

DELIVERING ON GRAND CHALLENGES IS IN THE DNA OF TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

NEWS ALERT

Brussels, 20 October 2014. Universities in Europe, most notably universities of science and technology, are increasingly adopting grand challenge related scientific and technical advances as their “third mission” alongside their two long standing principal responsibilities for teaching and research. The EuroTech Universities highlight the key strategic questions which need to be addressed by universities and by their principal partners in order to transform their unique potential for delivering real world solutions to real world problems into concrete achievements.

It is 5 years ago since the Lund Declaration issued the clarion call “Europe must focus on the grand challenges of our time.” This Declaration proved to be a key spur in the shaping of H2020 and especially its pillar on societal challenges. It was also a milestone for Europe’s universities. The EuroTech Universities Alliance has now organized a High Level Event to address the crucial issue of mobilizing universities to address the grand societal challenges.

The engagement of the EuroTech Universities in tackling societal challenges has been voiced by Anders Bjarklev, President of the Technical University of Denmark (DTU), who is participating in the High Level Panel. He affirms that delivering on grand challenges is in the DNA of technical universities. DTU cooperates closely with industry to solve urgent and immediate challenges. In a longer term perspective, the University is equally dedicated to securing the foundations for the technologies of the future by conducting excellent basic research.

Combining the delivery of technical solutions for urgent challenges while conducting investigator-driven research is underlined by the breadth of EuroTech Universities’ performance. Between them, the four universities had over 1,400 participations in FP7 projects, including over 140 ERC grants. During the same period, they created 450 startups, as well as appearing consistently among the top ranks for joint university-industry publications.

At the same time, in common with universities across Europe, the EuroTech Universities recognize that more needs to be done to address grand challenges and that it needs to be done better. They are engaged in integrating grand challenge perspectives across their principal missions of education, research and innovation. This can give rise to difficult decisions and some delicate trade-offs. Aligning educational curricula with grand challenge related aspects, providing incentives for relatively neglected areas of challenge related research without compromising researchers’ freedom to pursue their own interests, promoting true inter-disciplinarity, maximizing access to knowledge while seeking revenue from the private sector, providing independent and trusted advice and expertise to society - these are just a few examples of the challenges to be addressed.

Within the overall context of unprecedented changes in the higher education landscape as a whole, the mobilization of universities in addressing grand challenges is itself a major challenge. The success of this mobilization will carry significant effects for the future of universities as well as for the directions of research policies.

**ABOUT THE EUROTECH UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE:**

The EuroTech Universities Alliance is a strategic partnership of four leading universities of science & technology in Europe: DTU (Technical University of Denmark), EPFL (École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne), TU/e (Eindhoven University of Technology) and TUM (Technische Universität München). Together the EuroTech Universities are committed to finding technical solutions which address the major challenges of modern society. Their intensive collaboration across research, education and innovation support the EU's goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

www.eurotech-universities.eu

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