

# How should be the levels of public and private R&D investments to trigger modern productivity growth? Empirical evidence and lessons learned for Italian economy

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**ABSTRACT:** Governments in modern economies devote much policy attention to enhancing productivity and continue to emphasize its drivers such as investment in R&D. This paper analyzes the relationship between productivity growth and levels of public and private R&D expenditures. The economic analysis shows that the magnitude of R&D expenditure by business enterprise equal to 1.58% (% of GDP) and R&D expenditure of government and higher education of 1.06 (% of GDP) maximize the long-run impact on productivity growth. These optimal rates are the key to sustain productivity and technology improvements that are more and more necessary to modern economic growth.

**KEYWORDS:** R&D investment, Productivity growth, Optimization

**JEL-CODES:** E60, H50, O40, O57

The author wishes to thank Harold Linstone (Portland State University, USA), J.Heijs (Universidad Complutense Madrid, Spain), Nicholas Vonortas (George Washington University and Center for International Science and Technology Policy, Washington D.C., USA), Secondo Rolfo (CERIS, Italy), and participants at IAMOT 2008 Conference (The British University in Dubai), 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Technology Policy and Innovation (Stavanger, Norway), DRUID Conference 2007 (Copenhagen, Denmark), and AISSEC Conference 2007 (Parma, Italy) for their precious comments and suggestions to preliminary drafts of this research. Very special thanks to Silvana Zelli for research assistance. Lastly, thanks to the Italian National Research Council for its financial support to this research.

WORKING PAPER CERIS-CNR  
Anno 10, N° 5 – 2008  
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Torino  
N. 2681 del 28 marzo 1977

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*Distribuzione*  
Spedizione gratuita

*Fotocomposizione e impaginazione*  
In proprio

*Stampa*  
In proprio

Finito di stampare nel mese di Dicembre 2008

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*La recherche de la vérité doit être le but de notre activité; c'est la seule fin qui soit digne d'elle ...*

H. Poincaré (1935)

## INTRODUCTION

Productivity growth depends upon the capacity of country to innovate and more than ever, research investments are the key to innovation (Griffith *et al.*, 2004; Mayhew and Neely, 2006; Benum, 2007). As a matter of fact, what is needed now for countries to improve economic growth is to increase the intangible capital accumulation, based on knowledge, through Research and Development (R&D) investments, that have more and more a great influence on competitive advantage of firms and countries (Porter, 1990). Europe and the Unites States of America insisted on the need for enhancing productivity based on R&D investments, but in order to implement effective economic policies, they have to know:

*what is the optimal amount of public and private R&D expenditures that maximizes the national productivity growth?*

This economic problem has spawned a large theoretical and empirical literature (Hall and Mairesse, 1995; Jones and Williams, 1998; Bartelsman and Doms, 2000; Griffith *et al.*, 2004; Brécard *et al.*, 2006). However, theory alone is unable to provide an answer to optimal magnitude of R&D investment to boost productivity and economic growth in the long run. The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between levels of public and private R&D expenditures and productivity growth which can both steer national decisions about economic policies in the right direction and improve the governments' ability in facilitating the process that leads to long run economic growth and wealth increase, driven by accumulation and effective employment of knowledge and technologies (Griffith *et al.*, 2006). Before discussing the main economic problem, let me introduce a review of the literature and present the methodology of research.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The present-day economic and political debate revolves around the understanding of the causes of countries' economic success, based on strategic drivers that should be pulled in order to increase economic growth in modern economies.

Patterns of economic growth involve the analysis and assessment of productivity<sup>1</sup>. Mayhew and Neely (2006) describe productivity growth as stemming either from gains in static efficiency or gains in dynamic efficiency. *Static efficiency* is equivalent to use existing factors of production as effectively as possible to make markets operate more competitively and efficiently. *Dynamic efficiency* is all about the investment. Moreover, R&D investment if translated into organizational operations allows labour and capital to be put to more productive use. Since productivity growth plays a main role in increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is important to understand the factors underlying productivity growth, even if quantify their importance is a difficult task. Much of the research that examines the relationship between some factors and productivity growth is limited to showing a correlation between productivity and variables that influence it, and does not determine the causality and magnitude. There is a vast literature dealing with factors affecting productivity growth. Some of the factors that

<sup>1</sup> *Productivity* measures the ratio of outputs to inputs. Labour productivity is defined as 'real' (constant price) output divided by labour inputs (measured in terms of persons or hours).

*Multi-factor productivity* (MFP) represents the residual portion of output growth that cannot be explained by changes in labour and capital. MFP growth is labour productivity growth minus the effect on productivity of change in the capital-labour ratio (usually more capital per worker, or in other words, capital deepening). MFP growth in the long-run is explained by factors such as technological progress, rising education standards and changes in the socioeconomic environment. In some of the literature MFP is referred to as total factor productivity (TFP).

*Capital deepening* measures the increase in the value of capital per worker. As capital deepening is measured in volume terms, it also captures the effect of falling Information and Communication Technology (ICT) prices on labour productivity growth.

