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EUREKA Conference opens new perspectives for European Technology Platforms

date of publication > 27-April-2011

On 27 April, EUREKA and its [EUROAGRIFOODCHAIN Umbrella](#) organised a conference exploring possible new synergies with the European Technology Platforms (ETPs) of the agro-food and bio-based economy sectors. This very specialized event attracted some 50 participants from the industry and public authorities to the EUREKA Secretariat's premises, in Brussels.

In his opening speech Luuk Borg, Head of the EUREKA Secretariat, highlighted the importance for public authorities to invest in R&D to stimulate private investment and referred to EUREKA's successful example in creating EU competitiveness by helping R&D-performing SMEs access to finance.

Presentations from a number of ETPs and EUREKA Clusters informed participants of funding possibilities for cross-border cooperation in the agro-food field. Johan van Arendonk, Board member at FABRE ETP for Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction presented a handful of opportunities in the field for EUREKA and FABRE ETP to focus on, develop and implement by sharing expertise.

Iwona Podrygala from Biofuels ETP assessed various cooperation possibilities with EUREKA along the entire value chain, from feedstock production to marketable end products and highlighted the challenge of bringing new technologies to the global market.

Furthermore, Secretary General of Aquaculture ETP Courtney Hough stressed that new networks with clear and attainable targets need to be established.

"There is need for an EU wide holistic and integrated strategy for the bio-based economy to overcome the innovation Death Valley. To achieve this, all policies have to be involved and strategy should be developed and implemented at EU and member state level. Further measures include developing efficient IPR policy; support the development of start-ups and spin-offs; attract venture capital," added Joanna Dupont from Sustainable Chemistry ETP.

In his presentation on the Food For Life ETP, András Sebők, highlighted the need for "better understanding of how to assess sustainability of the various food chain and consumption patterns; improve understanding on how to communicate information about more sustainable solutions to consumers and other stakeholder communities. "EUREKA and the ETP can create together state-of-the-art workshops by bringing together their experts and partners to make sure results reach the industry," Sebok added.

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Erik Rodenbach, Programme Coordinator of EUREKA Cluster ITEA2 and Xavier Chazelle, EUREKA Cluster ACQUEAU's Chairman of the Board gave attendees examples of a successful cooperation with EUREKA highlighting the Clusters' success in attracting companies' interest.

"The expansion of the agri-business sector; the exhaustibility of fossil fuels; the growing population are some of the challenges agriculture and food sector face in Europe," added Patrick Van Beneden, Executive Vice-President Life Sciences at GIVM Agri+.

In the second part of the conference, Charlotte Andersdotter, Policy Officer at European Commission's DG Research and Innovation in charge of the monitoring of ETPs, broadened the approach to Innovation by presenting the Innovation Union flagship initiative and explained through which policies the EU aims to "radically improve the framework conditions and reduce time-to-market". "Shortage of capital is possibly the key obstacle to the development of innovative SMEs. European Innovation Partnerships should bring together all key players and work together to transform ideas and research into successful innovative products or services," added Andersdotter.

The conference - which was followed by a lively debate - concluded that EUREKA's funding programmes and the ETPs' Strategic Roadmaps complement each other and can help SMEs bring good innovative products to the market. "Instead of waiting until we have achieved coordination of all the individual initiatives, we should aim for smart cooperation between all the initiatives. This way we can use the best of all the individual initiatives, combine resources and create synergy. Thanks to the fruitful discussions and connections, this smart cooperation can start today," concluded Maarten Schaans, Chairman of EUROAGRIFOODCHAIN Umbrella and project officer at Dutch Ministry's division for agri-food AgentschapNL.

Further concrete steps picking up conclusions and ideas developed in the conference will follow.

Journalist, British and EU public relations expert, David Poyser moderated the debate.

The conference was organised within the framework of the EUREKA ACADEMY series of events.

You can download here the [full press release of the EUREKA Conference](#).

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