

Prof. Dr. Ursula Gather**Rector, Technische Universität Dortmund****1. Prof. Gather, do you think that university education and public research should be adapted to the industrial structure of the region in which the university is located?**

No, this approach would be wrong: When TU Dortmund University was founded in 1968 it was surrounded by coal and steel industries. It was, in fact, an excellent decision not to adjust the university to this sector, but to install a broad spectrum of natural sciences and engineering. Hence, the university triggered the rise of modern industrial branches in the city. Today, TU Dortmund University and the regional economy both profit from close cooperation in different fields. However, a university should always provide a large spectrum of disciplines to build on progress from basic research and interdisciplinary collaboration. Universities should respond to regional needs, however, excellent research needs to take place on an international level.

2. Can you provide an example how your university and other universities in your area have had an impact on regional development?

In 1985, just before TU Dortmund University turned 17, the city of Dortmund established the Technology Center Dortmund adjacent to our campus. Where there had once been a green meadow, today there is a technology park with 280 companies and 8,500 jobs. It is the largest of its kind in Germany! The university was a crucial factor for that development: Companies were attracted by highly qualified students from TU Dortmund University – the most entrepreneurial graduates even built their own start-ups. Today, the university cities in the Ruhr area attract smart young people, while their neighboring cities suffer from a decline in population.

3. How have you been able to create a culture of innovation at your university?

TU Dortmund University cooperates closely with the Technology Center Dortmund and the city's economic development center. Ten years ago, we initiated a network to support graduate students and scientists to build their own start-up companies. Recently, we jointly developed the vision to make Dortmund a model for science-based entrepreneurship. The concept finished among the top ten in a federal competition and is funded with 3.6 million Euros by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. However, innovation is also triggered in other ways, for example in the research center INVITE, which is run by a 50:50 joint venture of TU Dortmund University and Bayer Technology Services, or in the leading edge cluster

“EffizienzCluster LogistikRuhr”, which brings together 130 partners from academia and industry and is supported with 40 million Euros by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

4. What kind of framework is necessary to promote collaboration between academia and industry?

Speaking for academia I would like to stress that not just any collaboration with industry should be promoted. University research needs to remain independent, results have to be published, scientists should go beyond the limit of knowledge. Hence, both sides profit most from a partnership for innovative, even risky projects rather than from a service-providing relationship. We have had good experiences with forward-looking research programs that provide public funding for the academic partner and require partly-private funding for the industry partner.

5. In which scientific and technological sectors do you consider the Ruhr area to have the greatest innovation potential?

The Ruhr area is strong in information technology and logistics, but also in biomedicine and production technology.