Building an entrepreneurial university: A case study of the University of Tartu

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Background: Where do we come from?

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- From the late 1980s to the early 1990s – transition from the centrally planned to market economy
- 1994-2000 – a certain degree of economic stabilization and revival
- 2000 ... – formation of a sustainable, balanced R&D&I and HE system
- 2008-2010 economic crisis

- creation of a new R&D policy framework (legislative base, funding system, data collection and analysis system);
- thorough evaluation of research and research institutions (1991 and 1994), restructuring of the R&D system (integration of research institutes into universities);
- The Universities Act and the University of Tartu Act adopted by the Estonian Parliament (1995)
- implementation of Bologna reforms
- continuation of higher education reforms (HE quality issues, support for internationalisation, implementation of performance-based funding)

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Background: institutional funding

- The funding of HE institutions has evolved in the direction of greater autonomy for institutions;
- Universities have considerable autonomy in terms of managing their finances, staff and assets (such as land and buildings);
- The government's role in HE sector is rather steering than direction or control.
- R&D funding is highly competitive (project based funding was >90% of total university R&D funding in 2015). The main national financing instruments for RD:

  - baseline financing based on the results of RD activities (publications, PhD-s awarded, contracts directly related to R&D activities, income from IP);
  - institutional and personal research grants;
  - infrastructure expenses.

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Governance & structural reform at UT
Why? (1/2)

The principles of allocating (national) funding for teaching and research were changed:

- teaching funds were no longer allocated to the university based on the number of study places/graduates commissioned by the state, but based on on the performance agreement concluded between the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) and the university. The performance agreements stipulate the main quantitative and qualitative performance indicators and admission targets.
- research funding principles were reformed towards transition to full cost research grants (allocated in four specified fields of research which partly coincide with the four broad research areas within university). There has been no increase in funding – resulting in less research groups being funded.

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Governance & structural reform at UT
Why? (2/2)

- The university staff was dispersed and compartmentalized into different specialized directions [which hampered interdisciplinary cooperation];
- The existing academic units were extremely unequal and incomparable in terms of size and capacities (the number of employees and students, finances, research-intensiveness), at the same time they had to carry out the same administrative duties and responsibilities;
- Having larger subunits with a clear vision and a long-term strategy would stabilize the processes of goal-setting and budgeting, and would enable a more flexible response to the changing needs of the society;
- Consolidation of main activities (teaching and research) into broad research-area based faculties would reduce unnecessary duplication within and between the curricula.

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Which objectives were set? (1/2)

- To enable the university to meet the expectations of the society and students fast and in the best possible way – an imperative in a dynamically developing society.
- To turn the breadth of a classical university into a competitive advantage, yet without trying to cover all scientific disciplines.
- To remove formal obstacles and create stimuli for cooperation, joint planning, and bearing of responsibility .
- To make the units of academic structure more equal in terms of administrative capacity and responsibilities, and more comparable in size.
- To create more objective background for decision-making by incorporating all academic units into broader research fields.

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Which objectives were set? (2/2)

- To reduce academic competition within the university, optimise the usage of space, and ensure the balanced development of professorships between specific research & teaching directions.
- To achieve a more balanced academic structure of the university:
  - the four areas of teaching and research function as a coordination level
  - reduction of the number of institutes (from 80 to 25)
- To increase the financial stability of the newly established academic units, and to enhance their ability to obtain larger research grants, carry out more influential research, and more efficient teaching and learning in the future.

Governance and structure since 2016

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COUNCIL (11)
the highest decision-making body, responsible for the long-term development of the university and for ensuring the achievement of the university's objectives

5 UT employees | 6 external members

Budget committee

Audit committee

SENATE (22)
the highest academic decision-making body, responsible for the university's teaching, research and development activities

rector | 16 UT employees | 5 students

RECTOR
head of the university

RECTORATE (11)
coordinates the implementation of decisions at structural units of the university

