

InnovNation Conference 2025 - Event Report

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1. Introduction

The InnovNation Conference 2025, organized by Berytech, set the stage for a transformative dialogue on building Lebanon's innovation ecosystem. The event gathered change makers, entrepreneurs, researchers, and policy leaders united by the conviction that innovation is a collective endeavour, one that relies on the collaboration of government, academia, industry, and business support organizations with the aim of strengthening the IP and technology transfer enabling environment.

Opening the conference, Ramy Boujawdeh, COO of Berytech, underscored that "while hope fuels our aspirations, it must be accompanied by decisive action and commitment to turn research into tangible economic growth and sustainable solutions". His remarks resonated with the dynamic energy captured in the conference's opening short movie, which showcased a room filled with passionate individuals ready to push boundaries and shape the future of innovation in Lebanon. These opening insights not only set an inspiring tone for the day but also articulated the conference's core message: that building a thriving innovative ecosystem requires a unified, holistic approach and a clear strategic vision.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the event, summarizing the sessions and fireside chats, outlining the key takeaways from each discussion, and detailing the actionable recommendations offered by our experts. By distilling the collective insights and shared commitments of the day, the report aims to serve as a roadmap for harnessing Lebanon's potential and accelerating its journey toward an innovation-driven economy.

2. Event Overview

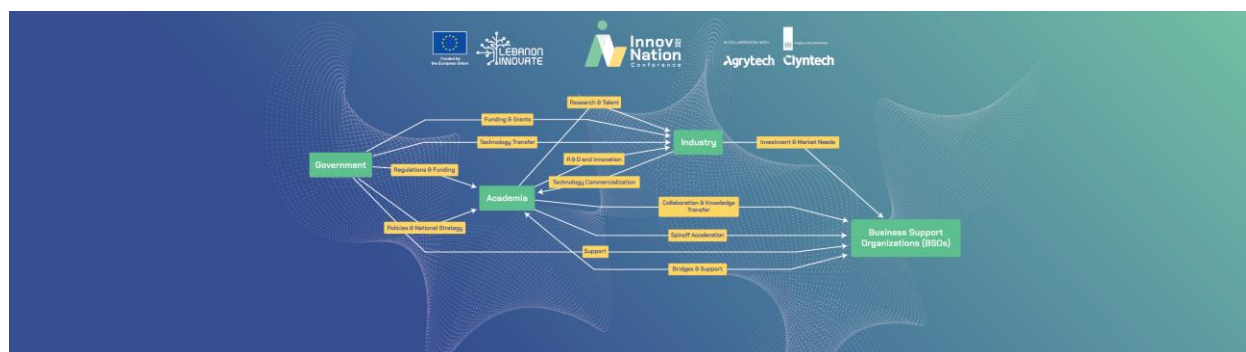
The InnovNation Conference 2025 took place on February 27, 2025, at the Mövenpick Hotel, Beirut. The half-day event brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including representatives from academia, industry, government, Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), and Business Support Organizations, along with researchers, entrepreneurs, legal professionals, and other key players. It provided a platform for dynamic discussions, knowledge exchange, and networking opportunities, all aimed at fostering innovation and strengthening Lebanon's innovation ecosystem.

The event was organized under the Lebanon Innovate program, a pioneering initiative funded by the European Union (EU) dedicated to fostering innovation and economic growth. Additionally,

it was supported by the Agrytech and Cleantech accelerators, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, showcasing collaborative efforts to develop Lebanon's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The conference featured a series of keynote speeches, fireside chats, and panel discussions focused on the challenging components of Lebanon's innovation landscape.

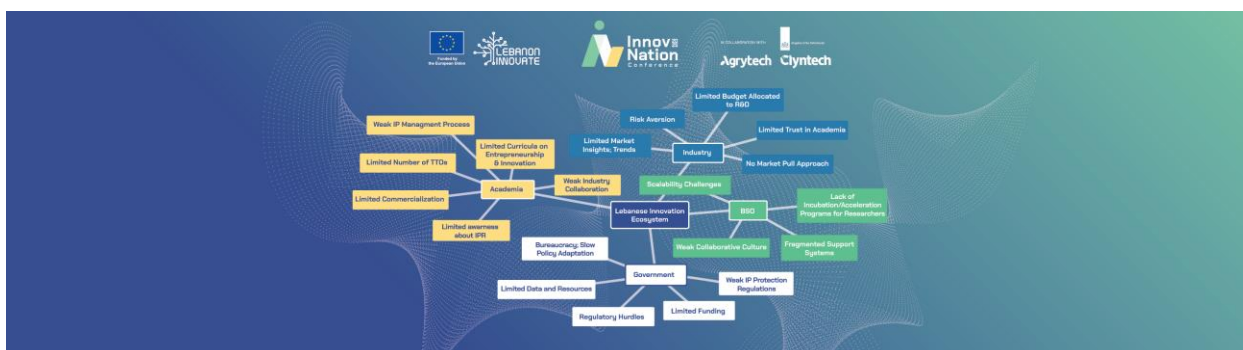
3. Session's insights and Key Takeaways



a. Shaping the future of the innovation ecosystem in Lebanon (Fireside Chat insights)

The "Fireside Chat 1" featured an engaging discussion with three key speakers from Berytech: Nadine Slim (Program Manager), Krystel Khalil (Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program) and Lara Khoury (Programs Director – Innovation Hub). They shared valuable insights on the evolving innovation landscape in Lebanon, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities shaping the ecosystem.