*Growth accounting* refers to the disaggregation of labour productivity growth into components, such as MFP growth, the effect of capital deepening and in some studies also the effect of rising education level.

have recently been examined include managerial ability, technology and regulation (Bartelsman and Doms, 2000). Department of Trade and Industry in UK emphasizes the five drivers of productivity growth: investment, innovation, skills, enterprise, and competition (DTI, 2006). Lichtenberg and Siegel (1991) and Hall and Mairesse (1995) documented the correlation between R&D and productivity at micro level. Amendola *et al.* (1993) present a well documented evidence that R&D has an important effect on productivity growth and also on competitiveness, whereas Hall (1996) points out that R&D is often associated with product improvement. Hall and Mairesse (1995) argue that a long history of R&D expenditures is a more potent predictor of productivity growth. According to Brécard *et al.* (2006), R&D produces its full effects on two form of innovation: the global productivity gains of factors and improvements to the quality of products. Growth is led by increased demand due to falling costs and prices and R&D leads simultaneously to an increase in GDP and in the use of factors. Aghion and Howitt (1998) recognise this by noting that “technological knowledge is itself a kind of capital good and it can be accumulated through R&D”. Griffith *et al.* (2004) argue that innovation and technology transfer provide two potential sources of productivity growth for countries behind technological frontier. They examines whether R&D has a direct effect on total factor productivity growth (i.e. innovation) in a panel of industries across twelve OECD<sup>2</sup> countries. They state that the greater the potential for technologies to be transferred through R&D and the higher the rates of productivity growth. In short, R&D contributes to total factor productivity (TFP) not only through innovation but also through technology transfer. In addition, they argue that R&D has played a role in the convergence of TFP magnitudes within industries across OECD countries.

A consensus has emerged around the fact that R&D contributes significantly to cross-sectional variation in productivity. Hall (1996) reports an elasticity of 0.1 to 0.15, Griliches (1995) reports an estimated elasticity of output with respect to

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<sup>2</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

R&D capital of between 0.06 and 0.1. The impact of R&D on productivity assessed from a macroeconomic perspective is analyzed by Jones and Williams (1998) that formalize a model similar to that of Romer (1990). They calibrate the model and estimate that optimal investment in R&D is two to four times larger than actual investment in the United States of America (USA).

Conversely, Machin and Van Reenen (1998) investigate whether a directly observed measure of technical change (R&D intensity) is closely linked to the growth in the importance of more highly skilled workers in USA and other six OECD countries. They show a significant association between skill upgrading and R&D intensities in all countries. Parisi *et al.* (2006), using a rich firm level data-base for Italy, state that R&D spending is strongly positively associated with the probability of introducing a new product, moreover the effect of fixed investment on the probability of introducing a process innovation is magnified by spending R&D spending internal to the firm. This implies that R&D can affect productivity growth by facilitating the absorption of new technologies.

This relationship between R&D investments technology and productivity growth has affected all modern economic growth literature. As a matter of fact, new growth theory (in the Romer 1990 version) introduces endogenous technological change (as a function of the level of human capital) into the Solow model. The first generation of this model considers the assumption of constant returns to technological knowledge and predicted that long run growth rate of an economy, increases in the level of R&D inputs and thus larger economies should grow at higher rate (Grossman and Helpman, 1991). Jones (1995) finds that first-generation models of endogenous growth are inconsistent with empirical evidence for the USA and refuted the scale effect prediction. To solve the empirical problems associated with these models of economic growth, a second-generation models of endogenous growth have been developed. In particular, economic literature offers two main approaches to remove scale effects: *a)* semi-endogenous theory of Jones (1995), and Segerstrom (1998), which modifies the original theory by incorporating

diminishing returns to the stock of knowledge in R&D. That is, as technology develops and becomes increasingly complex, sustained growth in R&D labour (and human capital such as share of researchers - Ulku, 2007) becomes necessary to maintain a given rate of Total Factor Productivity (TFP) growth. These models of economic growth have been motivated by graphical evidence of a decline in R&D productivity in the USA (Griliches, 1994) and in the UK, Germany and France over 1970-1990 period; *b*) fully endogenous Schumpeterian models of Aghion and Howitt (1998), Dinopoulos and Thompson (1998) maintains the assumption from the first-generation models of constant returns to technological knowledge, and assumes that as an economy grows, proliferation of product varieties reduces the effectiveness of R&D aimed at quality improvement, by causing it to be spread more thinly over a large number of different sectors. In addition, to ensure sustained TFP growth, R&D has to increase over time to counteract the increasing range of products that lowers the productivity effects of R&D activity. The theory is consistent with the observed coexistence of stationary TFP growth and growing R&D labour.

Despite a large amount of economic literature on these topics, the relationship between the levels of public and private R&D investment and productivity growth has not yet been wholly clarified. In particular a main question is:

*what is the optimal rate of R&D Expenditures by Business Enterprise and Government, within countries, that boosts productivity growth at aggregate level?*

The next section describes data and research methodology to answer this main economic issue for modern economic growth.

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

Since analyses of aggregate productivity across countries are central to many questions concerning long-run economic growth, an important issue is to probe the role of Business Enterprise

and Government R&D expenditures underlying productivity growth. A common indicator used to measure R&D investments across countries is represented by Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (Griffith *et al.*, 2006; Pouris, 2007). Instead, concerning productivity growth, researchers employ two metrics: labour productivity and total factor productivity. In this article I concentrate on the former that has different measures at aggregate level; in particular I use labour productivity per hour worked, since it is the most direct indicator of productive efficiency (van Ark *et al.*, 2008).

This research uses data of Eurostat (2008), which collects some key indicators, relating to general economic background and innovation/research, referring to the 1990s and to the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The indicators considered are described in the Table 1.

The geographical area is EU Member States, Candidate Countries, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Japan and the USA.

The model hypotheses (Hp), based on theoretical background, are the following:

*Hp1:* Productivity growth (acronym LPRH) is an indicator of the country's economic growth.

*Hp2:* R&D<sub>*i*</sub> is an indicator of the technological performance of the *i*th country and a driver of productivity growth.

*Time lag effect:* Investments in R&D up to period *n* shall increase the productivity growth from the period *n+1* onwards.

As a matter of fact, the R&D investments is followed by a period of deployment of the effects of innovation, which leads to sustained demand, improved competitiveness and long term economic growth.

