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"The role of Education in the promotion of Research and Innovation"

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- The theme of this year's conference – Synergies between Education, Research and Innovation- is a very relevant subject and a crucial policy development in the Commission's agenda.
- Education, research and innovation are at the heart of the EU 2020 strategy and are reflected in the headline targets: in the current years, growth and jobs in Europe will stem from innovations in products, services and business models as well as on Europe's ability to nurture, attract and retain talent.
- The Innovation Union Flagship of the EU 2020 Strategy stresses the role of human capital at the very core of innovation. To remain globally competitive, a radical shift in our innovation systems and paradigms is necessary. In this context, education plays a critical role. World class entrepreneurial universities are magnets for attracting excellent people and for creating environments where innovation is more likely to thrive.
- This partly explains why under the future Multiannual Financial Framework for research and Innovation, the Commission is proposing that education sector receives the largest relative budget increase – an increase of nearly 75% compared to current programmes. Synergies between the future "Erasmus for All" programme and Horizon 2020 will naturally be of the essence here.
- Synergies between education, research and innovation are, indeed, already a reality in Europe. The Commission has a number

of on-going or upcoming initiatives which strive to make the knowledge triangle a reality.

Higher Education

- The Commission adopted on 20 September a renewed communication of the modernization agenda for Europe's higher education systems. As you may recall, the first communication dating back to 2006, focused on the importance of integrating the knowledge triangle for growth and jobs.
- The new Communication addresses in a holistic manner all the missions of universities –teaching, research and translation of knowledge to economy and the society and identifies three main priorities for reform:
- First, Increasing the supply of higher education graduates in line with the EU 2020 target of increasing higher educational attainment, to improve the skill base of the European economy
- Second, improving the quality and relevance of higher education to ensure better alignment with the requirements of the labour market and foster entrepreneurship and innovation;
- Third, design effective governance and funding mechanisms for higher education to underpin quality objectives.
- Mobility, cross border co-operation, enhanced co-operation with business and engagement at regional level are all seen to have an important role in contributing to the overarching quality objectives of the Communication.

The EIT

- Already announced in the 2006 Communication, the European Institute of Technology –EIT- has in the mean time become a reality.

- The EIT is the first European initiative whose core mission is to fully integrate the knowledge triangle in order to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity and tackle societal challenges. The EIT explicitly links the whole innovation cycle from education and knowledge creation to business creation in existing and new companies.
- The EIT is a living example of seamless interactions between education, research and business. It is also a concrete demonstration of the importance of higher education institutions in the generation of innovation breakthroughs.
- The EIT and the KICs have made significant progress in a very short period of time. With initial KICs activities focusing on talent and people, first results have been achieved on education and entrepreneurship: multi-disciplinary summer courses have taken place and the first students have already received seed funds to start implementing their business plans.
- In other words, the EIT, after some initial teething issues, has passed successfully its proof of concept examination.
- Looking forward, the inclusion of the EIT as part of the future Horizon 2020 strategic framework will ensure that the strong potential for synergies between the EIT and the KICs and other research, innovation and education initiatives is fully exploited.
- The EIT can in particular play a very instrumental role, providing a strategic bridge between the research and innovation framework and the higher education agenda. Moreover, the EIT, via the co-location centers, can contribute to the Cohesion framework by addressing the linkages between the local and global aspects of innovation.
- The EIT's Strategic Innovation agenda that the Commission will adopt on 30 November, alongside the Horizon 2020 package, will detail the EIT's strategic orientations for the 2014-2020 period,

both in terms of consolidating the existing KICs, proposing themes for new KICs, ensuring a higher level of dissemination and Europe-wide communication of the EIT and KICs activities and finally by making sure that the EIT fully exploits its potential for exploring new avenues for simplification.

Knowledge Alliances

- The "Knowledge Alliances" as announced in the "Innovation Union" flagship - that is to say structured partnerships between higher education and business - have attracted overwhelming attention from potential stakeholders.
- At present, the Commission has just 1 million Euros at its disposal for pilot projects, yet the first call attracted almost 100 proposals, covering all EU Member States and requesting in total around 30 times the amount available!
- While many initiatives targeting the link between research and industry are already in place at EU level, these partnerships will address the "education-business" side of the triangle (joint curricula, multi-disciplinarity, entrepreneurship, placements for both students and teachers...), which remains underexploited.
- Needless to say, if the pilots prove successful, this "co-operation" strand of Commission policy will certainly be expanded under the next generation of Education, Training and Youth activities.

Marie Curie Actions

- Finally, I would like to conclude with the Marie Curie Actions, which are another first-rate illustration of "knowledge triangle" integration, in this case at the level of grants to individual researchers.
- Marie Curie Actions do not only foster mobility across countries and disciplines but also across the academic and industrial sectors. Collaboration between universities, research institutes and companies is thus strongly supported. They provide researchers of

all levels both with high quality doctoral and post-doctoral training and with the transversal skills they need, including entrepreneurship, to navigate their careers across the public and private sectors.

- Several Marie Curie initiatives, such as the *Initial Training Network* (which itself has recently launched the "European Industrial Doctorates" and the "Innovative Doctoral Programme") and the *Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways*, involve industry in their doctoral and post-doctoral training, which greatly increases researchers' employment prospects.
- Over 50 000 researchers have benefitted from the Marie Curie Actions since 1996 and the programme currently supports around 10 000 researchers per year.

Conclusion

- Europe needs to foster the role of higher education institutions as engines of innovation. Structured long terms partnerships between academia and business, improving teaching and learning methods, promoting international attractiveness and more entrepreneurial mindsets are key ingredients to truly boost Europe's innovation potential.
- Promoting education, research and innovation as well as the interactions between them will be a top priority in the Commission agenda in the years to come and we count on your active support and engagement your support to bring it forward.

Thank you for your attention.