The discussion delved into the key challenges and priorities shaping Lebanon's innovation ecosystem, with a particular focus on the Lebanon Innovate program. Speakers highlighted critical barriers, including limited budgets, weak national intellectual property (IP) policies, limited market resources, and lack of national IP support measures within the Lebanese government. The program seeks to bridge the gap between academia and industry by fostering knowledge transfer and innovation-driven collaboration. A key emphasis was placed on mapping the ecosystem, identifying gaps, and designing activities driven by market needs. The conversation also highlighted the vital role of accelerator programs in supporting startups and entrepreneurs, and the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders, including academia, industry, and business support organizations. Ultimately, the goal is to create a value proposition for every type of stakeholder and propel innovation forward.



Key Takeaways:

1. **Addressing systemic challenges:** Lebanon's innovation ecosystem faces key challenges, including limited funding, weak national IP policies, constrained market resources, and bureaucratic obstacles. Overcoming these challenges requires coordinated efforts among stakeholders to create a more supportive environment for innovation.
2. **Bridging academia and industry:** The Lebanon Innovate program plays a crucial role in fostering knowledge transfer and collaboration between academic institutions and the private sector. Mapping the ecosystem, identifying gaps, and designing market-driven initiatives are essential steps to strengthen this connection and drive impactful innovation.
3. **Empowering startups through collaboration:** Accelerator programs and business support organizations are instrumental in nurturing startups and entrepreneurs. Strengthening partnerships between academia, industry, and support networks is vital to creating a well-rounded ecosystem that provides value for all stakeholders and ensures long-term sustainability.

b. Bridging Academia and Industry (Panel 1 discussion)

Panel 1 of the event, moderated by Emma Shaffu, Director of Communications and Outreach at Berytech, brought together representatives from academia, industry, and research centers to explore the vital intersection of academia and industry in shaping Lebanon's innovation landscape. This session examined how universities have been driving research, fostering entrepreneurship, and tackling societal challenges, while also highlighting the invaluable partnerships with industry that amplify these efforts. Divided into three parts, the panel offered a dynamic and interactive discussion on the evolving relationship between academia and industry, and the opportunities and challenges that arise from their collaboration.

i. Panel 1 – Part 1

Part 1 of the panel explored the evolving relationship between academia and industry, focusing on how universities are increasingly addressing societal challenges through

research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Speakers Dr. Fadia Homeidan, Senior Advisor to the Provost for Technology Transfer, Entrepreneurship, and Institutional Projects at AUB, and Pr. Richard Maroun, Vice-Rector for Research at USJ, discussed the evolving relationship between academia and industry, emphasizing the role of universities in addressing societal challenges through research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The conversation focused on the importance of universities moving beyond traditional teaching and research to engage in academic entrepreneurship, with a focus on “translational research” that benefits society. One key point discussed was the shifting priorities within universities, where innovation is increasingly being valued alongside traditional academic outputs like publications. The panel emphasized that innovation, public service, and societal impact are now key criteria for faculty promotions and academic advancement. To support this shift, universities are updating policies on intellectual property, research funding, and commercialization, with initiatives such as technology transfer units and internal grants to encourage faculty and students to engage in entrepreneurial ventures.

Responsible research was also a central theme, with some institutions requiring ethical reviews for all projects, alongside efforts to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Sustainability is also a growing focus, with universities implementing green initiatives like waste-to-energy projects. Despite progress, academia-industry collaboration remains challenging due to a lack of trust and familiarity, though programs like the Lebanese Innovation and Research Award (LIRA) are working to bridge this gap. Universities are also strengthening inter-institutional partnerships through joint research, academic programs, and initiatives like collaborative healthcare research, joint diplomas, and international patent filings. While competition remains in rankings, there is a shared responsibility to serve society.

Key takeaways:

- **Universities as innovation hubs:** Higher education institutions are expanding their role beyond teaching and research to actively drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and societal impact.
- **Academic Entrepreneurship and translational research:** Encouraging faculty and students to engage in academic entrepreneurship enables the transfer of research from the lab to the public, fostering economic growth and addressing societal challenges.
- **Evolving academic priorities:** Innovation, public service, and social impact are increasingly recognized alongside traditional academic outputs like publications, influencing faculty evaluations and institutional policies.

- **Bridging academia and industry:** Building a culture of collaboration between universities and industry is key to fostering trust, driving translational research, and enabling commercialisation through technology transfer offices, funding programmes, and institutional support.
- **Responsible and interdisciplinary research:** Universities are embedding responsible innovation principles by prioritizing ethical and socially relevant research interdisciplinary collaboration, sustainability and societal impact.
- **University collaboration for greater impact:** Partnerships between academic institutions enhance research capabilities, facilitate knowledge exchange, and contribute to more effective problem-solving on local and global scales.