TABLE 1: VARIABLES

<i>Abbreviations and period</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Description</i>
R&DBUSS 1998-2004	Research and development expenditure: Business enterprise sector (% of GDP)	Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. R&D expenditures include all expenditures for R&D performed within the business enterprise sector (BERD) on the national territory during a given period, regardless of the source of funds. R&D expenditure in BERD is shown as a percentage of GDP (R&D intensity).
R&DGOVEDU 1998-2004	Research and development expenditure: Government sector (% of GDP) Research and development expenditure: Higher education sector (% of GDP)	
GDPPS 1997-2003	GDP per capita in PPS GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) (EU-27 = 100) Please be aware that this indicator has been rescaled, i.e. data is expressed in relation to EU-27 = 100	Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure for the economic activity. It is defined as the value of all goods and services produced less the value of any goods or services used in their creation. The volume index of GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) is expressed in relation to the European Union (EU-27) average set to equal 100. If the index of a country is higher than 100, this country's level of GDP per head is higher than the EU average and vice versa. Basic figures are expressed in PPS, i.e. a common currency that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries allowing meaningful volume comparisons of GDP between countries. Please note that the index, calculated from PPS figures and expressed with respect to EU27 = 100, is intended for cross-country comparisons rather than for temporal comparisons.
LPRH 1999-2005	Labour productivity per hour worked. GDP in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) per hour worked relative to EU-15 (EU-15 = 100)	Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure for the economic activity in an economy. It is defined as the value of all goods and services produced less the value of any goods or services used in their creation. GDP per hour worked is intended to give a picture of the productivity of national economies expressed in relation to the European Union (EU-15) average. If the index of a country is higher than 100, this country level of GDP per hour worked is higher than the EU average and vice versa. Basic figures are expressed in PPS, i.e. a common currency that eliminates the differences in price levels between countries allowing meaningful volume comparisons of GDP between countries. Expressing productivity per hour worked will eliminate differences in the full-time/part-time composition of the workforce.
<p>Countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, EU (15 countries), EU (25 countries), EU (27 countries), Euro area (12 countries), Euro area (13 countries), Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The United Kingdom, The United States of America</p>		

Source: Eurostat (2008)

The conceptual model is:

*Relative growth of Labour productivity per hour worked = f(Public or private R&D expenditure as % of the GDP).*

The statistical information drawn from the Eurostat data undergo a preliminary process of horizontal and vertical cleaning. The normal distribution of the data is checked by statistics based on arithmetic mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, the normal Q-Q plot, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of

normality, using statistics software SPSS. After that we apply a regression analysis on polynomial functions.

In addition, the specification of the model is a cubic and quadratic function since they portray the variables' functional links very well and suitably fit to data scatter. In particular I apply the leading indicator model that is a special case of dynamic linear regression model (Hendry and Richard, 1982; Spanos, 1986):

$$y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

General specification of the model is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Relative Variation Labour productivity per hour worked}_{i,t} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 R \& D \_ \text{Expenditure}_{i,t-1} + \\ & + \beta_2 R \& D^2 \_ \text{Expenditure}_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 R \& D^3 \_ \text{Expenditure}_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \end{aligned} \quad [1]$$

Where *i* subscripts denote countries, *t* subscripts denote time. In addition, since R&D is inherently a dynamic process and countries will not immediately adjust to long-run levels because of adjustment costs and other factors, a lag of R&D is included in the specification (Van Reenen, 1997). It is clear that the causality between R&D investment and productivity growth may run in both directions and to use time lag between dependent and independent variables may not be sufficient; so as to eliminate the simultaneity bias is applied the two-stage last-squares (2SLS) estimator based on:

□ *Stage one:*

R&D expenditure (public or private) is function of a main indicator of economic growth:

$$R \& D \text{Expnd}_{i,t-1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{GDP per capita}_{i,t-2} + \varepsilon \quad [2]$$

*Remark:* Richer and growing countries invest more in R&D (measured by R&D/GDP ratio).

$R \hat{\& D} \text{Expnd}_{i,t-1}$  represents the fitted values (un-standardized) of this regression analysis and it will become the independent variable in the second stage.

□ *Stage two:*

$$\begin{aligned} LPRH_{i,t} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 R \hat{\& D} \text{Expnd}_{i,t-1} + \\ & + \beta_2 R \hat{\& D} \text{Expnd}^2_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 R \hat{\& D} \text{Expnd}^3_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon \end{aligned} \quad [3]$$

These models are corrected by the Prais-Winsten estimation method based on the autoregression procedure estimates true regression coefficients from time series with first-order autocorrelated errors; this method eliminates the problems of serial correlation.

The estimation of the parameters and the statistical analysis are performed using the statistics software of SPSS.

Econometrics by regression analysis provides

main statistics information through the estimation of model's parameters and goodness of fit of the relationship between productivity growth and R&D investments. Econometric modelling does not provide us any information to achieve the purpose of this research, in other words "What is the optimal amount of public and private R&D investment to boost productivity growth?", but the estimated relationships by regression analysis are functions adapt for applying the differential calculus and therefore finding local and/or global optimum that indicates the best research policy to improve productivity and economic growth in the long run. In particular, having estimated the relationships [3], an optimization exercise is performed by noting that the functions of one (real) variable from the econometrically estimated relationships are polynomial functions of an order higher than the first order. Since the functions [3] are continuous and infinitely differentiable, we seek to maximize these objective functions applying the classic mathematical optimization methods (Rudin, 1991)<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND OPTIMIZATION

The statistic of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test normality of variables such that it is possible to apply the econometric models of parametric estimation. The results are

<sup>3</sup> One of the necessary conditions for the functions of one variable in order to have the solution  $x=x^*$  to be a maximum or a minimum is:

$$\frac{df(x)}{dx} = 0 \quad \text{for } x = x^* \quad (1^*)$$

In this case,  $x$  is a stationary point. Moreover, if the function is concave (or convex), then condition (1\*) is not only necessary but also sufficient in order for  $x^*$  to be an overall (global) maximum (minimum). *P.S.:* Let  $f$  be twice differentiable on (a,b), and  $f''(x) > 0$  for all  $x$  in (a, b), then the graph of  $f$  is concave upwards (or convex). Similarly if  $f''(x) < 0$ , the graph is concave downwards.

summarized in table 2, whereas figures 1 and 2 display the fitted functions.

