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**Abstract**

As universities are increasingly called by their national governments for a more entrepreneurial management of public research results, they started to develop internal structures and policies to take a proactive role in the commercialisation of university research. For the first time, this paper presents a detailed chronicle of how country-level reforms on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) were translated into organisation-level mechanisms to regulate university-patenting activity. The analysis is based on the complete list of patent policies issued between 1993 and 2009 by the population of Italian universities. Our evidence suggests that universities first dealt with legislative changes on IPRs by enacting isomorphic behaviours, then by creating a community of practices, and finally by leveraging on such community to influence government reforms on IP-related matters. We discuss our results in the light of institutional theory and public policy. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)