ii. Panel 1 – Part 2

Part 2 of the panel featured Dr. Nadine Nassif, Dean of the Faculty of Agronomy at Lebanese University, and Dr. Elise Noujeim, Advisor for Partnership & International Programme at CNRS-Lebanon and Director of Food Security & Agriculture at Fair Trade Lebanon, who shared insights on the state of higher education and research in Lebanon. The discussion explored the strengths, opportunities, and challenges faced by the Lebanese University (LU) as the country's sole national university, highlighting its resilience and commitment to education despite severe financial and other constraints. LU's recent academic achievements and international accreditations were emphasized, along with efforts to enhance productivity and foster collaboration with innovation hubs and industry. The discussion also underscored the importance of public-private partnerships in strengthening the education system, drawing parallels with the UK's investment in public education as a model for accessibility and excellence. Research funding was another key focus, with insights into how the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) prioritizes excellence and national impact over institutional affiliations, ensuring equal opportunities for both public and private universities. The panel also explored the dynamic relationship between academia and industry, highlighting the sources of research ideas and the need to align research with industry demands. Emphasizing the crucial role of collaboration in driving Lebanon's innovation ecosystem, the discussion concluded with a call to build trust in research by showcasing concrete examples of its tangible impact in addressing national challenges, ultimately shaping policy and guiding informed decision-making.

Key Takeaways

- **The Lebanese University's resilience and role in education:** Despite financial challenges, the Lebanese University (LU) maintains a strong academic reputation and continues to collaborate with various projects and industries, demonstrating its resilience and commitment to education.

- **The importance of public-private partnerships for innovation:** Successful innovation relies on the collaboration between academia and industry. Universities must align their research with societal and industrial needs to maximize impact.
- **Research funding based on excellence and national priorities:** Funding agencies like the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) prioritize research excellence and the impact of projects rather than favoring specific institutions, ensuring that all universities, both public and private, are supported based on the quality of their research.
- **Building trust in research through impactful examples:** Concrete examples of impactful research are necessary to build trust with policymakers and the public.

iii. Panel 1 - Part 3

Part 3 of the panel examined innovative university funding models and industry-academia collaboration, with insights from Dr. Ali Ammouri, Director of the LAU Industrial Hub, and Mr. Karim Ghorayeb, Operational Excellence Lead at Algorithm. The discussion focused on innovative university funding models, particularly the role of industrial hubs as a third revenue stream. These hubs act as bridges between academia and industry by providing consultancy services, fast-track solutions for businesses, and experiential learning opportunities for students. The model is adaptable and has the potential for replication by institutions seeking alternative funding sources while fostering stronger industry linkages.

However, challenges were raised regarding the potential commercialization of research at the expense of academic depth, curriculum shifts favoring corporate interests, and potential conflicts of interest for faculty engaged in both research and commercialization. The response emphasized that faculty have diverse research interests, with some prioritizing theoretical work and others engaging with industry. The model aims to integrate societal and industry needs without compromising academic integrity, ensuring research output remains relevant while fostering innovation.

The discussion extended to industry perspectives, particularly in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, where R&D faces high regulation and financial barriers. While large-scale research collaboration remains challenging, alternative engagement models include joint educational programs, faculty consultancy opportunities, industry-led courses, and student exposure to real-world challenges through rotational internships. These initiatives help students navigate an increasingly complex job market and equip them with industry-relevant skills.

The session concluded with a strong call for deeper trust between industry and academia, emphasizing that collaboration is essential for innovation. Industry stakeholders were encouraged to recognize the value academia can bring, while universities were urged to maintain openness to industry partnerships. The panel

highlighted the necessity of a structured, triangular framework involving universities, industry, and business support mechanisms to ensure innovations reach the market effectively.

Key Takeaways

- **Industrial hubs as a revenue stream:** Universities can diversify funding through industrial hubs that offer consultancy services, fast track solutions, an industry-specific training while strengthening academia-industry linkages and maintaining academic independence.
- **Balancing research and commercialization:** While industry collaborations drive applied research, universities must prioritize fundamental research and knowledge creation. A dual-track approach allows faculty to pursue both theoretical research and industry-driven projects based on their interests and expertise.
- **Bridging the skills gap through experiential learning:** Industry-academia collaboration should focus on equipping students with industry relevant skills through tailored internships, sponsored projects, industry-led courses and joint academic programmes.
- **Addressing trust and institutional barriers:** Successful collaboration requires overcoming concerns about academic independence, corporate influence, and conflicts of interest through clear policies and transparency.
- **Building a structured innovation ecosystem:** A successful university-industry collaboration model requires a structured triangular framework involving academia, industry, and business support mechanisms.

c. Critical Role of Public and Private Investment in Driving Innovation and R&D (Fireside Chat 2)

In a fireside chat on the Critical Role of Public and Private Investment in Driving Innovation and R&D, Mr. Nicolas Farhat, Senior Director at Berytech, engaged Mr. Maroun Chammas, Chairman and CEO of Berytech, in a discussion on the key challenges and opportunities shaping Lebanon's entrepreneurial landscape. Mr. Chammas highlighted the structural barriers hindering innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment in Lebanon, emphasizing that basic infrastructure, electricity, water, telecom, and a stable legal framework, must be in place before expecting growth in R&D and venture investment. He underscored the brain drain as a major challenge, with talent leaving for better opportunities abroad. Mr. Chammas stressed that Berytech's strength lies in implementation rather than just strategy, turning grants into sustainable initiatives, such as QOOT Agri-Food Innovation Cluster, and leveraging donor funding to attract private investment. He shared innovative financing mechanisms, including grant-matching models, such as WE4F (Water and Energy