Models estimated by 2SLS have been corrected by the Prais-Winsten estimation method that in the models has eliminated the problem of autocorrelation and has provided robustness estimates; in short, the parametric estimates of the models are unbiased estimations, the *t*-test returns meaningfulness of the parameters equal to 1%. The explanatory power of the model is

good, as indicated by high  $R^2$  adjusted values (the coefficient of determination adjusted) that is over 85% in model 1 (with R&D expenditure of business enterprise) and model 2 with R&D expenditure of Government and Higher education sector. The result of the Durbin-Watson test (D-W), after the correction with the Prais-Winsten estimation method, is no serial correlation (5% significance level). In short, the performances of the corrected models are excellent (Table 2).

TABLE 2: PARAMETRIC ESTIMATIONS

Explanatory variables	Model 1 (2SLS) Dependent variable		Model 2 (2SLS) Dependent variable	
	$k_{i,t-1} = R\&DBUSS_{i,t-1}$ Stage 1	$y_{i,t} = LPRH_{i,t}$ Stage 2	$w_{i,t-1} = R\&DGOVEDU_{i,t-1}$ Stage 1	$y_{i,t} = LPRH_{i,t}$ Stage 2
$z_{i,t-2} = GDPPS$	0.013*** (0.001)		0.003*** (0.000)	
$\hat{k}_{i,t-1} = \text{Fit for } R\&DBUSS$		21.14 (16.21)		
$\hat{k}_{i,t-1}^2 = \text{Fit for } R\&DBUSS^2$		73.41*** (21.01)		
$\hat{k}_{i,t-1}^3 = \text{Fit for } R\&DBUSS^3$		-33.82*** (8.08)		
$\hat{w}_{i,t-1} = \text{Fit for } R\&DGOVEDU$				523.301*** (81.99)
$\hat{w}_{i,t-1}^2 = \text{Fit for } R\&DGOVEDU^2$				-246.122*** (75.96)
Constant	-0.373*** (0.085)	34.65*** (3.53)	0.242*** (0.033)	-126.181*** (21.54)
$R^2$ adjusted	0.62	0.87	0.38	0.87
Durbin-Watson	1.97	2.01	2.06	2.02
N. cases	162	162	162	162

\*\*\* Parameter is Significant at 0.001; \*\* Parameter is Significant at 0.05; \* Parameter is Significant at 0.1

Note: Prais-Winsten estimation method based on the autoregression procedure estimates true regression coefficients from time series with first-order autocorrelated errors. Standard errors are in parenthesis. Moreover, *i* subscripts denote countries, *t* subscripts denote time.

- z = GDPPS: GDP per Capita in PPS (EU27=100)\_1997-2003
- k = R&DGOVEDU: R&D Expenditure Government and Education sector 1998\_2004
- w = R&DBUSS: R&D Expenditure Business enterprises 1998-2004
- y = LPRH: Labour productivity per hour worked 1999\_2005

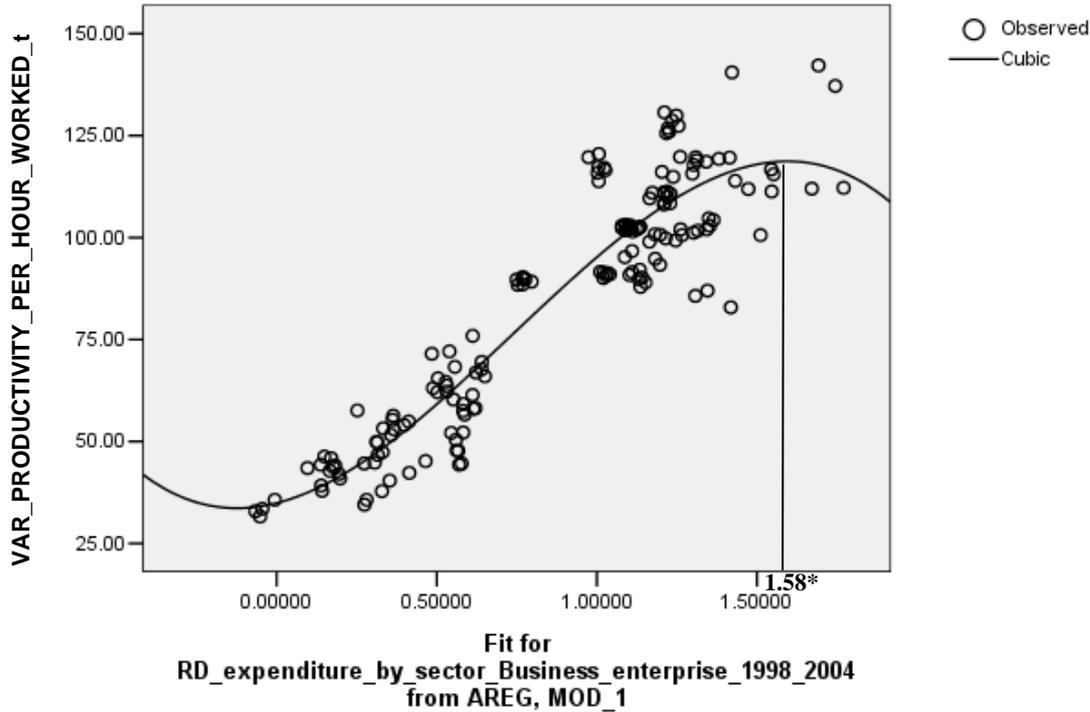


FIGURE 1: REGRESSION OF RELATIVE LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH PER HOUR WORKED (T) ON R&D EXPENDITURE OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AS % OF THE GDP

The estimated parametric equations are polynomial functions (continuous and differentiable functions) that make it possible to apply classic optimization methods (Rudin, 1991).

