

"Innovation Union: transforming Europe for a post-crisis world"
Plenary debate Wednesday 11 May 2011, 21:00
European Parliament, Strasbourg
Intervention by Prof. Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on
Regional Development

Over the last years innovation has become a symbol of a policy instrument that can fix all our problems. That means that there are huge expectations and we must deliver. Of course for a successful implementation of ideas governance matters. Governance framework for innovation must be based on pragmatism, delivered with a sense of urgency and be at the service of policy content.

Europe has to innovate or it will lose out to competitors. Every link in the European innovation chain must be strengthened and innovation policy must be refocused towards challenges of the future not of the past.

Today, we run the risk that not only companies but also governments might decrease their investment in innovation. This is the logic of the crisis and of national budget cuts. EU policy response and EU budgetary instruments must go firmly against this logic.

In Europe, innovation is not a concept that can be limited to specific innovation centres. It needs to be applied across the entire European territory. Europe is simply too small to afford innovation deficit in any of its parts.

R&D and innovation are clearly not the same thing. Governance for innovation should therefore do more than just support R&D policy. Promoting innovation-led growth is not about increasing excellence in R&D and R&D infrastructure, important as they are. It is also or even first and foremost about mobilising talents and new ideas. Governance for innovation must mean establishing new partnerships, enabling efficient innovation systems that mobilise the intellectual and entrepreneurial capacities, detecting sleeping innovators

through a business environment that is conducive to innovation, particularly for SMEs, and covering all sectors of the economy.

We do not yet have a fully-fledged European model for innovation, but what is clear is that it must be rooted in a well-orchestrated, concrete, strong and joint public-private effort. I trust that Innovation Union will take us all the way forward to such a model.