for Food Grand Challenge) innovation hub, where every \$1 in grants is matched with \$5 from the private sector, maximizing impact. He also highlighted creative financial solutions implemented through programs like SOS (Save Our Startups) and SMEF (Scale Manufacture and Export Fund), which took deposits that were stuck at Lebanese banks and converted them into fresh dollars, enabling entrepreneurs and SMEs to access much-needed funding. Additionally, he discussed how donor-funded initiatives were leveraged to provide short-term loans for businesses transitioning from diesel to solar energy, as well as revenue-sharing models where financial support was tied to a company's growth rather than traditional interest-based lending. Mr. Chammas also provided insights into investment decision-making, highlighting the importance of a well-prepared pitch, a committed entrepreneur, a strong value proposition, and a scalable market. He reinforced that while temporary financial solutions have helped sustain Lebanon's entrepreneurial ecosystem, long-term growth requires systemic economic reforms and a shift in governance to restore investor confidence.

Key Takeaways

- **Innovation needs a strong foundation:** Without basic infrastructure, electricity, telecom, and a stable legal framework, Lebanon cannot fully support innovation and R&D ecosystem. These structural gaps need to be addressed first to create an environment where businesses can grow.
- **Turning challenges into opportunities:** Despite Lebanon's economic crisis, creative financial models like grant-matching and alternative funding structures have helped startups secure funding and scale. These innovative approaches show that solutions exist even in difficult conditions.
- **The role of implementers in driving change:** Business support organizations like Berytech are not just strategists but implementers, ensuring that funding programs translate into sustainable, growth-driven initiatives that fuel Lebanon's innovation landscape.
- **Investing in people to sustain innovation:** Lebanon's innovation ecosystem must focus on retaining talent by creating competitive opportunities and financial incentives. A knowledge-based economy can only thrive if researchers, entrepreneurs, and skilled professionals are supported and fairly compensated.
- **Building investor confidence:** Entrepreneurs must present well-structured proposals, demonstrate commitment, and target scalable markets beyond Lebanon. However, for sustained investment, Lebanon needs strong economic reforms and better governance to rebuild trust and draw in capital.

d. Government's Role in Innovation (Panel 2 discussion)

Panel 2 delved into the government's pivotal role in fostering innovation in Lebanon, beyond just financial support, by focusing on the development of policies, strategies, and regulatory frameworks aimed at enhancing collaboration between the public and private sectors to build a more robust innovation ecosystem. Moderated by Ramy Boujawdeh, Chief Operating Officer of Berytech, the panel featured Eng. Chantal Akl, Director General of the Ministry of Industry, and Dr. Mohamad Abou Haidar, Director General of the Ministry of Economy and Trade. The interactive format of the panel allowed for audience member Souheir Nadde, Intellectual Property & International Trade Law Expert, to join the discussion and ask questions to the panelists, ensuring a dynamic, engaging, and audience-driven conversation. The panel discussion explored Lebanon's evolving innovation and research landscape, emphasizing the vital roles of industrial modernization, digital transformation, and intellectual property (IP) in driving economic recovery. Panelists highlighted the need for stronger collaboration between academia, industry, and government to enhance research-driven industrial growth and foster a more competitive business environment.

Discussions focused on the Ministry of Industry's efforts to modernize the sector, including the expansion of industrial clusters, the promotion of clean and sustainable technologies, and the acceleration of industrial digitization. Additionally, the importance of partnerships between universities and industrial stakeholders was recognized as crucial for bridging the gap between research and commercialization.

The Ministry of Economy and Trade highlighted the crucial role of innovation in Lebanon's economic recovery, pointing to recent progress in patent registrations and the country's active participation in international expos to promote local startups. The panel also acknowledged Lebanon's 94th ranking in the 2024 Global Innovation Index (GII) and underscored ongoing reforms to strengthen the innovation ecosystem. Digitalization is a key priority, with the launch of a ministry application aimed at improving public sector efficiency and restoring trust. In parallel, work is underway on a strategic economic vision for 2030-2035, designed to build a sustainable business model with clear mid-term objectives. Given that SMEs make up 90% of Lebanon's economy, the ministry is negotiating a draft law to introduce incentives and support mechanisms tailored to their needs. Women's economic empowerment is also a focal point, alongside efforts to strengthen the startup ecosystem through incubators and EU-backed programs. These initiatives aim to drive research and development (R&D), create a more competitive business environment, and ultimately improve Lebanon's standing in the GI.

A key segment of the discussion focused on IP as a cornerstone of economic growth. Panelists stressed the need to protect Lebanese products through geographical indications (GIs) and international trademark registration, particularly in light of Lebanon's

ongoing efforts to align its IP framework with global standards. Legislative updates, including Lebanon's initiative to accede to the Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks and discussions on the potential benefits of joining additional international IP agreements, were also highlighted.

Looking ahead, the panel emphasized the importance of continued reforms to build trust in the public sector, implement effective industrial and trade policies, and foster an environment conducive to startups and SMEs. By prioritizing IP protection, accelerating digital transformation, and promoting collaborative innovation, Lebanon aims to strengthen its position in the global innovation ecosystem and pave the way for sustainable economic growth.

