

TRUST, FLEXIBILITY AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY KEY TO SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

NEWS ALERT

Brussels, 6 December 2013 - While Europe punches well above its weight in terms of generating scientific and technological knowledge, successful university-industry collaboration is a key pre-requisite for using that knowledge to address the grand societal challenges. A High Level Panel of EuroTech Universities' Presidents, major companies and EU institution representatives concluded that trust, flexibility and interdisciplinarity are key ingredients to achieving successful collaboration.

This was the key message of the high level panel debate organized by the EuroTech Universities Alliance on 3 December in Brussels. The panel included case studies provided two of the EuroTech Universities, Hans van Duijn, Rector Magnificus of Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) and Anders Bjarklev, President of Technical University of Denmark (DTU), Vice Presidents from two major companies, John Bell from Philips and Walter Weigel from Siemens. Anne Glover, the Chief Scientific Adviser to the President of the European Commission, and Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP, were also invited to give their views.

The importance of collaboration with industry has been long recognized and is in the DNA of technical universities. More than 150 years ago, the founder of DTU, H.C.Orsted (1777-1851) stated "Collaboration between people from industry and research will benefit both. It inspires researchers to new discoveries and provides the industry with insight into continuously new ideas and inventions."

There is clear evidence that these mutual benefits continue to this day. "An independent analysis of the more than 5,500 contracts that DTU has signed over the past 5 years indicated that these companies had grown by an average of 10% more per year," states Anders Bjarklev. "With their productivity increasing by over 30% during a 6 year period, as compared to a similar cohort of companies who had not collaborated."

The cooperation landscape is undergoing some fundamental changes. Philips has been a pioneer of open innovation over the past 50 years and will continue to collaborate with its 250 university partners. However, the company has now recognized that it also needs to engage in a selected number of strategic partnerships, including TU/e. "Developing mutual trust at all levels is of crucial importance," stressed Hans van Duijn. "At TU/e, this is underpinned by postgraduate placements in industry, as well as joint appointments of senior professors."

There are similarities in Siemens' approach to cooperation with universities. In addition to its various specific cooperative actions, it is engaged in strategic partnerships with 8 top universities worldwide, of which 6 are in Europe, including EuroTech Universities DTU and Technische Universität München (TUM).



Universities are also constantly adapting their cooperation models with industry; for DTU, its guiding principle of research independence is supported by differentiating the portfolio of companies with which it works. This approach also enhances the university's rapidly growing role as a neutral actor able to promote pre-competitive cooperation across several industry players.

Anne Glover acknowledged that leading European universities of science and technology are especially well suited to assure seamless links between the generation of new scientific knowledge, technological prowess and their translation into innovative products and services which can address societal challenges and deliver economic growth and employment. The EuroTech Universities' strategic partnership offers a highly promising model in relation to this urgent need. "Our Alliance exploits the complementary expertise available in the four partner universities," stresses EuroTech President Wolfgang Herrmann. "So we form critical mass in a number of technical areas, which is highly attractive to industry."

ABOUT THE EUROTECH UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE

The EuroTech Universities Alliance is a strategic partnership of four leading universities of science & technology in Europe: TUM (Technische Universität München), EPFL (École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne), DTU (Danmarks Tekniske Universitet) and TU/e (Technische Universiteit Eindhoven). The Alliance builds upon and combines the excellence, expertise and capabilities of its partner universities to develop technical solutions which address grand societal challenges. It is also a forum for cooperation and exchange on a range of issues in research, education and innovation, including the recruitment and career development of researchers.

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