and company needs with areas of expertise within MTU. The department acts as entryway for organisations, but also collects business intelligence, that support the university's strategic directions, promote good practices by understanding what has worked and building on this to create a practice guide for future interactions. The Extended Campus has worked to codify and quantify the types and numbers of interactions between the Institution and its external partners. This has led to the identification of three key pillars of engagement:

- Graduate development: work placements, guest lectures, live projects

³³Research to Business: <https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/for-finnish-customers/services/funding/cooperation-between-companies-and-research-organizations/research-to-business>

³⁴ More information: <https://extendedcampus.cit.ie>

- Workforce development: trainings for continuing education
- Research and innovation: equipment & facilities, collaborative research, consulting.

The Extended Campus is uniquely organised on the basis of faculty representatives, who are generally appointed from each of the faculties for a three-year term. Half of their time is financed by the Extended Campus and the other half by their faculty. The faculty representatives are those to whom the queries or questions that are relevant to their particular faculty are directed, they support the cases and keep tabs on the lead interactions to make sure they are being followed up. This role allows not only for the work sets and the queries to be driven in through the faculty, but it also enables the faculty to push out their strengths, their priorities, and their needs and to push work placement.

- **Tallinn University (TLU)**

At TLU, the **EXU platform**³⁵ originally started in 2018 as a one-stop shop for industry partners seeking to collaborate with the university, and as the main source of information about the possibilities for cooperation and collaboration for various stakeholders. Today, the role of the EXU is that of a Tec Transfer mediator, an interpreter between various parties that aims to support the transform knowledge results into products and services and to help formulate business and societal challenges as research tasks. The main activities of EXU are divided into four categories:

- Processing requests from companies, public and third sector parties, preparation of project applications and contracts (reactive activity);
- Taking proactive action to commercialise university knowledge (support for service development and the university's service portfolio, initiating projects to support science commercialisation activities);
- Establishing and maintaining partnerships with the private, public and third sectors;
- Increasing the visibility of university's knowledge: EXU showroom, EXU Academy seminars, various events and marketing activities).
- **Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)**

At VUB, **VUB TechTransfer**³⁶ is a department within the university's Vice-Rectorate for Innovation & Industry Relations and reflects that cooperation among researchers, institutions and companies, including SMEs. The creation of new economic activities in the form of spin-offs is seen as an obvious way to transfer knowledge and technology to society. Governmental and EU research funding and the financing of (industrial) research by local municipalities enable the synergy of the state-industry-university partnership to be maximised.

4.2.2 Key Activities of the Institutional Support Centres

Although the institutional forms may vary, most university support centres of the ScreenME partners conduct the following activities:

- **Introducing measures to researchers and industry partners that facilitate networking between the industry and the university.**

³⁵More information: www.exu.tlu.ee/eng

³⁶ More information: <https://vubtechtransfer.be/>

These include various cooperative public sector measures that are meant to facilitate cooperation between the university and the industry. The most common measures are innovation and development vouchers that help to decrease the monetary risks for the industry, as only self-financing is needed to start a R&D project with the university. The activities to raise awareness are usually accompanied by the provision of application writing support for both parties.

- **Encouraging and supporting researchers to actively take part in entrepreneurship related or oriented Horizon Europe proposals**

All Horizon Europe proposals include a renewed section about impacts in application templates. Compared to the previous funding framework (Horizon 2020), the new approach is linked to Key Impact Pathways (KIPs) which also include societal and economic / technological impacts besides the scientific ones. This presumes that the proposals have to foresee non-academic benefits arising from research and describe how the results of projects impact the companies, public sector and society as a whole. These types of EU proposals also require n-helix partnerships that may take the form of networks with two, three, four or five participants that include industry, public, third sector representatives and/or citizens, already at the level of the project consortia, and thus motivate universities to network with industries. Supporting the researchers in finding non-academic partners and consulting them in writing the impact sections in the proposals is rather common practice.

- **Providing coaching/mentoring in service development and research commercialisation to researchers.**

The aforementioned opportunities to apply for funding usually envision a need to describe the research results according to the technology readiness level (TLR). Consulting with the researchers to and conducting workshops, etc. also help to formulate the possible outcomes of, and fields of application for, their research.

- **Building and maintaining partnerships.**

Proactive activities undertaken to constantly look for partners and be visible in the field are important (participating in relevant events, organising events, engaging with the community, etc.). Both institutional and personal ties are important for maintain partnerships. This presumes a strategic approach to partnerships that includes having a long-term plan and a diverse collaborative portfolio.