Key Takeaways:

- **Strengthening Lebanon's innovation ecosystem:** Lebanon is advancing its innovation landscape through industrial modernization, digital transformation, and stronger collaboration between academia, industry, and government. Upcoming initiatives will focus on technology transfer, commercialization, and expanding innovation clusters to support economic recovery.
- **Boosting research & industrial competitiveness:** Efforts to bridge the gap between research and industry include expanding industrial zones, supporting SMEs, and launching public-private partnerships. New measures will fund applied research, offer incentives for startups, and promote technology adoption. Focus is placed on digitization, industrial clusters, and the adoption of clean technologies, with a push towards Industry 4.0.
- **Addressing Lebanon's Global Innovation Index ranking:** Lebanon is prioritizing structural reforms, digital transformation, and public-private collaboration to enhance innovation. A national economic vision for 2030-2035 is being developed, with a strong focus on supporting SMEs (which comprise 90% of Lebanon's economy) through new incentives, legislative reforms, and EU-backed startup incubators.
- **Intellectual property as a growth driver:** Strengthening IP protection, including geographical indications (GIs) and international trademark registration, is a priority, with Lebanon working toward aligning its IP framework with global standards, including accession to the Madrid System for the international registration of marks.
- **Strengthening governance and public-private collaboration for innovation:** Restoring trust in the public sector through digitalization and efficient governance is essential for economic recovery. At the same time, stronger public-private partnerships (PPPs) are needed to scale up innovation, support industrial research, and transition Lebanon toward a more competitive, knowledge-based

economy. The use of real, data-driven policymaking will be crucial in ensuring that industrial research aligns with market needs and enhances economic impact.

e. Support from Business Support Organizations (BSOs) (Panel 3 discussion)

Panel 3, moderated by Lara Khoury, Director of Programs, featured insights from Dr. Nancy Saliba (Director at Asher Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship), Dr. Talal Salem (Innergy), and Ms. Huda Saigh (Associate Director at EBRD), setting the stage for a discussion on how Business Support Organizations (BSOs) and academic expertise drive innovation. The panel explored how academia, industry, and business support organizations (BSOs) can collaborate to drive innovation and entrepreneurship. A key focus was on how entrepreneurs with academic backgrounds contribute valuable research-driven insights that can enhance accelerator programs and business support strategies. Speakers emphasized the value of academic expertise in entrepreneurship, particularly in research methodologies, data analysis, and access to skilled talent and lab facilities. They also highlighted that while universities generate significant research, much of it remains untapped due to structural barriers. Many researchers struggle to commercialize their work, as academic institutions often prioritize publications over market-driven applications. Addressing this challenge requires policy changes and better incentives to encourage collaboration between academia and industry.

The discussion also highlighted lessons learned from running accelerators and innovation programs. Speakers shared how structured funding mechanisms help businesses access academic research, following a step-by-step process from validating early-stage ideas to refining products and scaling them for market entry. By reducing risks for companies and offering targeted support at various stages, these programs help bridge the gap between research and commercialization.

Successful case studies demonstrated how incubators and accelerators play a pivotal role in guiding startups through this journey, helping them secure funding, refine business models, and connect with industry partners. The panel emphasized that successful innovation depends on a strong ecosystem where universities, BSOs, and industry players actively collaborate. Ultimately, the key to transforming research into real-world impact lies in fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, building trust between researchers and businesses, and creating pathways that move ideas from the lab to the market.

Key Takeaways:

- **Collaboration is key:** Strong coordination between universities, ministries, industry groups, and business support organizations is essential for successful innovation programs. Building on previous initiatives and working closely with key partners helps drive impactful results.

- **The Power of collective action:** Bringing together resources, expertise, and advisory support in shared spaces fosters collaboration and amplifies impact. By joining forces, stakeholders can create real impact and drive positive change for the future.
- **Bridging research and industry:** Businesses need to trust research to drive innovation, while researchers must step out of their comfort zones, moving beyond applied research to engage with the market. With the support of incubators and accelerators, both industry and academia must make the effort to build trust and collaboration to turn research into market-ready solutions.
- **Structured support for product development:** Phased programs that guide startups from early-stage validation to market scaling are essential for reducing the risks associated with innovation. These programs help businesses leverage academic research and manage the challenges of product development more effectively.
- **Support for SMEs in R&D:** Providing targeted support to SMEs in their research and development efforts is crucial. This includes ensuring they have access to research facilities, skilled talent, and funding mechanisms that help bring their ideas to market.

4. Recommendations

Lebanon is entering a critical phase of transformation in its innovation and research landscape, driven by ongoing efforts to modernize industry, strengthen intellectual property protection, and integrate digital technologies. While significant challenges remain, strategic initiatives are being implemented to build a more competitive and research-driven economy. Considering these efforts, the following recommendations reflect the key takeaways from discussions at the InnovNation Conference 2025 and aim to address both the immediate barriers and long-term needs of Lebanon's innovation ecosystem. These recommendations are divided into two main groups: those that require government action to create the right policy environment, and those that can be driven by the private sector and academia independently. Together, these strategies provide a roadmap for navigating Lebanon's current challenges and advancing its innovation landscape.

a. Strengthening Lebanon's Innovation Ecosystem: Policy and Governmental Recommendations