Model 1 (table 2) considers  $y_{i,t} = \text{LPRH}$  at  $t$ ; and explanatory variables Fit for *R&D expenditure by business enterprise* at  $t-1$  of first, second and third order. It has  $R^2_{\text{adj.}}=87\%$ . The estimated function at stage two is:

$$y_{i,t} = 34.65 + 21.14\hat{k}_{i,t-1} + 73.41\hat{k}_{i,t-1}^2 - 33.82\hat{k}_{i,t-1}^3 \quad [4]$$

Necessary condition to calculate the maximum is:

$$\frac{dy}{d\hat{k}} = y'(\hat{k}) = 21.14 + 146.82\hat{k} - 101.46\hat{k}^2 = 0 \quad [5]$$

The first derivative<sup>4</sup> equal to 0 gives us two roots:

$$\hat{k}_1 = +1.58; \quad \hat{k}_2 = -0.13; \quad \{\hat{k}_1; \hat{k}_2\} \in \mathfrak{R} \quad (\text{the set of real numbers})$$

When private R&D expenditure is 1.58 percent; productivity growth is maximized in the following point (Figure 1):

- ▲ (R&D Expenditures of Business Enterprises  $t-1$ ; LPRH  $t$ )
- ▲ (1.58; 117.91)

Model 2 considers  $y_{i,t} = \text{LPRH}(t)$ ; and explanatory variables Fit for *R&D expenditure of government and higher education sector* at  $t-1$  of first and second order. Estimated relationship ( $R^2_{\text{adj.}} = 87$  percent) is:

<sup>4</sup> The derivative function also gives us the value of the rate of change at every point.

$$y_{i,t} = -126.18 + 523.30\hat{w}_{i,t-1} - 246.12\hat{w}_{i,t-1}^2 \quad [6]$$

$$\frac{dy}{d\hat{w}} = y'(\hat{w}) = 523.30 - 492.24 \hat{w}$$

Let us set the first derivative equal to 0, which gives us:

$$\hat{w} = +1.06 \in \mathfrak{R}$$

When public R&D is 1.06 percent, LPRH is maximized in the following point:

**B** (R&D expenditure of government and higher education sector  $t-1$ ; LPRH  $t$ )

**B** (1.06; 168.46).

Moreover

$$y'(\hat{w}) > 0 \text{ in } [0; 1.06[, y'(\hat{w}) < 0 \text{ in } ]1.06; +\infty[$$

$$y''(\hat{w}) = -492.24 < 0 \Rightarrow y(\hat{w}) \text{ is a concave func-}$$

tion downwards (see Figure 2 which is restricted to ]0.30; 0.80[ ).

Therefore the point **B** is a global maximum, too.

Model 1 has the cubic term negative, i.e. the increase is less than linear because it is exerting a downward force on the function. In addition, model 1 shows that if Private R&D expenditures increases by 1%, the estimate average productivity growth is given by linear term 21.14, quadratic term 73.41 and cubic term - 33.82, which represents the damping factor, in other words the friction of productivity growth due to diminishing returns of R&D investments. Model 2 presents an impact of Public R&D investment on Productivity growth equal to 523.3 and -246.12 (quadratic term).

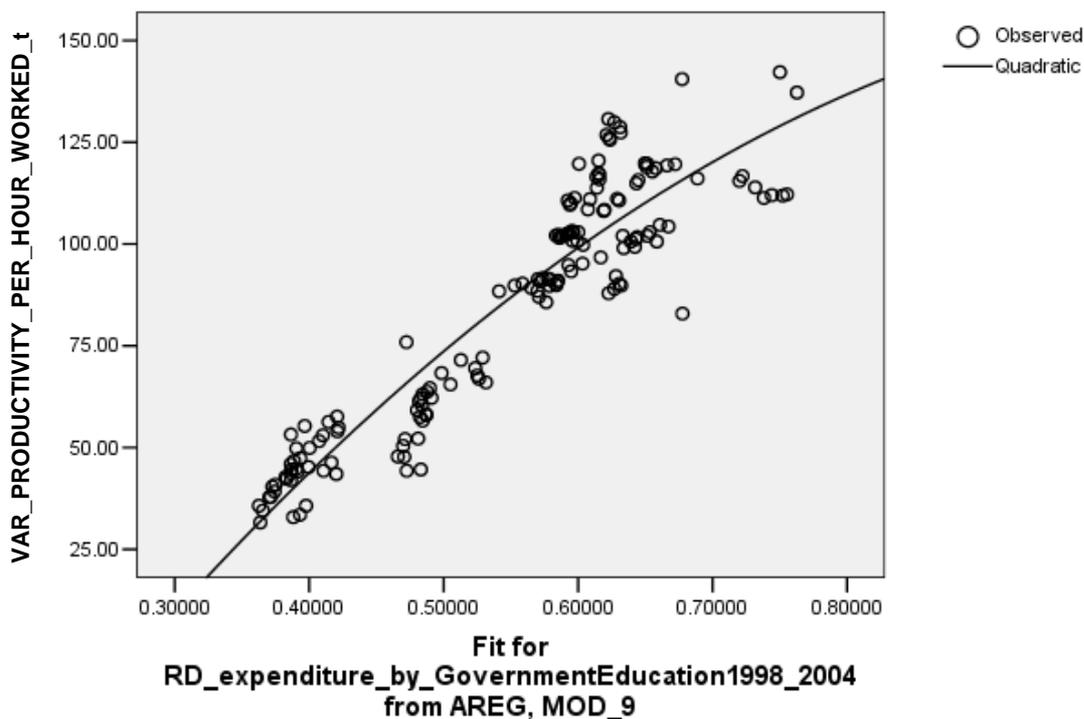


FIGURE 2: REGRESSION OF RELATIVE LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH PER HOUR WORKED (T) ON R&D EXPENDITURE OF GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP

#### 4. LESSONS LEARNED AND DISCUSSION

This paper investigates the relationship between levels of public and private R&D expenditures and productivity growth across open economies. Public and private R&D expenditures as percentage of GDP are an important driver of productivity growth, as showed by models. Lessons learned from this research are the following:

- PROPOSITION 1: the relative productivity growth =  $f$  (Public R&D Expenditure as % of the GDP) is concave function.

