EIT vs Excellence Universities

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In 2000, Europe devised a plan to boost its economy by focusing on knowledge and innovation called the Lisbon Agenda. However, in the 2005's midterm review of this agenda, it was clear that Europe was failing to achieve the goals set by it.

- José Manuel Barroso, the then president of the EU Commission, proposed the creation of an European Institute of Technology (EIT) to help boost innovation and knowledge in order to help the european economy and society's growth.

- The EIT main focus would be to reinforce the relationship between the three edges of the Knowledge Triangle: Education, Research and Business (or Innovation). It was believed that this approach would obtain better results than to promote each edge by itself.

- The main purpose of this paper will be to analyse whether the creation of the EIT was in fact needed by Europe or not. To discuss this, two views will be presented. The First View will support the EIT and try to prove that it was needed while the Second View will try to do the opposite.

- The EIT integrates the pillars of the Knowledge Triangle and integrates them in the so-called Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) whose main goal is to form partnerships between the private, public and academic sectors in order to drive innovation. The first view states that this approach is being successful.

- Specifically for the education pillar, the EIT support is it with its Master and PhD Schools in which they have created programmes in collaboration with excellence universities which try to enhance its student's innovative and entrepreneurial skills.

- However, the second view states that the EIT is just a bureaucratic monster that creates more hoops between universities and is wasting the EU Commission's budget, human resources and time.

- The second view considers that funding should be spent in Excellent Universities that have proven to be worth and that are already filled with researchers and students full of innovative ideas.

II. THE BATTLE AT STAKE

Our story begins in year 2000, when Europe set its development plan, the Lisbon Strategy. The aim was to make the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"[5], by 2010. However, in 2005, in the Midterm Review of the Lisbon agenda, Europe acknowledged that even if some progress was made, most of the goals were yet to be achieved. Europe was still falling short in turning research result into commercial opportunities.

In short terms, the Knowledge Triangle was yet to be fully implemented. The **knowledge triangle** is made of education, business and research. At its center, we can find entrepreneurship, which represents the hypothetical bridge between the edges of the triangle. In particular, Europe recognized its lack of control in education.

In this scope, a big choice was to be made: create a network between the excellence universities that were already present, or building something completely new from scratch. As is known, Europe went with the second option and created the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), inspired by the worldwide famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which was regarded as a model of the synergy between higher education, research and innovation. But, are we sure that creating the EIT was the correct choice? To answer this question we had to take into consideration the innovation at stake, and that was the main clash of our battle.

In 2005, there already were excellent universities in Europe, such as Oxford and Cambridge, and there were also many "european programmes" such as Erasmus and Double Degrees. Which was the innovation brought to the table by the EIT? Was it a real innovation? Should they have created it in a different way? Was the EIT really needed?

These were the most important questions the groups had to answer and that were more discussed. As one can have understood, the two groups had different parts in the discussion: the pro EIT had to defend its position from the other group's attack. The main focus of the pro excellence universities group was mainly to criticize and

attack the weak spots of the EIT structure, rather than proposing an alternative solution.

The documentation we relied on to prepare for this battle is public and available, but we were forced to express our own opinion because there is no evidence if a fact can be considered as a positive or a negative one.

III. BATTLE FIELD AND CONSTRAINTS: THE FACTS

To understand the battle, understanding the term "knowledge triangle" (Figure 1) is crucial. Knowledge triangle refers to the interaction of higher education, research and business (or innovation), which are the key factors in a knowledge-driven society. At its center is entrepreneurship, which can be achieved by bringing together all the three aspects of the knowledge triangle. The most important constraint for our battle was setting the time frame. The starting time was decided to be the launch of Lisbon agenda at year 2000 and take into account everything until the present time, including even the possible plans for future. In this time frame, the following dates and events were the most important regarding the battle:

Figure 1. Knowledge Triangle

A. March 2000: The Lisbon Agenda

The Lisbon Agenda was a development plan for the European Union for the years 2000 to 2010. The main reason for the Lisbon Agenda was overcome the challenges that globalization and the new knowledge-driven economy brought to European Union, such as the widening skills gap especially in the information technology area[4]. A major challenge was also the fact that the US was outperforming the European economics with its ICT-driven economy[4]. Thus, the goal for Lisbon Agenda was to make EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010[4]. This was intended to be reached for example through better policies for information society and R&D and by modernizing the European social model[4].

B. February 2005: Mid-term review of Lisbon Agenda

On February 2005 was the publication of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda, delivered by the President Barroso. It revealed the slow progress of the goals that were set up in the Lisbon Agenda, mostly due to the lack of determined political action[6]. As a result, President Barroso suggested a renewed strategy with a main goal of "delivering stronger, lasting growth and creating more and better jobs"[7]. One of the main focus areas was to boost knowledge and innovation for growth, and as a part of that area was the creation of European Institute of Technology (EIT)[7]. The goal of the EIT was "to act as a pole of attraction for the very best minds, ideas and companies from around the World"[7].

C. February 2006: The 1st Communication

On February 2006 the European Commission sent a first communication to the European Council, reporting that the EU was still failing against competing economies such as USA and Japan, calling for an immediate action. From the year 2000 the innovation gap between Europe, Japan and US was constantly increasing and in Europe there was a huge cultural and intellectual gap between the researchers and entrepreneurs[9]. The communication was also the first formal proposal for the idea, structure, organization and composition of the European Institute of Technology (EIT). The main argumentation for the EIT was that "Europe should not only develop the three corners of its 'knowledge triangle' (education, research and innovation), but reinforce the bridges between them."[9]

D. June 2006: The 2nd Communication

On June 2006, the European Commission sent a second communication to the European Council, which provided further information about aspects of the proposal and set out, where appropriate, suggestions for addressing them. They claimed that the EIT should be seen as one part of an integrated strategy to mobilize education, research and innovation towards the Lisbon goals, providing also support for research and innovation at the highest levels of excellence. It is remarked that the key is combining entrepreneurial mindsets and competence with excellence in technological studies[8].

E. Launching of KICs: 2010, 2014 and 2016.

The EIT announced Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) for the purpose of integrating all three sides of the knowledge triangle. EIT is operated through these autonomous KICs, which are located in different

hubs, combining members from each dimension of the knowledge triangle. The first three KICs were launched 2010 and were Climate-KIC, EIT Digital (previous EIT ICT) and KIC InnoEnergy. Other two KICs, EIT Health and EIT Raw Materials were launched 2014. Furthermore, two more KICs, EIT Food and EIT Manufacturing, are to be established in 2016[1].

F. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme with nearly 80 billion euros of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020)[2]. The EIT will contribute strongly to the objectives of Horizon 2020 and is also funded by the Horizon 2020 programme[3].

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