Lebanon's innovation ecosystem holds immense potential, but its development is inherently tied to the government's ability to provide the necessary structural and policy support. Given the country's economic challenges and the crises, it has faced in recent years, it is understandable that governmental capacity is stretched, and decision-making processes require time. However, the government remains a critical enabler of innovation, as key reforms, infrastructure development, and policy decisions cannot be effectively undertaken

without its involvement. While academia, research institutions, incubators, and the private sector all play vital roles, their efforts must be supported by a clear governmental framework to ensure long-term impact. The following recommendations outline essential governmental actions that can drive Lebanon's innovation agenda forward:

i. Develop a national innovation strategy

The government should establish a clear, national roadmap for innovation that aligns with Lebanon's economic priorities. This strategy should identify sectoral focus areas, such as the digital economy, clean technology, and industrial modernization, to guide targeted investments and policy interventions. Additionally, fostering collaboration between ministries, academia, and industry will ensure that the innovation strategy aligns with market needs and drives practical outcomes.

ii. Enhance infrastructure to support innovation

A top priority should be improving Lebanon's energy, telecom, and digital infrastructure, creating a stable foundation for innovation and research and development (R&D). Private sector investments in critical infrastructure projects that support technology hubs and startups should be incentivized, while regulatory reforms should be introduced to accelerate digital transformation across industries, providing the necessary environment for innovation to thrive.

iii. Strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks for innovation

The government must implement clear policies that ensure robust intellectual property (IP) protection, facilitate technology transfer, and support the commercialization of research. Modernizing laws related to business registration, taxation, and investment will encourage entrepreneurship and attract foreign direct investment. Establishing regulatory sandboxes for emerging industries such as fintech and AI will provide a controlled environment to test new technologies while ensuring compliance with regulations.

iv. Create innovation-friendly investment policies

Targeted tax incentives should be developed for startups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and R&D-driven businesses to encourage innovation. Local banks should be encouraged to introduce tailored loan and investment mechanisms for innovative companies, making financing more accessible. Additionally, streamlining bureaucratic processes will improve Lebanon's ease of doing business and help attract international investors, contributing to a more innovation-friendly environment.

v. Support industry-academia collaboration

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be institutionalized to drive R&D and innovation programs, creating synergies between government, academia, and the private sector. The

government should provide grants and funding opportunities for university-led research projects with commercial potential, encouraging universities to establish technology transfer offices and innovation centers. These efforts will enhance collaboration and ensure that academic research leads to practical, market-ready solutions.

vi. Improve governance and institutional support for innovation

Strengthening the existing governmental bodies responsible for innovation policy is essential, ensuring better coordination between ministries to avoid fragmentation. A centralized innovation authority or national innovation council should be established to oversee policy implementation and measure impact, ensuring accountability. Developing monitoring mechanisms will help assess the effectiveness of innovation policies and allow for timely adjustments to improve outcomes.

vii. Enhance Lebanon's position in the global innovation index

Structural reforms should be prioritized to address weaknesses in governance, education, and digital infrastructure, which will improve Lebanon's ranking in the global innovation index. Increased engagement with international organizations, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), will help Lebanon access capacity-building resources and funding opportunities, while aligning innovation policies with global best practices will enhance Lebanon's competitiveness in regional and international markets.

b. Recommendations for Strengthening Lebanon's Innovation Ecosystem through Academia and Industry

The following recommendations focusing on strengthening academia-industry collaboration, boosting research commercialization, and enhancing Lebanon's overall innovation ecosystem reflect both Lebanon's challenges and opportunities in fostering a more resilient and competitive innovation ecosystem. While government policies play a critical role in enabling these initiatives, collaboration across academia, industry, and business support organizations will be key to bridging existing gaps and create a structured, collaborative framework for innovation-driven growth.

viii. Strengthening academia-industry collaboration

A strong knowledge-based economy relies on effective partnerships between universities and businesses. Strengthening these linkages will foster trust, drive translational research, and accelerate commercialization. Existing initiatives should be reinforced through structured collaboration frameworks, shared research agendas, and clearer pathways for technology transfer.

ix. Encourage academic entrepreneurship and research commercialization

Universities must integrate entrepreneurship more effectively into their structures, incentivizing faculty and students to engage in applied research and spin-off ventures.

This requires dedicated technology transfer offices, intellectual property support, and funding mechanisms to support the transition from research to market-ready solutions.

x. Expand innovation clusters and industrial hubs

Lebanon's innovation landscape would benefit from stronger regional innovation clusters that bring together academia, industry, and research institutions. Industrial hubs within universities can serve as key revenue-generating entities by offering consultancy services, industry-specific training, and applied research solutions. These hubs must be structured to maintain academic independence while aligning with market needs.

xi. Bridge the skills gap through experiential learning

To meet industry demands, universities should focus on equipping students with practical, market-relevant skills. This requires the expansion of experiential learning models, such as industry-led courses, cooperative education programs, and startup incubation opportunities within academic institutions. Collaborative initiatives between universities and business support organizations, like Berytech, can provide mentorship and training to prepare graduates for emerging sectors.

xii. Enhance intellectual property and innovation governance

A robust IP framework is essential for fostering innovation. Lebanon should continue aligning its IP laws with global standards while strengthening support for researchers and startups in protecting their inventions. The adoption of a national technology transfer and innovation charter, outlining clear policies on IP ownership, commercialization, and revenue-sharing models, would provide much-needed structure and legal clarity.

xiii. Facilitate research funding and public-private collaboration

Sustainable funding mechanisms are crucial for advancing Lebanon's research and innovation potential. Greater public-private collaboration, along with diversified funding sources, including EU-backed grants, venture capital, and government incentives, can help scale innovation projects. A more data-driven, impact-focused funding approach will ensure that investments align with national priorities.

xiv. Strengthening coordination between key stakeholders

A cohesive innovation ecosystem requires continuous coordination among universities, ministries, industry representatives, and incubators. Lebanon should build on past efforts to enhance structured dialogue between these stakeholders, ensuring that policies, funding strategies, and training programs are aligned with both economic needs and global best practices.

