

PRESS RELEASE

AENEAS and EUREKA host panel session on Collaborative Innovation at ICT 2018 conference

Paris, 10 December 2018 – With the focus on the digital future, AENEAS and the EUREKA Association hosted a panel session as part of the European Union’s ICT 2018 event in Vienna, 4-6 December 2018. The panel’s theme of ‘Collaborative Innovation for the Digital Age’ recognised that Europe’s digital transformation will depend on collaboration between all stakeholders, supported by the right funding instruments and tools tailored to help deliver rapid, agile innovation.

The EUREKA Clusters (Celtic-Plus, EURIPIDES², EUROGIA 2020, ITEA, Metallurgy Europe, PENTA, SMART) are a vital component of the range of collaboration instruments that EUREKA supports. With their strong industrial focus, they are currently running a series of such events to promote dialogue between large industry, SMEs, Research and Technology Organisations and academic institutions – together with their partners in the public authorities – to focus on how better to stimulate collaborative projects and represent their industry partners from Europe and beyond. For over 20 years, the EUREKA Clusters have proven their value by enabling a wide range of collaborative projects meeting the ambitions of both industry and National Authorities. They have generated significant societal and economic impact, illustrated by numerous success stories covering a broad range of industrial applications. These activities are complemented by other programmes such as Eurostars and GlobalStars.

AENEAS brings another view from industry, along with many years’ experience in the European Commission Joint Undertaking programmes, ENIAC and ECSEL. AENEAS, in partnership with ARTEMIS-IA and EPoSS, was also responsible for the creation of the Electronic Components and Systems Strategic Research Agenda – an industry wide roadmap for technology development supporting the Digital Economy.

The involvement of both organisations in this panel session echoed their coordinated approach to the stimulation of collaborative projects in a range of complementary European Commission and EUREKA programmes. The panel also stressed the importance of partnerships between SMEs and large companies within consortia, so-called project “ecosystems”, designed to allow the societal and economic exploitation of ideas, talents and opportunities wherever they originate.

The wide-ranging discussion addressed the question: “Are current mechanisms for stimulating collaborative funding fit for purpose in the Digital Age?”

Addressing the needs of SMEs, Sandro D’Elia, Programme Officer, European Commission – Directorate for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Industry stated that “SMEs are faster than everybody else. How we quickly scale them up, is the issue. We need an ‘ERASMUS’ type system to help them get access to the technology they need wherever it is available, e.g. through the European network of Digital Innovation Hubs and to put them in contact with the relevant large enterprises and research institutes.”

This was supported by Arnaud Zoubir, ALPhANOV who added that “Incentives programmes are also required for start-ups.”

The importance of risk taking was raised by Jean-Michel Duquerrois, Head of System Architecture and R&T projects, Airbus DS SLC. “With innovation comes risk. We shall not stop investing in projects, just because we do not want to take the risk to fail,” he stated. “Public funding is an important motivator for projects that extend the state-of-the-art,” commented Dr.-Ing. Anton Strahilov, Innovations Manager, EKS InTec GmbH.

The question of speed and cycle time was addressed by Rob Smeets, Director, Public-Private Partnerships, Philips: “If you want to go fast, go to the market directly, without public funding. For collaborative innovation, small concise projects may be the way to go faster,” he said. Olaf N. Hartmann, FFG - Austrian Research Promotion Agency, European and International Programs agreed that there were also challenges in the public agencies: “Innovation agencies should apply innovation in their way of acting as well,” he commented.

Addressing the importance of internationalisation in today's Global environment, Dora Meredith, Senior Coordinator of the UK Chairmanship of EUREKA and Innovate UK said: “Programmes must be agile and accessible to all, with the opportunity to meet the best partners, whether they be located inside or outside Europe.”

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See <http://www.eurekanetwork.org/>

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