rector | vice rectors and area directors | deans

FACULTIES
ARTS AND HUMANITIES
SOCIAL SCIENCES
MEDICINE
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

INSTITUTIONS
ESTONIAN GENOME CENTRE
LIBRARY
MUSEUMS AND BOTANICAL GARDEN
YOUTH ACADEMY

Strategic Plan 2015–2020

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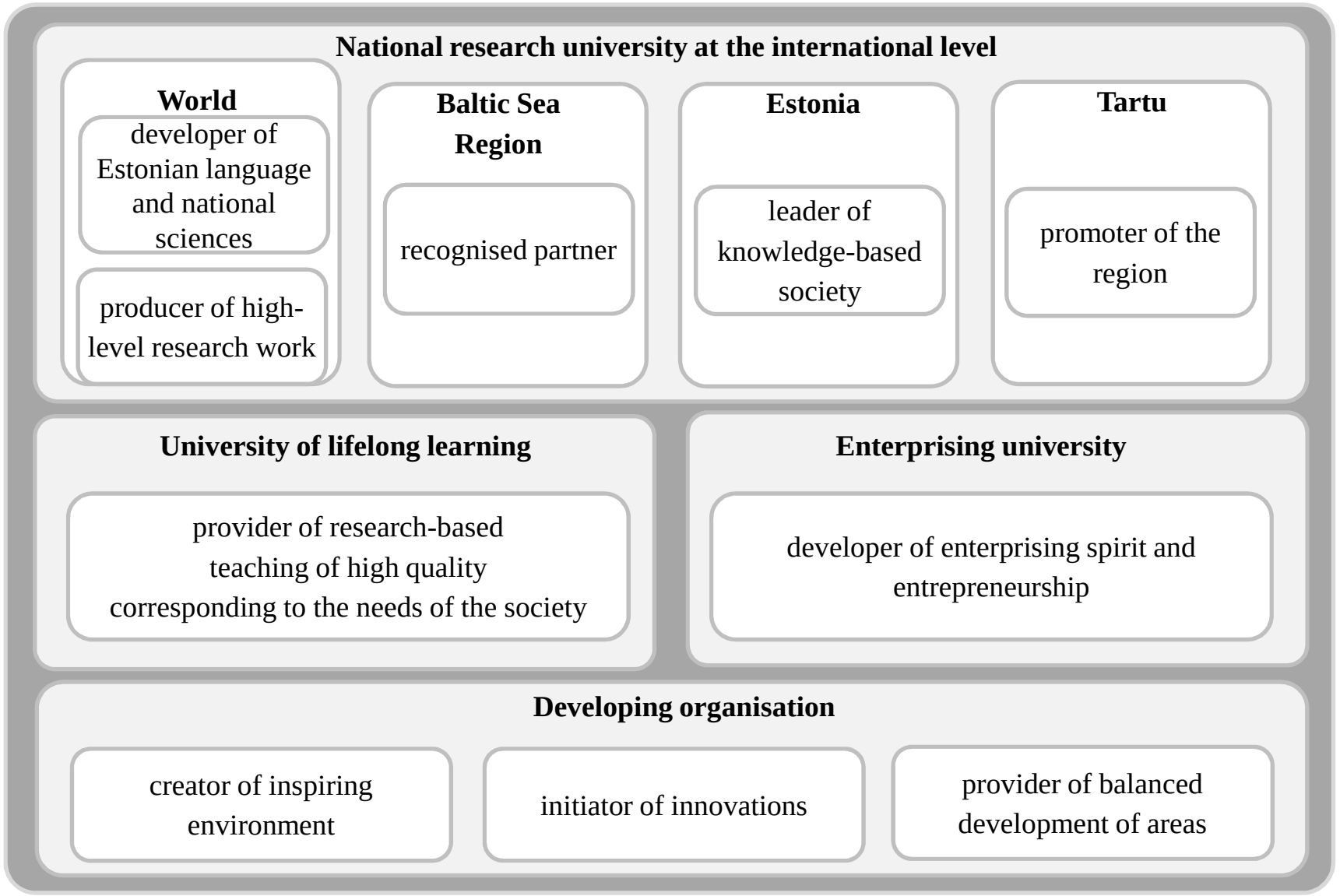

What has been done?

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- University Development fund.
- Hierarchy of strategic documents:
  - yearly operational plans (indicating the sources of funding);
  - performance agreements.
- A new position, Vice Rector for Development, was established and the program of 'entrepreneurial university' was started.
- The UT strategic plan defines the „entrepreneurial spirit" as one of the main pillars of development:
- - knowledge transfer from the academic community to the society and companies where more traditional 'intellectual property' based approach is substituted with wider knowhow transfer and services approach;
  - developing creativity and entrepreneurship skills of students through new courses and intellectual team-work (UT Idea Lab).
- Support from the EU structural funds: Programme of systematic development of entrepreneurship education at all levels of higher education.
- Establishment of a corporate partnership programme between the university and companies (or government agencies).
- Counseling of university spin-off companies.

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UT's position in two major world university rankings (2012-2016)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
• THE World University Rankings	351–400	351–400	-	351–400	301–350
• QS World University Rankings	501–550	461–470	379	400	347

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UT' performance in the QS World University Rankings by Subject

Subject	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Communication & Media Studies	151–200	51–100	51–100	101–150	101–150
Linguistics					101–150
English Language & Literature				201–250	251–300
Modern Languages		151–200	151–200	251–300	251–300
Medicine				301–350	301–350
Computer Science & Information Systems					401–450
Philosophy				151–200	
History & Archaeology			151–200		

Performance of small countries'(pop. under 4 mln) universities in THE WUR 2015-2016

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Rank	University	Country	Teaching	International Outlook	Research	Citations	Industry Income
178	University of Luxembourg	Luxembourg	29.7	99.9	30.0	85.8	40.6
201–250	University of Iceland	Iceland	16.9	60.3	27.6	92.0	52.7
301–350	**University of Tartu**	**Estonia**	**23.6**	**48.4**	**23.1**	**80.9**	**34.5**
351–400	University of Cyprus	Cyprus	19.1	75.0	25.4	66.6	34.7
351–400	University of Macau	Macau	21.5	98.8	22.0	53.3	46.3
401–500	Cyprus University of Technology	Cyprus	17.1	67.0	13.1	70.3	34.0
501–600	University of Maribor	Slovenia	16.0	35.5	13.1	51.2	39.6

UT's challenges in R&D

- Focusing of UT's R&D priorities on national and international concerns:

- sustainability of the Estonian culture in an open world;
- entrepreneurial and socially responsible society;
- healthy and active long-lived people;
- resources and technologies for environmentally friendly economic growth;
- information and communication technology for developing an innovative society.

- Enabling public access to UT's research facilities (laboratory equipment and devices, collections and archives, structured information or a complex of these);
- Achieving sustainability in the highly competitive R&D project funding (>90% of total university R&D funding in 2015);
- Increasing the visibility of the traditional university as the main contributor to the technological development of the society.

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UT's challenges in education

- consolidation or merging of study programs to avoid duplication and internal competition;
- focusing on the entrepreneurship education (including other transferable skills) – developing general and study area specific new subjects on all levels of higher education;
- introduction of new methods of learning and teaching;
- increasing the number (and widening the range) of English-taught study programs;
- implementation of performance-based funding model.

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Thank You!