5. Suggested Action Plan

The following actions are designed to translate the recommendations into tangible initiatives. These actions involve concrete steps for academia, industry, research institutions, and the public sector to drive collaboration, commercialize research, and build a robust innovation ecosystem.

i. Develop a national innovation strategy

- **Action 1: Establish a multi-stakeholder task force to draft the National Innovation Strategy**

A task force, comprising government bodies, academic leaders, and industry experts, should be formed to draft a comprehensive National Innovation Strategy. This group will assess sectoral priorities like the digital economy, clean energy, and healthcare technology to align innovation goals with national growth objectives.

- **Action 2: Integrate innovation objectives into Lebanon's national economic vision (2030–2035)**

The Lebanese government should ensure that innovation is a central pillar in the country's long-term economic development plan. By setting specific targets for innovation in areas such as R&D, technology adoption, and startup growth, Lebanon can make significant strides toward a knowledge-based economy.

ii. Enhance infrastructure to support innovation

- **Action 1: Launch a national broadband expansion initiative**

Improving internet connectivity is vital to fostering innovation. A national broadband initiative should be introduced to enhance digital accessibility across Lebanon, focusing on underserved rural and urban areas.

- **Action 2: Prioritize the development of tech hubs and innovation clusters**

Tech hubs and innovation clusters should be developed in key industrial zones, universities, and free economic zones. These clusters can serve as collaborative spaces for startups, investors, and researchers to work together, driving innovation in critical sectors.

iii. Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks for innovation

- **Action 1: Revise Lebanon's Intellectual Property (IP) laws**

Lebanon should update its IP laws to improve protection for patents, trademarks, and copyright, aligning them with international standards. This will provide a secure environment for startups and innovators to protect their intellectual property rights.

- **Action 2: Establish regulatory sandboxes for digital health, fintech, and AI startups**

Regulatory sandboxes will allow startups in emerging sectors like fintech, AI, and digital health to test innovative solutions in a controlled environment. These

sandboxes should be designed with oversight from relevant authorities to ensure regulatory compliance while encouraging innovation.

iv. Create innovation-friendly investment policies

- **Action 1: Introduce tax incentives for R&D-driven enterprises**

To stimulate innovation, the government should provide tax deductions for companies investing in research and development. This will lower financial barriers for businesses looking to develop new technologies and drive economic growth.

- **Action 2: Encourage private-public partnerships to establish a Lebanon Innovation Fund**

A Lebanon Innovation Fund should be established in partnership with international development organizations and the Lebanese diaspora. This fund will attract foreign investments and provide capital for high-potential startups in emerging sectors.

v. Support industry-academia collaboration

- **Action 1: Establish government-funded research grants**

Research grants should be introduced that require partnerships between universities and industries to ensure the commercial viability of research. These grants would support collaborative research that addresses real-world challenges and fosters innovation.

- **Action 2: Develop Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) at universities**

Each university should establish a dedicated TTO to manage the commercialization of academic research. The TTO can assist with patent applications, licensing, and forming partnerships with private sector companies to turn research into marketable products.

vi. Improve governance and institutional support for innovation

- **Action 1: Create a National Innovation Authority (NIA)**

To better coordinate innovation policies, Lebanon should establish a National Innovation Authority. This body will oversee national innovation initiatives, ensuring alignment across sectors and managing funding and policy implementation.

- **Action 2: Train policymakers on emerging technologies**

Government officials should be trained on emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and digital health. By understanding these trends, policymakers can create more effective regulations and support innovation in the private sector.

vii. Enhance Lebanon's position in the global innovation index

- **Action 1: Implement structural reforms to encourage innovation, enforce IP rights and modernize IP registration**

Lebanon should enforce its IP laws and strengthen the IP office at the Ministry of Economy and Trade by digitizing IP registration processes and reducing processing times. Additionally, Lebanon can introduce innovation-friendly business regulations, such as fast-track startup licensing similar to the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL)'s support schemes, to encourage entrepreneurs.

- **Action 2: Take advantage of available international and regional technical support to boost innovation**

Lebanon should actively seek technical assistance and funding from organizations like WIPO, the EPO (European Patent Office) and the EU. For instance, Lebanon can collaborate with WIPO to establish a national Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC) program, providing startups and researchers with free access to patent databases and IP advisory services. Additionally, the government can apply for EU Horizon funding to support R&D initiatives in universities and tech hubs.

- **Action 3: Promote Lebanon as a regional hub for innovation**

Lebanon should actively participate in global innovation summits and forge bilateral agreements with other countries for technology collaboration. Lebanon can also host an annual Beirut Innovation Forum, attracting investors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to showcase local innovations and foster regional partnerships.

viii. Strengthening academia-industry collaboration

- **Action 1: Establish joint innovation labs and collaborative research centers**

Universities can partner with local and international businesses to create co-working spaces and innovation hubs within campuses, where researchers and industry experts collaborate on applied research projects. These centers would serve as focal points for both academic and commercial research, helping translate academic research into marketable solutions.

