



Media Information

Engelberg, 17 November 2005

European Research Area and beyond Conference, 15 / 16 November 2005

Fostering International Cooperation

How can and should international cooperation between scientists be promoted? What role do the European Union and other nations play here? And where does Swiss science stand in this context?

At the invitation of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), the Swiss Federal Government represented by the State Secretary for Education and Research and Academia Engelberg, around national and international scientists, regulatory experts, and politicians met at the ETH in Zürich for a two-day conference. This international exchange of views was designed to intensify contacts and help to break down barriers.

Tackling specific problems together

In three different workshops, participants engaged in intensive discussions on the role of the EU in relation to the European Research Area (ERA) and their various sponsorship programmes. They also looked closely at research centres in Asia, which will play an important part in the global Eureka network in the foreseeable future. Discussions also touched on challenges and inhibitions in the collaboration between science and industry.

Essential conditions for success

Closing the conference, Dr. Hermann-Friedrich Wagner, Chairman of the OECD Global Science Forum, name six points which he regards as essential if the EU is to be a successful player in global science in the future. An important criterion, he said, is to ensure the quality of research and strengthen competition. In addition, there should be more intensive sponsorship for research programmes. A third point concerned the infrastructure of science, which has to be improved. Furthermore all scientists from the EU should have access to research. If these three criteria are met, he said, then young scientists face the prospect of attractive research jobs in the future. A fourth point which he said needed to be addressed is an increase in collaboration between science and industry. The fifth point that needs consideration is not to underestimate "neighbours" like Russia, with their enormous potential, in the global world of science. But above all, he said, there has to be a policy of open information. "Go public" was his take-home message, so that science can show the public what research funds are being used for.



<Photo caption on social part>

The lecturers' foyer of the ETH Zürich provided the setting for the official welcome address to the conference on "European Research Area and beyond". Scientists from the EU and Switzerland and representatives of the EU, OECD, the confederation of Switzerland, politicians and business representatives gathered for cross-border discussions.

<Bildlegende 1: Charles Kleiber>

State Secretary Dr. Charles Kleiber welcomed the 80 or so scientists, politicians and representatives of institutions to the two-day conference "European Research Area and beyond". In his speech, he took the example of the many Swiss winners of the Nobel Prize and other examples to show the potential residing in such a "small" country as Switzerland. He pointed out that innovation had to be encouraged not only in technology but also in society and between the cultures of our countries.

<Bildlegende 2: Richard Ernst>

In his speech, Nobel Prize winner Prof. Richard Ernst suggested that a European Future Institute be established. This should function as a think tank, so that the huge problems that we urgently have to address can be tackled together.

<Bildlegende 3: Olaf Kübler>

Prof. Olaf Kübler, President of the ETH Zürich, welcomed participants to a morning full of debate and discussion. In his speech, he sketched the role of the ETH: "We want to ensure that Swiss science can keep its positions as a world leader in technology."

<Bildlegende 4: Klaus Hug>

In a brief presentation, the role of Academia Engelberg was outlined by the President of the Foundation Dr. Klaus Hug. Science and Public Trust, the motto of Academia Engelberg, will remain a sustained focus of attention with conferences like this one.

<Bildlegende 5: Janez Potocnik>

The need for scientific collaboration within Europe was underlined by Janez Potocnik from the European Commission. To ensure that Europe can keep pace in the future with the enormous potential of Asian countries, he said, we need to invest heavily in science. But this alone, he added, is no guarantee for success. To get to the top it takes the very best quality and above-average innovation.

<Bildlegende 6: Herrmann-Friedrich Wagner>

Encouragement at the grassroots level by strengthening the educational institutions is one of the basic prerequisites for quality assurance, said Dr. Herrmann-Friedrich Wagner, Chairman of the OECD Global Science Forum.