

Event Diary

EIT Awards 2013

Celebrating innovation and entrepreneurship!

12 November 2013 - Budapest, Hungary





Overview

A key objective of the EIT is to create an entrepreneurial culture. Integral to this is the EIT’s annual awards competition, organised in collaboration with its three Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs): Climate-KIC, EIT ICT Labs and KIC InnoEnergy.

In 2013, we were excited to extend the competition by adding a new category. While the Venture Awards continued, this year we introduced the CH.A.N.G.E Awards category, to celebrate change agents and the next generation of entrepreneurs.

The awards showcased the potential and talent of members of the EIT community and inspired them through championing role models. More broadly, the event promoted an entrepreneurial mind-set, and proactive spirit by putting the spotlight on KIC ventures and the next generation of change agents and entrepreneurs.

12 November 2013:

Activity in Brief

08.00

Team EIT has convened at Millenáris, a state-of-the-art venue in Budapest. In half an hour Europe's broadcasters and print and online journalists will file in to attend a press conference about today's awards. Shortly after, nominees, participants and EIT students and alumni will join them in the auditorium as we build up to the formal awards ceremony, which will take place this afternoon.

The auditorium is alive with action as technicians rig the lighting and prepare the stage. Organisers brief the video and sound crew and make final preparations.

Press conference

08.30

Alexander von Gabain, Chairman of the EIT Governing Board, is hosting a press conference for approximately 20 journalists from across the EU. Accompanying him on the panel are Naveen Jain, World Innovation Institute founder, and Gábor Bojár, Member of the EIT Governing Board and Founder of Graphisoft and the Aquincum Institute of Technology.

Alexander begins by summarising the EIT's achievements in launching and developing the KICs over the last three years.

The majority of journalists' questions are focused on the details of how the EIT measures its success in financing entrepreneurship.

For Alexander, the evidence supporting these achievements lies in the tangible Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) which have been seed financed after just 3.5 years by approximately €300m and counter financed by more than €1.1bn. For Naveen Jain, the next test for the EIT is to step beyond its achievements in Europe and to show that it can lead the rest of the world – particularly the US and China. "To truly lead, you don't just have to disrupt what is happening in the EU. You have to disrupt what's happening in the rest of the world."

Gábor Bojár reflects upon the potential for Europe to do this. He emphasises the changing nature of the market, which previously had been dominated by the large, homogenous US domestic market. Now Europe's diversity is an advantage because the market has globalised and products and services need to be adapted to a kaleidoscope of cultural contexts. This offers many opportunities for Europe.

In his closing statement, Alexander thanks the journalists and fellow panellists and reiterates that the EIT is uniquely placed to help Europe harness its innovative and entrepreneurial capacity.

“What the EIT is doing is a break with the past. It's the first time Europe has brought together and integrated the work of people from leading companies, from the best universities and research centres with entrepreneurs to teach students, to create innovative products and services and to start and support new companies”

Alexander von Gabain, Chairman of EIT Governing Board





Opening

09.00

Alexander von Gabain, Chairman of the EIT Governing Board

opens the 2013 Awards with a question. What do innovation and entrepreneurship really mean in the 21st Century? For Alexander, innovation is a process of identifying challenges and responding with solutions; as with medical advances in responding to pandemic diseases. It is a complex, risky process, requiring substantial, sustained investment. It is less the product of the individual genius, than of complex networks. He emphasises that although Europe has a history of brilliant entrepreneurs, the data suggest we need an 'entrepreneurial renaissance' to strengthen our ability to compete globally.

Alexander highlights how the EIT supports this process through financing trans-European ecosystems where research, business and higher education come together on topics of societal challenges in order to build interconnected knowledge hubs and nurture entrepreneurs. Having discussed the climate for entrepreneurship Alexander turns to the characteristics of entrepreneurship itself, with some recommendations for his fellow budding entrepreneurs in the audience. He thanks participants and the nominees and wishes them an exciting EIT Awards 2013.



09.30

Entrepreneurial keynote: The potential of innovation and entrepreneurship to solve grand challenges facing humanity

Naveen Jain arrived in the United States from India with five dollars in his pocket and went on to launch a string of highly successful Silicon Valley software firms. Tell him 'the sky's the limit' and Naveen will try to prove you wrong. He plans to go much further with Moon Express, his most recent venture, by mining natural resources in outer space. Who could be better qualified to present the potential for entrepreneurship?

Naveen addresses why entrepreneurship is crucial to addressing challenges in fields as diverse as energy, the education system and healthcare. Central to his thesis is the notion of a 'disruptive mindset' which characterises how entrepreneurs approach challenges.

Entrepreneurs go beyond incremental improvements by offering new solutions. Take education. To Naveen, fixing the education system is a red herring. In fact, he argues the current education system does what it was designed to do perfectly well. But needs have changed in our post industrial society and we need a new education system to meet these. Similarly, climate change has become a debate about conservation, when in fact the entrepreneur sees the opportunity to create more of the resources we need.

It is a thought provoking and challenging talk that keeps participants on the edge of their seats throughout.

“When we adopt the mindset that everything is possible and that we can do it, that's when things start to change!”

Naveen Jain, World Innovation Institute founder



10.45

Meet the EIT CH.A.N.G.E nominees

It's now time to meet the nominees for this year's CH.A.N.G.E Awards. The session is facilitated by Karen Wilson, Board Member and Advisor at the European Forum for Entrepreneurship Research (EFER), who challenges each nominee on their entrepreneurial achievements, their entrepreneurial mind-set and can-do spirit.