Proof: The concavity of this function (see graph of  $f$  in figure 2 and model 2) is due to diminishing returns to research investments that play a similar role to diminishing returns to capital accumulation into standard neoclassical growth model (Solow, 1956; Cass, 1965).

- PROPOSITION 2: the long run magnitude of Public R&D expenditure as percentage of the GDP that maximizes productivity growth is about 1.06%, whereas the long run magnitude of R&D expenditure of business enterprise as percentage of the GDP that maximizes productivity growth is about 1.58%.

Proof: See mathematical optimization applied to models.

- REMARK: to maximize national productivity growth it is necessary maximize both R&D expenditure of business enterprise and R&D expenditure of Government-higher education. Both research policy strategies are complementing each others and need to be implemented conjointly.
- REMARK: if the magnitude of Public or Private R&D investment is higher than the optimum levels (proposition 2), the productivity growth is not maximized, thus generating a productivity growth that can be reached with a lower level of R&D expenditures, so that economic resources can be allocated in a more efficient way in other sectors.
- REMARK: to increase productivity and economic growth the long run magnitude of Public R&D expenditure as percentage of the GDP has to be lower than R&D expenditure of business enterprise as percentage of GDP. As a matter of fact, Steil et al. (2002) analyzing the economic and technological perform-

ance of a number of countries, find out that in the USA, as well as Japan, Germany, France, and the UK, the Government intervention in R&D investment -particularly in industrial policy and labour market- has been reduced, thus favouring the action of market forces, which have become more and more important in allocating resources. Vincent-Lancrin (2006) describes similar results.

In Europe some governments have concentrated on reforms to achieve static efficiency gains based on supply-side revolution. Relatively little was done specifically to stimulate R&D investments. As the incentive to invest in R&D is determined by the private return and not the social return, R&D is held back in many countries by underdevelopment of financial markets or inappropriate government research policies. This is the reason since some countries do not invest more in R&D. Moreover, the long-run growth in R&D spending is surely linked to growing influence of science in the process of production and greater market competition at home and abroad in knowledge era may force countries to increase R&D expenditures in order to produce new or better product (Scherer, 1992; Van Reenen, 1997). This is the reason why an increasing number of countries have introduced fiscal incentives and subsidies for R&D that may increase innovative activity of firms (Heijs *et al.*, 2007), as well as they may also alter the strategic interactions between firms that determine market shares.

Policy makers to increase the economic performance of their countries, they should focus their decisions on the magnitude of public and private R&D investments, which should be about 1.58 (for private R&D expenditures) vs. 1.06 (for public R&D expenditures) in the long run. In achieving these aims the policy makers have to ensure better coordination of research policy and recognise the complex chain of causation that can be triggered by polling on R&D investment. As a matter of fact, productivity growth enhancing can be achieved by a magnitude of public and private R&D expenditures close to these optimal rates that support the competitiveness in the long run, a complex matter based on quality improvements

and product niche that should be of vital interest to any government, rather than competitiveness in the short run based on price and cost. Contrary to expectations and to much of the literature (Brécard *et al.*, 2006), it is not true that higher is R&D expenditures as percentage of GDP, higher is productivity growth, since the function *Relative Productivity growth* =  $f(\text{R\&D expenditures as \% of the GDP})$  has local concavity due to diminishing returns to R&D investments.

Economic literature has analyzed this aspect and models of R&D-induced growth can serve as empirical templates to assess the potential of different growth policies for countries. Lichtenberg and Van Pottelsberghe de la Potterie (1998), Keller (2002), Guillec and Van Pottelsberghe de la Potterie (2004) have established that the level of TFP is influenced by the R&D stock in the OECD countries. However, only a few studies have examined whether semi-endogenous growth can account for the relationship between R&D expenditure and Total Factor Productivity (TFP). Semi-endogenous growth models relax the assumption of constant returns to technological knowledge and a positive growth in R&D inputs is required to maintain sustained growth in TFP that have been motivated by graphical evidence of a decline in R&D productivity in USA. Schumpeterian theories of endogenous growth have, to some extent, also been motivated by diminishing returns to R&D by assuming that innovations are spread over a larger variety of products and, therefore, that there is a tendency for decreasing returns to R&D (Aghion and Howitt, 1998).

