

INDUSTRY SABBATICAL GUIDE

The main objective of industry sabbatical is to facilitate intersectoral cooperation by increasing the R&D capacity of Estonian private and public sector institutions. If the mobility of researchers and knowledge from universities to private and public sector institutions is encouraged, both sides gain a better understanding of R&D and the development potential this can bring. Industry sabbatical helps researchers advance and diversify their academic career, gain new experience and skills, establish links with other sectors. As a result, the number of researchers with private and public sector experience in Estonia increases and the knowledge, skills and experience can circulate, helping to strengthen cooperation. By allowing its successful researchers to work in other sectors, the university can serve society and contribute to the development of Estonia as a whole. A national funding scheme "[Supporting intersectoral mobility](#)" has been created with the same objective, encouraging Estonian private or public institutions to hire researchers holding a doctoral degree.

This guide aims to promote industry sabbatical and spread the knowledge that the university also values working outside the university and is ready to enter into negotiations with the employees so that the researcher could temporarily move to other sectors. Since the employee and the employer can at any time agree on amendments to the terms and conditions of the employment contract (workload, suspension of the contract, etc.) under the Employment Contracts Act, the university does not need new legislation to launch the industry sabbatical system. Thus, the guide does not establish any legal constraints but describes the possibilities arising from legislation and makes recommendations for agreements.

1. *What is industry sabbatical?*

Industry sabbatical is the temporary employment of an academic staff member in a private or public sector institution during which the employee's academic position at the university is retained. This means that in the case of the industry sabbatical, the employee's position at the university is on hold during a particular agreed period.

The industry sabbatical system aims to increase knowledge transfer to solve the problems of society and the business sector in private companies, public sector or start-ups ('company') and diversify the academic career by working in various sectors.

2. *Who is it for?*

We advise giving the opportunity of an industry sabbatical to academic staff members who work under an employment contract entered into for an unspecified term with the workload of at least 0.5, hold an academic position requiring a doctoral degree and do not have additional fixed-term duties (primarily managerial duties). If a person's workload at the university is less than 0.5, we can assume that the employee already has enough time for activities outside the university.

3. *What arrangements should be made with the employee?*

The employee agrees on the industrial sabbatical, including its length and start date, with the immediate supervisor and head of unit, formalising it in the employment contract. Industry sabbatical is temporary in nature, and therefore its maximum duration should be up to 36 months. It is important not to conclude agreements for an indefinite period. Both the employee and the employer need clarity on the arrangements, and this knowledge is also necessary for the smooth organisation of teaching and research.

4. *May the employee continue to work at the university during the industry sabbatical?*

It is recommended that during the industry sabbatical, the employee's workload at the university does not exceed 0.2. If the employee's workload at the university is higher, the researcher's contribution to the company may remain modest, and the industry sabbatical will not serve its purpose. Tasks during this period may be related to teaching, supervision and the execution of research projects and public contracts. The agreement is formalised in the work plan and taken into account in the evaluation of the employee.

5. *May the employee use the job title of the university during the industry sabbatical?*

The academic staff member may use the job title of the university during the industry sabbatical, i.e. also during the time the employment contract is suspended.

6. *Who owns the intellectual property created at the company during the industry sabbatical?*

The company where the employee worked owns the intellectual property created at the company during the industry sabbatical. If necessary, a separate contract is concluded between the university and the company for using the created intellectual property in the research and teaching activities of the university. If the company's work requires using intellectual property created at the university and the university agrees to that, a separate contract is concluded between the company and the university.

It is important to analyse all intellectual property issues before the industry sabbatical and conclude the necessary agreements between the parties. For that, the head of unit and the immediate supervisor must inform the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation about the employee's planned industry sabbatical, who will then analyse intellectual property issues and prepare the necessary contracts.

7. *What happens after the industry sabbatical?*

After the industry sabbatical, the academic staff member either returns to work in his/her position at the university with the previous workload or terminates the employment relationship with the university on the general grounds laid down in the Employment Contracts Act.

The academic staff member who has been on industry sabbatical submits to the immediate supervisor an overview of the activities and experience as well as proposals for possible follow-up activities.