

# EU urges 'closer ties' between science and industry

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Bridging the gap between research institutes and enterprise is central to advance innovation and competitiveness in Europe, argue EU officials and industry leaders.

But how to get these separate orbiting planets acquainted with one another was the subject of heated debate at the 5th European Innovation Summit, held in Brussels last week.

Many scientists find it difficult to relate to businesses, the pursuit of dissimilar objectives often leave one if not both parties alienated. Commenting on the mistrust between businesses and scientists, Chief EU Scientific Advisor, Anne Glover, said 'we need to recapture the trust between all stakeholders.' 'Many scientists think that business just wants to exploit them commercially,' she said.

Similar sentiments echoed by business leaders suggest [scientists](#) don't understand the real world, are reluctant to share their results or unable to work under pressurised business time-scales.

Glover suggests that should these attitudes continue, Europe will miss out on the benefits of investing in research and European businesses will become less competitive.

The common misconception that the European economy is dominated by large multinational enterprises is one of the many barriers to success facing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which make up more than 99% of all European businesses. The rapid nature of societal evolution requires a fast response which is a task multinational companies struggle to achieve.

'When you're small, you're faster on your feet,' says Glover, referring to the dynamic nature of many SME [business](#) models. However, SMEs are not equipped with enough resources to thoroughly engage in experimental research and development activities. Glover suggests the fall out could be addressed by encouraging partnerships between SMEs and established research institutions better able to carry out R&D activities.

Dr Giorgio Anania, CEO of Aledia, now involved in his fifth start-up voiced concerns over the lack of a U.S-style Silicon Valley innovation ecosystem in Europe. 'It's about ramping up quickly and down if needed to,' 'Europe needs to foster a risk adverse mindset in its youth,' he added.

Industry leaders were united in their belief that Europe is not short of knowledge; they suggest the gap between transforming science and research into innovation for economic growth and social well-being can be overcome by leveraging public and private sector relationships.

Eureka - a platform focused on turning new technologies into marketable products, is working directly towards building cross-sectoral links. Kristin Danielsen, International Director of the Research Council of Norway and Eureka Chair, stressed the importance of cross-border collaboration in driving growth in Europe.

'So far the vast majority of research programmes in Europe are run in an isolated way leading to inefficiency. I strongly believe that helping small companies grow into middle-sized ones and to become internationally-open businesses will be central to the enhancement of European competitiveness,' she said.

Eureka's joint programme with the European Commission - Eurostars - is specifically tailored to SMEs focusing on innovative technologies. Eureka estimate that Eurostars is set to create 30 000 jobs over the course of the next European financial period.

The SMEs in Europe event was part of a series of workshops held at the European Parliament during the 5th Innovation Summit to launch the newly revised funding programme for research and innovation - Horizon 2020.

**More information:** [www.knowledge4innovation.eu/](http://www.knowledge4innovation.eu/)

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