

A more ambitious vision for European innovation

[Acknowledgements]

President Buzek,

Honourable Member van Nistelrooij,

Esteemed guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here again, and to share in the opening of the 7th European Innovation Summit,

Organised by the Knowledge4Innovation (4KI) network of the European Parliament.

This is an event which, every year, reminds us of the importance of innovation for European progress and prosperity.

As Chair and Vice-Chair of the 4KI network,

The Honourable Members Lambert van Nistelrooij and Professor Jerzy Buzek, have animated discussion on European innovation.

Today, I would like to thank them for their commitment, and to welcome the new K4I Pact for Innovation:

A Pact which calls for a coherent set of EU policies for innovation;

A pact which greatly complements the work of the Juncker Commission.

[Background – the year gone by]

Last year, the new Commission had to decide the direction we will take, as policymakers for science and innovation.

Two things were clear.

First, our actions must always reflect the European values of openness and diversity.

Second, we have to embrace change. We have to try new things and be willing to take risks:

If we want European research and innovation to remain at the forefront of modernity and economic growth.

It is therefore with great pride, that I look back on the year gone by.

The Juncker Commission has worked with speed and conviction.

1. EFSI

In just one year, we have shown that the European Union is capable of finding new ways to mobilise investment in high-risk, high-reward innovation projects:

By mobilising 1 billion euro for research and innovation projects through the new European Fund for Strategic Investments.

And we expect the Juncker Plan will achieve much more.

2. SAM

In just six months, we were able to establish a new Scientific Advice Mechanism:

So that a diverse group of leading European experts can be called upon to inform EU policymaking, with independent scientific advice.

3. Ebola

And, in a few short months, we demonstrated that the Commission is capable of reacting swiftly in a crisis:

Intensifying the vital research needed to tackle a global health challenge like Ebola.

So we are already taking great steps:

- To improve investments in European innovation;
- To inform EU policy-making with the best scientific knowledge available; and to
- To use European research and innovation to solve global challenges.

[The Innovation Pact]

The K4I Pact for Innovation reflects many of the principles behind my own priorities.

Particularly, to involve a greater diversity of people and organisations in European innovation.

[Open innovation]

This is why I have made open innovation, 1 of the 3 defining priorities of my mandate.

Because we live in a time when those without access to the traditional establishment are often the ones doing the most exciting work.

[Inspirational example]

Take for example Tal Golesworthy, an engineer from the UK who was diagnosed with Marfan syndrome.

Tal engineered an aortic support, which saved his life and, so far, the lives of more than 100 others.

Traditionally we would have assumed that only a doctor would be in the position to save Tal's life.

But his innovation not only did that, it made his recovery quicker and his quality of life far better.

I believe more open innovation in Europe would provide space for all kinds of people to pursue their ideas.

People who see the solutions others do not.

And it is time we all worked together to let them in.

[Next steps]

So, over the next six months, I will be exploring how a European Innovation Council could help innovators succeed in bringing European innovation to global markets.

I'm not talking about a physical place or additional bureaucracy.

I'm interested in giving European innovators what European researchers already have, through the European Research Council:

A place to bring their ideas, so that we can support them.

[Call to action]

I hope the Knowledge4Innovation network will contribute to our discussions on how a European Innovation Council could work.

I welcome your input and hope to continue addressing the issues raised in the K4I Pact, through closer cooperation between our institutions.

[Conclusion]

Finally, I would like to thank the Honourable Members Professor Jerzy Buzek and Lambert van Nistelrooij,

For leading by example and for being proactive in their support of European innovation.

Let me leave you by wishing you a wonderful evening and an excellent summit. There is still a great deal of work to do. But if we achieve as much next year as we have in 2015, we will certainly be on the right track!