- **Action 2: Organize matchmaking events and hackathons for joint problem-solving**

Universities and business incubators can organize annual matchmaking events or hackathons, where startups, researchers, and businesses come together to solve industry-specific challenges.

ix. Encourage academic entrepreneurship and research commercialization

- **Action 1: Develop university-led innovation incubation programs**

Universities should establish incubation centers that provide mentorship, seed funding, and office space to student and faculty startups. These centers can

partner with business incubators like Berytech to offer access to business expertise, networking opportunities, and potential investors.

- **Action 2: Create a comprehensive technology transfer office (TTO) strategy**
The establishment of a Technology Transfer Office (TTO) at major universities could facilitate IP management, commercialization, and licensing. The TTO could offer workshops and training for faculty and students on patenting, copyrighting, and other IP-related processes, and connect them with potential investors and business partners.

x. Expand innovation clusters and industrial hubs

- **Action 1: Establish regional industrial innovation hubs connected to universities**

Partner universities can collaborate with industries to create specialized hubs in regions like Bekaa or Mount Lebanon, focusing on specific sectors such as agriculture or technology. These hubs would provide infrastructure for research, testing, and commercialization of new technologies, while also offering training and consultancy services to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

- **Action 2: Launch industry-academic collaborative projects with funding support**

Lebanon could initiate joint projects between universities and businesses to work on challenges such as the commercialization of agricultural technologies or renewable energy solutions. The projects could be funded by both the government and private sector partners, aiming for real-world application and scalability.

xi. Bridging the skills gap through experiential learning

- **Action 1: Implement cooperation education programs and internship programs with industry leaders**

Academic institutions should establish strong relationships with businesses to provide students with internships or cooperative education programs. These programs could involve semester-long projects, where students work alongside industry professionals to develop solutions to real-world challenges, building a bridge between academic learning and practical skills.

- **Action 2: Launch industry-led workshops and certification programs**
Universities could offer specialized workshops and certification programs in partnership with businesses, focusing on skills needed in emerging sectors such as AI, fintech, or digital marketing. These short-term programs would equip students with hands-on knowledge and help them gain certifications that are highly valued in the job market.

xii. Enhancing intellectual property and innovation governance

- **Action 1: Align IP laws and frameworks with international standards**

Lebanon should work on reforming its intellectual property laws to comply with international standards. These reforms would streamline the registration process and ensure Lebanese startups can access international markets with better protection for their innovations.

- **Action 2: Develop an innovation charter for IP management**

A national framework for managing intellectual property could be developed, incorporating principles such as transparent licensing, revenue-sharing models, and IP protection guidelines. This framework would be implemented at universities and research institutions to ensure that inventions and innovations are effectively protected and commercialized.

xiii. Facilitating research funding and public-private collaboration

- **Action 1: Launch a national innovation fund**

Lebanon could establish a national fund that matches grants for early-stage research projects in technology, agriculture, and healthcare. The fund would encourage both public and private sector investment, providing researchers and startups with the resources needed to develop innovative solutions.

- **Action 2: Create public-private partnership (PPP) innovation programs**

Public-private partnerships can be established to co-fund high-risk, high-reward innovation projects. An example of such a program would be launching a PPP for the development of a Lebanese-made renewable energy solution, where government and private companies share resources, expertise, and financial support.

xiv. Strengthening coordination between key stakeholders

- **Action 1: Organize annual innovation summits with diverse stakeholders**

Lebanon can organize an annual innovation summit that brings together academia, industry, government, and support organizations such as Berytech and CNRS. The summit would feature workshops, networking events, and presentations to share best practices, encourage collaboration, and align stakeholders on common innovation priorities.

- **Action 2: Create an innovation coordination body with clear governance structures**

A multi-stakeholder coordination body could be created, including representatives from academia, business, government, and research institutions. This body would meet regularly to ensure that policies and initiatives are aligned, addressing gaps in the innovation ecosystem and promoting synergies between stakeholders.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, while many of the recommendations and actions discussed during the InnovNation Conference 2025 are not entirely new and have already been implemented by universities and other institutions, it is important to view this report as a roadmap for any institution looking to implement or enhance innovation.

The insights shared during the conference provide a clear framework for fostering collaboration across academia, industry, and government, and serve as an actionable guide for accelerating Lebanon's journey toward an innovation-driven economy.

As highlighted throughout the event, innovation is a collective endeavor that requires sustained commitment, strategic vision, and decisive action to transform ideas into tangible, sustainable solutions. This report, therefore, summarizes the collective expertise and aspirations of the event, offering a comprehensive approach to building a thriving innovation ecosystem in Lebanon.

**About Lebanon Innovate: Funded by the European Union and in partnership with Berytech, ANIMA, Leitat, IRI, and IRALEB, the Lebanon Innovate program transforms research into market-ready innovations across 3 industries: ICT, healthcare, and agrifood. Emphasizing IP protection, commercialization, and networking, the initiative strengthens Lebanon's entrepreneurial ecosystem by equipping professionals with resources, expertise, and international networks, fostering a culture of innovation. Learn more here [Lebanon Innovate Program | Berytech](#)*

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