

## **Peter Olesen to succeed Alexander von Gabain as Chairman of the EIT Governing Board on 1 August 2014**

**The Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) unanimously elected Peter Olesen as its next Chairman during its meeting on 13 March 2014. Peter Olesen will succeed Alexander von Gabain, second Chairman of the EIT Governing Board, when his mandate comes to an end on 31 July 2014.**



Peter Olesen and Alexander von Gabain

*"I am delighted and honoured to have been elected Chairman by my fellow Governing Board members and would like to thank Alexander for his outstanding leadership of the EIT. I am very much looking forward to taking on this challenge and continue to shape the EIT in its next growth stage as outlined in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA)", says Peter Olesen. "Following the successful set up of the Institute and its first three KICs, the next few years will be decisive for the EIT as we continue to strengthen the activities of the existing KICs and expand our portfolio of KICs, with the designation of two new ones in December this year and preparations for the launch of two new ones in 2016", he adds.*

*"I am extremely pleased that Peter will succeed me as Chairman of the EIT Governing Board in August", says Alexander von Gabain. "With his drive, experience within the knowledge triangle and under his leadership, I am convinced that the EIT will continue to thrive with its strategic focus on boosting the entrepreneurial mind-set across Europe and increase its impactful investment into Europe's innovation landscape."*

As set out in the EIT Regulation, Alexander von Gabain's term as Chairman and member of the EIT Governing Board will come to an end on July 31 2014, six years after his appointment to the Board.

### **Background**

#### **About the EIT**

The EIT is an independent EU body set up in 2008 to spur innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe to overcome some of its greatest challenges. It brings together leading higher education institutions, research labs and companies to form dynamic cross-border partnerships – Knowledge and Innovation Communities, KICs - that develop innovative products and services, start new companies, and train a new generation of entrepreneurs.

The first three KICs on climate change, ICT and sustainable energy were selected in 2009 ([Climate-KIC](#), [EIT ICT Labs](#) and [KIC InnoEnergy](#)). To date, they have provided entrepreneurship training for more than

1000 students and contributed to the creation of more than 100 start-ups. Over 90 new products and services have been launched and more than 400 business ideas are currently being incubated within the KICs.

The EU has decided to expand the EIT's activities over the 2014 to 2020 period within the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and to increase its budget to € 2.7 billion. As a result, the EIT launched a [Call for KIC Proposals](#) on 14 February 2014 with a view to select two new KICs focusing on *innovation for healthy living and active ageing*, and on *raw materials – sustainable exploration, extraction processing, recycling and substitution*. In addition, the EIT will also launch a call for KIC Proposals in 2016 focusing on *food4future* and *added-value manufacturing* with a further call planned for 2018 addressing *urban mobility*.

*The EIT makes innovation happen!*

**Peter Olesen** obtained his PhD in Plant Cell Biology at University of Copenhagen in 1978 and ran postdoc research programmes at University of Copenhagen and the Risoe National Laboratory until he moved to the biotech industry in 1983. He has been Chair of the Board of the Danish Council for Strategic Research since 2008. He spent 25 years as Research Director, VP R&D and Executive VP/CSO in four major international food and food ingredients companies: Danisco A/S (DK) 1983-93; Sandoz Seeds Ltd. (France) 1994-95; CPKelco/Hercules Inc. (DK & US) 1996-2000; Chr.Hansen A/S (DK) 2000-2008. He has held 3 appointments as affiliated professor at the University of Copenhagen: Plant Sciences 1986-91 and 1993-98; Functional Foods 2008-13. In addition, he was employed as part-time MSO professor at the Department of Plant Biology and Biotechnology at the University of Copenhagen 2009-11. Today, he is manager of his own company, ActiFoods, that offers counselling and knowledge sharing to companies and research institutions within food and health. He has served as member or chaired a number of scientific advisory boards, think tanks, and science/policy committees and boards in his home country Denmark as well as in the EU.

In 2012, he was appointed to the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) of which he will become the Chairman on 1 August 2014.

**Alexander von Gabain** obtained his Ph.D. in Genetics at the University of Heidelberg and held a post-doctorate position at the Stanford University. In the 1980s and 1990s, he was Professor at the University of Umeå and at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, as well as an advisor to pharmaceutical and biotech companies. From 1992 to 1998, he was Chair of Microbiology of the University of Vienna at the Campus Vienna Biocenter, Austria. In 1998, he founded Intercell AG and led the company as CEO until it was successfully floated on the Vienna Stock Exchange in 2005. His research interest is in the field of biomedical research and documented by a large number of publications, book chapters, edition of books and patents. He is professor of Microbiology at the Max Perutz Laboratories of the University of Vienna, and foreign adjunct professor at the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, member of several professional organizations and serves on the boards of biotech and venture capital enterprises. His many achievements have been acknowledged by prestigious industrial awards, academic prizes, honourable memberships, including the Swedish Royal Academy of Engineering Science.

In 2008, he was appointed to the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), of which he is the Chairman since 15 September 2011.

#### **For more information**

On the EIT: [www.eit.europa.eu](http://www.eit.europa.eu)

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#### **Contact**

[Caroline Vandenplas](#) (+36 1481 9371)