- **Being the middleman in negotiations between the companies and the researchers.**

The industry and the university usually speak different languages. To smooth the negotiations, a middleman is needed who can translate the industry challenges into research problems, and the research outcomes into practical results.

- **Providing help in science communications and marketing.**

Communications and marketing are needed for the research to have a greater impact. This includes both more targeted communication as well as general awareness-raising activities.

5. Networking: Key Advice for Gaining Access as well as Building Trust and Relationships

In the context of media management research, a scholarly field that many academics dealing with the screen media industry would identify with, Horst (2020) describes the process of building long-term relationships with industry practitioners through the process of ethnographic inquiry. According to Van Maanen (2011b:151, ethnography is a “technique of gathering research material by subjecting the self – body, belief, personality, emotions, cognitions -- to a set of contingencies that play on each other, so that over time -- usually a long time -- one can more or less see, hear, feel, and come to understand the kinds of responses others display (and withhold) in particular situations.” According to Horst (2020), gaining access and building trust and relationships are two key steps in the ethnographic approach to industry professionals. Our consortium partners also shared their experiences and advice for constructive networking and relationship building. The following lists the key take-aways from our workshops from the researchers’ perspective:

- **Focus on value co-creation**

It is important not only to focus on one's own benefit that the relationship might provide, but to realise and emphasise how the relationship can be beneficial to both the researchers and the industry practitioners and how they can jointly co-create value. A good approach is to pose the question: “What research question can we help you answer?”.

- **Understand the company and its context**

For researchers, it is important to understand the company and the context of the organization when approaching and conversing with the firm. This requires preliminary desktop research.

- **Build social relationships and be authentic**

Authenticity is important for strong and long-lasting relationships with industry professionals. Do not pretend that you are interested in the company and its representatives, if you are not.

- **Be visible to the industry**

Researchers need to leave the comfort zone of their own academic circles, and introduce their names and activities to the industry professionals. There are many ways to increase one’s visibility outside academia. These can include:

- Joining researchers with similar interests. The Esports Research Network serves as an example.
- Promoting your research work in social media and in a form that is also accessible to non-academic audiences.
- Publish and distribute newsletter that serve as industry briefs as well as summaries and promote your recent research projects and findings in an accessible language.

- **Be inclusive and proactive**

The initiative to collaborate rarely comes from the industry professionals themselves. Hence, proactively inviting industry professionals is important. Ways of doing this may include:

- Inviting practitioners to guest talks in study programmes or at academic conferences
- Organising special conferences, symposia and workshops together with industry experts and that aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Examples include the annual conference jointly organised by the Estonian Public Broadcaster ERR and Tallinn University, as well as the Esports Research Network Conference.
- Engage in discussions and reach out to industry professionals during and after they participate in a conference or workshop.

- **Provide industry professionals with a voice and an audience**

Actually, industry professionals like to share their views and enjoy a dialogue with academics that focuses on understanding their situation from various perspectives. Besides inviting industry professionals as guest speakers, researchers can also act as facilitators to provide an audience for industry professionals in a broader sense. The Esports Research Report, a podcast organised by the Esports Research Network, serves as an example. Here, talks with practitioners are broadcast to researchers internationally.

- **Create a community of people both from the industry and academia**

Academics can even be the initiators and facilitators of community-building. The Esports Research Network, for instance, runs a social media channel, a Discord channel, that connects people from industry with academia.

- **Create a pleasant workshop and meeting environment**

It is important to create a pleasant atmosphere at meetings. Frequently, industry partners actually enjoy coming to the university for a meeting as it creates a special atmosphere.

- **Clarify the expectations beforehand**

It is important to be entirely open about what ones expect from the collaboration, and to listen to the partners' expectations.

- **Do not overpromise**

Set realistic expectations. If you disappoint the partners, they will not be interested in a long-term relationship.

- **Listen carefully**

Listening to the partner is key to a mutual understanding. Frequently careful listening will make one receptive to early warning signs about misunderstandings, and signs about how the research questions and/or processes may need to be modified.

- **Avoid academic jargon, but don't be afraid to talk about theories**

Academics and practitioners sometimes don't understand each other as they seem to be speaking different languages. While our partners confirmed that media professionals may, in fact, enjoy being introduced to various theoretical viewpoints and having a theory-based discussion, this talk must be accessible and free of academic jargon.

- **Deliver results and provide an update**

When collaborating with industry partners on specific research projects, let them know what has happened with the information they provided. Though academic publications may not be that relevant, nor interesting, to them, write them a report that summarises the main outcomes in easy-to-understand and accessible language.