Ha and Howitt (2007) argues that long-run trends in R&D and TFP are more supportive of fully endogenous Schumpeterian growth theory than they are of semi-endogenous growth theory. The distinctive prediction of semi-endogenous theory that sustained TFP growth requires sustained growth of R&D input is not supported by co-integration tests and forecasting exercises, as TFP growth has been stationary even though the growth rate of R&D input has fallen three-fold since the early 1950s in the USA. In contrast, the prediction of Schumpeterian theory that sustained TFP growth requires a sustained fraction of GDP to

be spent on R&D, is not contradicted by similar tests. In addition they state that Schumpeterian theory of endogenous growth is more consistent with long-run trends in R&D and TFP than semi-endogenous theory. Zachariadis (2003; 2004) examines the relationship between TFP growth and the share of R&D expenditure in total income and finds support for the Schumpeterian growth models. Madsen (2007) shows that the hypothesis of constant returns to R&D cannot be rejected for 21 industrialized countries and, therefore, challenge the conventional wisdom of diminishing returns to R&D or that R&D is diluted due to an increasing variety of products as the economy grows. The statistical results were supported by graphical evidence which showed that diminishing returns to R&D have been limited to some countries and certain period in history, particularly the 1960s. The results imply that the assumptions underlying semi-endogenous growth theories cannot be maintained and that Schumpeterian theories have to relax the assumption that R&D is spread over an increasing range of goods as the economy is growing to be consistent with the empirical evidence.

This research shows diminishing returns to R&D investments, in addition a main finding is that to increase productivity growth and economic performance of countries in the long run, policy makers should focus their decisions on the total amount of R&D investments and their inner structure respectively that should have a public R&D investment < private one (i.e.  $1.58 < 1.06$ ).

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

On an international level, converging strategies are adopted in relation to science and technology policies to boost productivity and economic growth (Dodgson and Bessan, 1996; Tassej, 1997). Despite these converging initiatives, the benefits differ greatly among advanced economies in terms of economic performance and productivity growth. Since the mid 1990s, the European Union has experienced a significant slowdown in productivity growth, at a time

when productivity growth in the United States significantly accelerated. In particular the United States accelerated average annual productivity growth (measured as GDP per hour worked) of 2.3 percent from 1995-2006; conversely, EU15, labour productivity growth declined from an annual rate of 1.5 percent during the period 1995-2006.

The poor productivity performance of European countries in comparison with the USA has been an important focus for government policy. European Union with 15 countries (EU15) has a R&D expenditure of business enterprise equal to 1.23% of GDP, whereas R&D expenditure of government and higher education is 0.66% of GDP vs. 1.93 and 0.64 in the United States (Table 1A, in appendix). This situation leads to a European growth of labour productivity per hour worked as well as GDP per capita lower than the USA. In addition within the Europe there are larger differences across countries in the levels of R&D Expenditures and labour productivity development. Moreover, according to Borrás (2004), despite institutional efforts, the conceptualization of a European Innovation System is still premature in the European Union. Acemoglu *et al.*, (2006) argue that Europe has reached the productivity frontier by the mid 1990s, it now require a new model of innovation and technological change to make better use of country's own innovative capabilities. Sapir *et al.* (2004) explicitly address the need to speed up the process of Lisbon Agenda (European Commission, 2004). Van Ark *et al.* (2008) show that the European productivity slowdown is attributable to slower emergence of knowledge economy in Europe compared to United States. They consider various explanations which are not mutually exclusive: for instance, lower growth contributions from investment in information and communication technology in Europe, the relatively small share of technology-producing industries in Europe, and slower multifactor productivity growth (which can be viewed as a proxy for advances in technology and innovation). Underlying these explanations are issues related to the functioning of European labour markets and the high level of product market regulation in Europe. In addition, several EU countries are far from reaching the optimum

magnitude of public and private R&D investment as % of GDP, because of weak industrial structure and macroeconomic problems that generate a technological and economic delay in the 1990s and early 2000s, leaving Europe far behind in comparison to the US economy. The optimal rate of public and private R&D investment that maximizes the productivity growth in the long run is based on a set of open economies operating in the same geo-socio-economic and political area. It is important to always consider *social-economical specificity of each country*. In particular, each country has a specificity represented by his macroeconomic (public debt, inflation, real GDP growth), industrial structure (traditional rather than high tech industries) and financial structure, such that, given a fixed level of R&D expenditures (e.g. equal 1.0 percent of GDP for public R&D), this may breed different effects and economic performances within several countries.

Table 2A in Appendix shows that the magnitude and composition of public and private R&D expenditures change with the level of development of nations: *countries with high and medium GDP per capita* have R&D expenditure of business enterprise higher than R&D expenditure of government, whereas *less developed countries* have a R&D expenditure of government > R&D expenditure of business enterprise because of less dynamic industrial structure. As a matter of fact, if we consider the ratio public R&D expenditure –to– Private R&D expenditure, using arithmetic mean of countries over 1998-2005, econometric linear model shows that if GDP per capita increases of 1 percent, this ratio decreases of –0.012 (see table 3A and figure 1A in appendix). These results show that low Total R&D expenditures of government and high R&D expenditure of business enterprise are a necessary condition for countries to pursue high economic growth avenues in modern world wide economic system.

For instance, Italy even if is a developed country (it belongs to G7) has a composition of Public and Private R&D expenditures similar to developing countries (i.e. public R&D expenditures higher than private R&D ones). This wrong research policy applied by Italian

Governments of different coalitions has been producing low economic performances such as low productivity growth and Growth rate of GDP volume over time (see Table 1A).

In short, to achieve high levels of national productivity growth, the maximization of private R&D expenditures has to be a complement to the maximization of public R&D ones. A sustainable research policy strategy to increase economic growth should be based on R&D expenditures of business enterprise higher than government R&D expenditure to maximize long run productivity growth.

The governments realize that it is critical to be aware of the relative importance of different factors that might influence productivity growth. However, it is equally important for researchers to help government more acutely aware that the ultimate impact of any increase in spending on R&D depends critically upon complex, interwoven strings of causations which are not necessarily constant over time and across countries, because of globalization and turbulence of markets. In all, *this* empirical evidence suggests that the underlying political economy of growth that should be adopted to boost productivity gains in the long run and therefore competitive advantage of open economies seems simple at first glance, given a stable socio-economic-financial situation and low public debt: *raising both the long run R&D expenditure of business enterprise as percentage of the GDP at around 1.6%, and R&D expenditure of government and higher education sector at about 1% of GDP, ceteris paribus the stability of their economic systems.* The challenge for policy makers is how to ensure that such mix research policy strategy based on optimal magnitudes of public and private R&D expenditures (as % of GDP) are integrated in national political economy, considering country specificity, to maximize their long-run positive impact on modern economic growth patterns.

