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[ACTIVITIES](#)
[PROJECTS](#)
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[Return to news articles list](#)
[see also EUREKA press room](#)

EUREKA strengthens its role as a major player in supporting R&D&I

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In its latest debate in the European Parliament in Brussels, 'Effectively supporting transnational cooperation in industrial innovation' and the third under Israeli Chairmanship, EUREKA once again stressed its pivotal position in the European Research Area and demonstrated that research and innovation are more than ever '*crucial to addressing global challenges*', adding that '*innovation can be more effectively addressed at regional or even local level*'.

More than 90 high level stakeholders from the EUREKA network, EU institutions, industry and academia got involved in a lively debate on the different R&D support measures for hi-tech SMEs along the value chain and heard the view of big industry on strategically-significant R&D segments and the importance of networks.

German European Parliamentarian Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, host of the event, but unfortunately not able to be present, broadcast a brief welcoming address to participants where on behalf of the European Parliament, he stated that EUREKA's and other players' expertise is needed in order to make the next funding programme more effective than the previous one.

Vittorio Prodi MEP said that, despite no longer being involved with the ITRE Committee, he had a long-standing relationship with EUREKA. The network's philosophy of combining expertise across frontiers and collaborative working was the right one to ensure that Europe becomes more competitive.

Eli Opper, the EUREKA High Level Representative Chairman in his presentation focused on new models and sources of funding for EUREKA projects, especially for SMEs and start-ups. He said that new mechanisms are needed because stakeholders are cautious of risk-taking and because VC funds are not focused on long-term gains.

Julian Sesena, MaPeEr SME coordinator in his presentation conveyed the main message and recommendations as regards to community policies supporting SMEs were in line with those of the event at large. We are in need of an open innovation, simplification of rules and administrative burdens. There should be a better promotion of contacts with Venture Capital and other needs which SMEs would have after a research activity is carried out and grants should be complemented with loans. Better cooperation mechanism between National R&D programmes and European programmes are needed.

Luuk Borg, Head of the EUREKA Secretariat and moderator of the whole event, explained in further details the EUREKA Network and especially the Eurostars Joint Programme with the European

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Commission. He focused in the answer of EUREKA to the Eurostars MidTerm report stressing the fact that the Eurostars model fits largely the SMEs needs and its strong added value relies on EUREKA's well established network of national project coordinators (NPC) and national funding bodies (NFB), which have a deep local implementation and an extensive experience in supporting SMEs.

Yigal Erlich from the Israeli Chair and Chair of EUREKA's Round Table Financing Innovation, went into more details in explaining the benefits of public and private funding joining efforts while praising the governance structure flexibility of the EUREKA Network allowing for *a la carte* participation, pilot projects trying out new approaches and most importantly coverage of the whole value chain, from idea to market, with tailor made support and instruments.

Three of EUREKA Cluster's Chairmen (Enrico Villa-CATRENE, Rudolph Hagenmueller-ITEA2 and Jose Jimenez-CELTIC) presented the added value of the industry in developing generic technologies of key importance for the European competitiveness and stressing the success of the bottom-up approach and flexibility allowing the industry a quick and efficient response to changing parameters. Addressing the needs of large companies and SMEs, clusters are the core engine for industrial innovation and economic growth.

Magnus Madfors, Director R&D Policy, Ericsson, in his presentation touched upon the same points of the previous speakers suggesting that SMEs and big enterprises need to find a way of working together as an ecosystem. More simplification and an innovation friendly climate are needed now in Europe. European companies need to be better at turning the research funding results and values on the market. 'There is a big difference between playing to win and playing not to lose and sometimes in Europe we are playing not to lose' he concluded.

Eli Sofer Vice President at Runcom, an Israeli SME, showcased a number of projects and success stories done with the cooperation of EUREKA Clusters. He emphasised that the project would not have succeeded without the help of EUREKA, which he described as a good platform for setting up international partnerships. Finally Mr. Sofer called for a stable funding environment to be created in order to relieve the uncertainties accompanying the setup of a new consortium between project partners.

Follow the link to download the [EUREKA debate at the European Parliament full press release](#).

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