- **Take your colleagues on board**

Very often, university-industry collaborations originate from personal relationship between specific people. The challenge is to expand this relationship to larger teams at both the university and the company. Therefore, from the researcher's point of view, it is important to include colleagues in the projects. Ideally, even if someone leaves their institution, the collaborative relationship can still continue.

- **Make use of your alumni network**

Alumni networks can often provide valuable contacts for researchers in order to gain access to an industry. In addition, they often have a special connection to faculty members of their alma mater, which may also prove beneficial for the relationship and the collaboration.

- **Projects need an owner**

When collaborating with the industry, it is very important that on both sides, industry and university, someone feels responsible for it and has project ownership. If not, lack of commitment may jeopardise the project.

- **Do not rush**

Do not rush projects into existence. Sometimes networking and relationship building takes a very long time until trust is established and the project focus is formulated.

- **Projects need to be managed**

When collaborating, it is important that such collaborations are properly managed. This includes setting up deadlines for milestones and deliverables, clear communication and regular project meetings.

- **Be part of problem-solving: use action research method**

When collaborating, apply an interactive inquiry process through which you actively collaborate in defining the research question, and through which you actively take part in their problem-solving situation, while simultaneously conducting your research. Have regular meetings to share research findings and experience, while allowing both research focus and problem-solving solutions to adapt in dialogue.

6. Identified Key Research Interests Shared by Researchers and Media Industry Representatives

The workshops which the ScreenME consortium organised left a lot of room for participants to share with each other and discuss research areas and topics they find most timely and interesting. Especially the conversations between researchers and representatives from the industry proved to be interesting and useful in terms of identifying research interests shared by both researchers and industry representatives.

A common understanding was that the complexity of the media industry and its underlying dynamics call for an interdisciplinary research approach. At best, changes in media industries, markets, and firms are studied not only with consideration of social, economic, cultural and political aspects involved, but also in a collaboration between researchers and industry representatives. The following lists, in no particular order, some of the key research areas and questions that were raised during our workshops. We do not claim that this list is complete in terms of including everything that could be studied, nor do we state that all of the listed research areas and questions have not been studied, yet, though this may be the case for some.

Research with a focus on the sustainability of media (and society)

An overarching research area is that of sustainability. In fact, many of the other research questions in the other research areas can be subsumed under the topic of sustainability. Sustainability entails both environmental as well as economic sustainability. One of the industry representatives in our workshops distinguished three levels of sustainability that any media company is concerned with:

1) Sustainability issues that concern all companies

This regards the wider environmental and social impact of a company. Questions may include:

- How large is the company's carbon footprint, and can it be reduced?
- How to guarantee a work life balance?

2) Sustainability issues that are specific to companies in the media industry

This level of sustainability considers the specific impact and role that media companies have in society. Questions may include:

- How can a company guarantee fact-based journalism of integrity?
- How can audience data be used in an ethical and responsible manner?
- How can free speech and expression be guaranteed, and where are their limitations?
- What are the competencies and skills needed now and in the future?

3) Sustainability issues that concern specific companies

This concerns questions about the continued existence of a company. Questions may include:

- How to adapt a company's business model to changing market and industry dynamics?
- How to enhance a company brand?

Research with a focus on new players in the media industry and the related dynamics

- What new players emerge and what does this mean for the power dynamics in the industry and its markets?
- How do distribution platforms, such as VOD, disrupt the traditional media markets and value chains? What can be the learnings for traditional players? How do these platforms influence innovation and diversity?
- What is the set up and the characteristics of the influencer economy, and how does it impact media firms?
- What is the role of influencers in society?
- What is the relationship between journalism and influencers?

Research with a focus on entrepreneurship

- What are the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs?
- What is the impact of entrepreneurship education?

Research with a focus on diversity

- How to define, measure, and ensure various kinds of diversity?
- What values do various kinds of diversities play for media works, audiences, and society in general?
- What are drivers of diversity?
- What is the connection between a diverse workforce and a company's sustainability?
- How does the power of distribution platforms influence content diversity?
- What is the connection between diversity on the audience side and the organizational side?

Research with a focus on technology

- What is the impact of digital technology on the media labour market and working modes?
- How do new technologies enable new business opportunities for screen media?
- Do new technologies enable or threaten content diversity?
- What is the role of technology and artificial intelligence in content production?
- What technologies enable news journalists the monitoring of social media to detect emerging stories worth reporting about?

- How effective is the use of artificial intelligence to tackle harmful content?

Research with a focus on media content

- What are new forms of content?
- How can the transnational content flow be understood from a small market perspective?
- What are the solutions to fight copyright infringement?

Research with a focus on media company(ies)

- What is the relationship between company size and innovation? How agile can large companies be?
- How do companies learn about new technologies and opportunities?
- How does a diverse workforce contribute to organizational learning?
- How to attract talent?