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## APPENDIX A

TABLE 1A: ARITHMETIC MEAN OF VARIABLES PER COUNTRIES

Country	GDP per capita in PPS 1997-2004	R&D Expenditure: Business Enterprises 1998-2005	R&D Government and higher education sector 1998-2005	R&D Expenditure: Business minus Government and higher education expenditures	Labour productivity per hour worked 1999-2005	Arithmetic mean
						Growth rate of GDP volume 1997-2004
Austria	130.9	1.41	0.69	0.72	99.5	2.2
Belgium	124.6	1.36	0.54	0.82	127.9	2.3
Cyprus	88.9	0.06	0.21	-0.15	68.2	3.6
Czech Republic	71.8	0.76	0.46	0.30	48.4	2.0
Denmark	129.6	1.59	0.75	0.85	102.7	1.9
Estonia	47.3	0.24	0.49	-0.25	39.3	7.2
EU (15 countries)	114.7	1.23	0.66	0.57	100.0	2.3
EU (25 countries)	104.7	1.19	0.65	0.54	91.0	2.5
EU (27 countries)	100.0	1.19	0.65	0.54	-	2.4
Euro area (12 countries)	113.6	1.18	0.66	0.51	102.6	2.2
Euro area (13 countries)	113.3	1.18	0.66	0.51	102.3	2.2
Finland	115.1	2.30	0.97	1.33	95.4	3.7
France	114.9	1.36	0.78	0.58	117.3	2.4
Germany	119.5	1.71	0.75	0.96	109.7	1.4
Greece	79.1	0.19	0.43	-0.24	68.6	4.2
Hungary	57.9	0.34	0.47	-0.13	50.6	4.6
Iceland	133.6	1.41	1.20	0.21	84.6	4.2
Ireland	131.1	0.81	0.37	0.45	115.0	7.6
Italy	115.6	0.53	0.55	-0.02	96.0	1.5
Japan	117.0	2.26	0.74	1.52	-	0.9
Latvia	39.1	0.15	0.28	-0.13	32.2	6.7
Lithuania	42.9	0.12	0.53	-0.42	39.4	6.2
Luxembourg	236.7	1.45	0.17	1.28	154.3	5.1
Malta	80.0	0.26	0.19	0.07	76.1	0.2
The Netherlands	131.5	1.04	0.71	0.33	117.8	2.7
Norway	154.6	0.92	0.71	0.22	141.6	2.7
Poland	48.6	0.20	0.40	-0.20	43.7	4.1
Portugal	77.2	0.23	0.44	-0.21	58.7	2.6
Romania	29.0	0.26	0.14	0.13	-	4.2
Slovakia	53.2	0.37	0.24	0.13	52.3	3.4
Slovenia	78.9	0.85	0.55	0.30	64.0	3.9
Spain	98.2	0.52	0.45	0.08	89.4	3.9
Sweden	121.7	2.92	0.93	1.99	101.2	3.0
Switzerland	143.1	2.03	0.66	1.37	101.0	1.7
The United Kingdom	118.2	1.18	0.59	0.59	88.8	3.0
USA	156.8	1.93	0.64	1.29	113.4	3.2

Source: Eurostat (2008)

TABLE 2A: STATISTICS OF COUNTRIES PER LEVEL OF GDP PER CAPITA

<i>Level of GDP per capita</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean Statistic</i>	<i>Std. Deviation Statistic</i>
HIGH	GDP per capita in PPS 1997-2004	125.89	18.68
	Labour productivity per hour worked 1999-2005	107.94	13.80
	Growth rate of GDP volume 1997-2004	3.09	2.18
	R&D Expenditure Business Enterprise 1998-2005	1.39	0.41
	R&D Government and higher education 1998-2005	0.70	0.19
	Valid N (list wise)	84	
MEDIUM	GDP per capita in PPS 1997-2004	82.28	9.68
	Labour productivity per hour worked 1999-2005	66.58	13.76
	Growth rate of GDP volume 1997-2004	3.21	1.73
	R&D Expenditure Business Enterprise 1998-2005	0.44	0.30
	R&D Government and higher education 1998-2005	0.42	0.13
	Valid N (list wise)	36	
LOW	GDP per capita in PPS 1997-2004	47.98	7.32
	Labour productivity per hour worked 1999-2005	43.75	7.74
	Growth rate of GDP volume 1997-2004	4.77	2.69
	R&D Expenditure Business Enterprise 1998-2005	0.25	0.11
	R&D Government and higher education 1998-2005	0.39	0.12
	Valid N (list wise)	37	

TABLE 3A: PARAMETRIC ESTIMATIONS OF MODEL

<i>Estimated relationship</i>					
$k_i =$	2.25***	$-0.012y_i$ ***	$R^2 \text{ adj.} = 27.3\%$	F = 13.79 (sig. 0.001)	N=35
	(0.367)	(0.003)	S= (0.798)		
*** Parameter is Significant at 0.001 level					

Notes: The second column is the estimate of the constant and of  $\beta_i$ . Underneath them, in parentheses, their standard error. The third column has adjusted  $R^2$  of the regression and below it, the standard error of the regression. In the last column the  $F$  test and its significance level.

$k_i$  = R&D Expenditure of Government and Higher Education as percentage of GDP – (minus) R&D Expenditure of Business enterprises as percentage of GDP, arithmetic mean over 1998-2005 period

$y_i$  = GDP per capita in PPS, arithmetic mean over 1997-2004 period



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