EuroTech Universities
Excellence in Science and Technology

UNIVERSITIES OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DESIGNING A RESILIENT EUROPE

EuroTech High-Level Event ● 10 November 2020

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Repair and prepare
for the next generation

The crisis has amplified the importance of a resilient Europe, the need for a pan-European effort in approaching health and sustainability issues, and the need for scientific breakthroughs in different global challenges. Universities are central actors in fertilizing these scientific breakthroughs and finding innovative solutions to threats like a global pandemic.

COVID-19 has shown the importance of science. We need to build on this 'new' awareness and use it. Universities have an essential role to play, not only in overcoming the current health crisis but also in giving directions to tackling climate change and digitalisation. We need science and technology to a sustainable way of living, and we need the skills of engineers to deal with the digitalisation of our lives.

A European recovery plan for science
based on long-term investments

We need a European recovery plan for science and future-oriented technologies. Moreover, we need to improve knowledge transfer, which must be faster and more targeted to make Europe more competitive and independent from the rest of the world. This recovery plan must contain reliable long-term investments as solving problems of that magnitude takes time.

The recovery plan should invest in Europe's future and ensure a sustainable and inclusive recovery with an even greater focus on the European Green Deal and digitalisation.

Europe must take its strategic interests into its own hands and increase cooperation to move towards digital sovereignty, which rests on three inseparable pillars: computing power, control over our data, and secure connectivity. Successful partnerships such as CERN and Airbus are the best examples of Europe being unbeatable when it cooperates. Therefore, widening the scope of collaboration is key, not only in the defence and IT domains but also, for example, in the health sector and sustainable and flexible manufacturing. To achieve this we need a strong European Research Area (ERA) with a real opportunity for cooperation in all research, innovation and technological fields.

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Europe must become a technological leader
with a 'human face'

Europe must act as a technological leader, learning from the private sector and taking citizens on board. Social sciences and innovation are essential. Europe needs to take the position of a market power aligned with an agile governance model that takes science advice into account.

Innovation is a social process and needs to be inclusive. Collaboration with local communities and stakeholders is of utmost importance to deliver socially responsible and accepted solutions. These solutions need to be holistic and socially sustainable to successfully tackle climate change and digitalisation. This is why society needs to be included. Engagement with local governments and business networks in the region can connect entrepreneurs to the local and regional innovation ecosystems and offer expert advice of, e.g., large corporations in specific domains.

Strengthen trust in science
through improved education and focus on human capital

Integrating the broader society in the process of innovation will help increase public trust in science. Increased confidence in science will also ensure more public financial means for science and technology.

Europe's competitive advantage is knowledge, and we need to build on that in the future. The focus should be on human capital and education as we can build on a firm basis of solid public educational systems in Europe. Getting a feeling for social responsibility and taking citizens on board needs to be integrated into engineering education. Future engineers need to be aware of the public's take on technology. Co-creation with society needs to be an integral part of future studies, from the first semester throughout the whole curriculum of engineering education.

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More early-stage and smart investment
to boost entrepreneurial venturing from labs to market

The European Innovation Council (EIC) is opening up fully-fledged in 2021. This increased focus on and amount of funding for deep-tech development have been needed for years. If Europe is to harvest from its competitive technological advances, such high emphasis on entrepreneurial venturing from labs to market is indispensable. Risk capital for early-stage deep-tech start-ups has been lacking – especially in capital-intensive industries.

But next to raising capital, we also need to enhance the evaluation system, focusing on the project teams' ability to deliver. We need to foster a social mindset among entrepreneurial researchers to create sustainable solutions for all Europeans. And we need to ask our entrepreneurs how they want to include and utilise their local ecosystems in their endeavours to deliver global sustainable solutions.

Create an EU toolbox
to support the transition from research to entrepreneurship

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In the early days, it's often difficult to see a clear path from an idea to an end product. But universities across Europe create these inventions every day. However, often research funding stops, or risk capital finds the idea too uncertain and refuses to back it at this stage.

That's why we need transition tools to support entrepreneurial-minded researchers. They should be enabled to build up and broaden the team capacity, test and demonstrate the feasibility of the invention, and explore market opportunities before incorporating. Furthermore, it should be possible to support the researchers on their entrepreneurship journey via the in-house entrepreneurship centres of universities, essential in the early phase.

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Step up cooperation, widen the scope, take risks
and engage with industry and society

Scaling-up and strengthening the value chains should be a priority. We need to have one digital market to allow for more investment and investment of scale. Europe needs to secure its value chains, which are critical in leveraging state-of-the-art technologies. Value chains master our society's future, address crucial questions, and produce services and products that will be competitive and allow for a prosperous future.

Interdisciplinary training and (executive) education at scale is vital as there is a need to re-skill millions of Europeans to reshape and solve complex future challenges. Hence, a common vision and cross-border cooperation between all the actors within the innovation ecosystem, including industry, governments (EU Member States) and Higher Education, are critical to secure Europe's competitive advantage and generate growth.

The EuroTech High-Level Event took place on 10 November 2020 online.
For information about the programme and the speakers, please visit www.eurotech-universities-hle.eu.

You can find a recorded version of the event on Youtube: https://youtu.be/RnM4Rdj2Wfc

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