Research with a focus on production processes

- What is the role of technology and artificial intelligence in content production?
- How does the networked society impact content production?
- How are social media transforming the creation of content?
- How do work processes in the newsroom change due to new forms of social formations (on social media)?

Research with a focus on the shift from analog to digital

- What can legacy media companies learn from digital born companies and start-ups?
- What is the role of social media in a company's transformation from analog to digital?
- What is the relationship between influencers and journalists?

Research with a focus on the wider industry

- What are good practices in other industries that the screen media industry can learn from (and vice versa)?
- Collaboration between start-ups and established media companies
- What is the status quo in terms of worker's gender and age diversity across the screen media industries?

7. Summary: Critical Thinking and Academic Independence as Key Selling Points for Researchers

The great potential of university-industry collaboration lies in the pairing of real-life perceptions and insights with conceptual and theoretical, and even normative, understandings and reflections. Where industry professionals are caught in the timely pressing challenges of their day-to-day businesses, it can be the role of academics to reflect and further investigate occurring issues as well as to see and point to the wider picture of industry behaviour and trends, including their economic as well as wider societal impact. As such, the great potential of collaborative activities between academic researchers and industry professionals lies in their contribution to an improved understanding of the screen media industries, and, by extension, to a vivid and sustainable industry itself.

For academic screen media industry researchers, collaborative activities with the industry lead to greater insights into their subject of study, the industry. Based on Lazarsfeld's (1944) distinguished between administrative and critical research, Rohn and Evens (2020a, b) point to the great potential of academic scholarship where critical research and administrative research go hand in hand. In fact, the difference between academic research and consultancy work is that academic research, in contrast to consultancy work, engages not only in administrative but also in critical research. Critical research, therefore, is paramount to academic scholarly work, and it is only possible where academic freedom and intellectual independence exist. Also, and especially, when cooperating and collaborating with industry partners.

Rohn and Evens (2020b) reflect on academic independence in detail. Accordingly, academic independence entails those researchers, although closely working with industry professionals, need to be free in their choice of what to research and how to conduct their research. Furthermore, they need to be independent in their review and potentially criticism of the behaviour of their industry partners. Academics also need to be allowed to publish their studies including their own conclusions in academically relevant forms and journals. For maintaining academic independence, great transparency in terms of the partners roles, their expectations as well as the ethical standards is needed. When this exist, our partners' experience has shown, the mutual benefits of university-industry collaborations are profound. And one of the key learnings when talking to industry professionals at the ScreenME workshops was that they, in fact, highly valued academic independence that led to critical thinking and open discussions. The main selling point for them in choosing to work with university partners was not only their capability to study and point to the wider picture, but also their honesty in terms of their interpretation of study results. An honesty that they were not always certain to get from paid consultancy, at least not to that degree.

8. References and Links

Websites of mentioned institutes and projects:

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EXIST: www.exist.de

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Mediapolis: <https://mediapolis.fi/en/>

MTU Extended Campus: <https://extendedcampus.cit.ie>

MUNSTER TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, IRELAND (MTU) <https://www.mtu.ie/>

Munster Technological University's Rubicon Centre: <https://mediafastforward.be/>

Next Media Accelerator: <https://nmavc.super.site/about>

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Research to Business:

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Screen Brussels: <https://screen.brussels/en>

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TALLINN UNIVERSITY, ESTONIA (TLU) www.tlu.ee

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The Kitchen: <https://thekitchen.io/>

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL, BELGIUM (VU) <https://www.vub.be>

VRT Sandbox programme: <https://sandbox.vrt.be/>

VUB TechTransfer: <https://vubtechtransfer.be/>

ScreenMe blog posts

1) How to Enable Long-Term Collaboration between Universities and Societal Actors: A ScreenME Study Visit to the Media, Management, and Transformation Centre (15th November 2021).

<https://screenme.tlu.ee/uncategorized/how-to-enable-long-term-collaboration-between-universities-and-societal-actors-a-screenme-study-visit-to-the-media-management-and-transformation-centre/>

2) Strengthening the start-up climate around Technische Universität Ilmenau (29th October 2021)
<https://screenme.tlu.de/uncategorized/strengthening-the-start-up-climate-around-technische-universitat-ilmenau/>

3) University Collaboration with Media Start-Ups (15th September 2021)
<https://screenme.tlu.de/uncategorized/screen-media-networking-and-the-role-of-universities-in-supporting-screen-media-entrepreneurship/>

4) Networked world is beautiful. And it destroys the traditional journalistic processes (18th May 2021)
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