

Social innovation and education at heart of plans to boost European entrepreneurship

Two-day conference debates best ways to join forces for innovation in Europe

Budapest, Hungary – Europe needs to focus on entrepreneurship, innovation, education, and breaking down barriers between technologies and disciplines, according to participants at a two-day conference organised by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

Speaking at the conclusion of INNOVEIT 2016 in Budapest, which was attended by more than 350 European entrepreneurs and innovators, Martin Kern, the EIT Interim Director, said:

'Innovation often occurs at the intersection of different disciplines and based on emerging technologies. At the EIT, we are working effectively across borders and disciplines and are increasingly seeing the results from our five innovation communities. Now, the EIT is looking to further improve collaboration both within the EIT Community and with new stakeholders, so as to continue to accelerate the delivery of innovations that meet the current needs of Europe's citizens and society as a whole to address major challenges.'

INNOVEIT 2016 featured presentations by 17 innovators and entrepreneurs who were nominated for three EIT Awards. These awards highlight the most successful start-ups, the most innovative projects and the best entrepreneurial talent that Europe has to offer.

The **EIT Venture Award**, which celebrates breakthrough innovations and exciting start-ups, was given to Florian Schneider, a Netherlands-based entrepreneur who co-founded Nerdalize, which heats homes using computing power.

Sweden-based entrepreneur Allen Mohammadi won the **EIT CHANGE Award**, which recognises Europe's newest crop of entrepreneurs and the ideas they generate. Allen's company, Hippogriff AB, developed an accurate, non-invasive and inexpensive tool for the screening and early diagnosis of heart disease.

The **Innovators Award**, for developing an innovative product, service or process with an outstanding potential for positive societal and economic impact, was given to Norbert Kuipers and his team. Norbert is a Dutch national who worked with Climate-KIC to develop a system for using waste and renewable heat for clean water production and indoor air control.

Peter Olesen, Chairman of the EIT Governing Board, said:

Budapest, 2 May 2016

'The three award winners – Florian Schneider, Allen Mohammadi and Norbert Kuipers – work across disciplines to deliver innovations that solve important environmental and health issues, and we are proud of their achievements as part of the EIT Community.'

Leading European decision-makers also participated in INNOVEIT 2016: Members of the European Parliament Paul Rübige and Eva Kaili joined Commissioner Tibor Navracsics, responsible for the EIT, and Commissioner Carlos Moedas, responsible for Research, Science and Innovation.

In his opening address, Commissioner Navracsics highlighted the successes of the EIT Community, including its funding for more than 200 start-ups and its educational programmes, from which almost 500 people have graduated with EIT degrees, with EIT alumni setting up businesses and joining the ranks of the world's leading young companies.

Commissioner Moedas underlined the need to combine the digital and physical worlds, focus on 'user innovation', and give stronger guidance to budding entrepreneurs in Europe.

INNOVEIT 2016 also included discussions on fostering social innovation – which will be the subject of a new cross-EIT initiative – and improving entrepreneurial education through greater use of intensive courses, summer schools and online learning.

Martin Kern said:

'The EIT has achieved a lot over the last couple of years in entrepreneurial education, research-driven innovation and business creation – including the establishment of a growing alumni network to share experience, building a student community of more than 2 000 people, and setting up EIT Health and EIT Raw Materials. After INNOVEIT 2016, I feel even more confident that the EIT will continue to grow in strength, with two new innovation communities soon to arrive to ensure a sustainable food value chain and increase the competitiveness of Europe's manufacturing industry. These will make the EIT Community even more attractive to potential innovators, and support the development of economic growth and jobs in Europe.'

Find out more

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More information on the Award nominees and their ventures is available at:
<http://eit.europa.eu/innoveit#awards>

Press pictures are available at: <http://eit.europa.eu/innoveit#media>

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About the EIT

The EIT is an independent body of the European Union set up in 2008 to spur innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe to overcome some of its greatest challenges.

It brings together business, education and research labs to form dynamic cross-border innovation partnerships that develop innovative products and services, start new companies, and train a new generation of entrepreneurs.

The EIT Community has brought together 800 leading and committed partners from across Europe, bringing more than 140 new products and services introduced to the market. There are more than 1 000 students enrolled on EIT entrepreneurial degree courses, and almost 500 EIT degree graduates. The Community has incubated more than 900 business ideas and created 200 start-ups to date, in the fields of climate, energy, digitalisation, health and raw materials. New innovation communities in the areas of food and added-value manufacturing are joining the EIT Community this year.

The EIT – Making Innovation Happen

The EIT is a body of the European Union