Each KIC has put forward three nominees to run for the CH.A.N.G.E – Award:

Climate-KIC: Evan Bruner, Kate Hofman and Swati Pandey

EIT ICT Labs: Germán Leiva, Dorottya Maksay and David Pribil

KIC InnoEnergy: Muhammad Rizwan Anwan, Eduardo Appleyard and Linkesh Diwan

Participants must impress a formidable jury comprised of leading entrepreneurs and Members of the EIT's Governing Board including Karen Maex, EIT Governing Board Member; Naveen Jain, Trustee of Board of Singularity University and Founder of the World Innovation Institute; Elpida Keravnou-Papailiou, EIT Governing Board Member; David Maasz, Serial Entrepreneur, Business Angel and Start-up Evangelist; and Sony Mordechai, Chairman & CEO of Global Eye Investments.

Each nominee has two minutes to pitch their innovative and entrepreneurial achievement in front of the panel and hundreds of fellow students and alumni. The moderator is scrupulously fair at ensuring nominees keep within their allocated time.

All participants perform well under pressure and it is clear that it will be no easy task to select the three winners.

“I'm so impressed by the level of entrepreneurship we've seen here. The nine nominees are not only talented. They're also addressing major societal challenges with their ideas and products.”

Karen Wilson, Board Member and Advisor, European Forum for Entrepreneurship Research (EFER)



11:50

Meet the EIT Venture nominees

After a creative warm up activity to keep the blood moving we're straight into the EIT Venture Awards. The awards were launched in 2012 to highlight new business ideas and innovative start-ups that are emerging from the KICs. In this session, Venture nominees pitch their business models to a jury of established entrepreneurs in their bid to win.

The selected ventures will be granted access to management expertise as they seek to expand and raise finance.

Venture nominees pitches are replete with videos and polished animations illustrating their products in use. Particularly startling is the advanced nature of the technologies they have developed; from a new form of clean coal, to a video game for patients undergoing physical rehabilitation. It is clearly going to be a difficult decision for the judges.

Each KIC has put forward three nominees for the VENTURE Award:

Climate-KIC: Chokri Mousaoui (Eternal Sun), Dominik Peus (Antaco), Peter Stein (Green TEG)

EIT ICT Labs: Fabio Belloni (Quupa), David Tacconi (CoReHab)

KIC InnoEnergy: Lionel Chaverot (Enerstone), Héctor Martín (Smalle Technologies), Lars Wallden (Northstar Telemetrics)

The experienced panel judging this year's ventures includes: Peter Olesen, EIT Governing Board Member; Christian Reitberger, General Partner, Wellington Partners; Bruno Revellin-Falcoz, EIT Governing Board Member; and TJ Ewing, Vice President International Development, LogMeln.

Each KIC has put forward three nominees for the VENTURE Award:

“To see such ambitious and successful ventures coming out of the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities is a cause for celebration, because it shows we are bringing to the forefront the next generation of entrepreneurial Europeans.”

Daria Tataj, EIT Governing Board Member

Meet the press...

This event was all about drawing attention to the remarkable achievements of the nominees. Each took part in a rapid fire 'speed dating' session with 20 journalists from across Europe. The timing of the session, which took place at 2pm, ensured the media had the opportunity to file their stories in time for the evening news.

14:15

Interactive session: What does it take to be an entrepreneur?

While the rest of us were enjoying lunch, the judges reconvened behind closed doors to select this year's winners. The final decisions have been made and the envelopes are sealed, ready for the official ceremony in an hour's time.

Meanwhile, participants are getting seated for the chance to pick the brains of a panel of successful European business people.

William Benkö, Chief Commercial Officer within DBH Group is moderating a panel including:

- Márton Szöke, Serial Entrepreneur and Angel Investor;
- Gábor Bojár, EIT Governing Board Member;
- Rosa Vilarasau, Co-founder of NOEM and EIT 2012 Award winner;
- Ihsan Elgin, Executive Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at Özyeğin University;
- Christian Reitberger, General partner, Wellington Partners; and
- José Manuel Leceta, EIT Director.

We begin with a question about the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur. There are some interesting parallels in the responses.

Rosa and José Manuel both emphasise the role that perseverance plays. Entrepreneurs must be prepared to fight for their ideas and stand by them through difficult times. Likewise Márton and Christian addressed the need to be prepared for inevitable failures on the path to success. The panellists were candid about sharing examples of their business failures, as well as successes. Entrepreneurs must learn from these mistakes and improve.

Personal traits were discussed too. As a young man, Gábor's ambition was to be a scientist until he realised he was more passionate about spotting and nurturing talent in others. That's why he became an entrepreneur. Ihsan used to work for a large company. The meetings and bureaucracy frustrated him and he wanted to be able to make decisions quickly and independently.

And their advice for would-be entrepreneurs? Márton emphasises that young entrepreneurs are not alone, and should seek out the incubator programmes and angel money that is available to support good ideas.

Ihsan underlines the fact that not all start ups are expensive or risky. For example, you can set up a web page for €20 to see if consumers will try to buy your product. If you just want to measure traffic you don't even have to sell the product at this stage. If demand is out there, you will attract investors.

Rosa pointed out that there are different phases in our lives and it's important to be open to becoming an entrepreneur throughout life. Anyone can start a business at any time.

As the session ends, the enthusiastic applause suggests participants have been given plenty of food for thought.



The entrepreneur's bookshelf

A few suggested reads from our panel of entrepreneurs...

Hatching Twitter, by Nick Bilton

Christian Reitberger recommends Bilton's dissection of the events leading up to the launch of the social media giant, which illustrates the ups and downs that characterise the early days of many start ups.

Four steps to the Epiphany, Steve Blank

Ihsan Elgin is a big fan of Steve Blank's work in the field of customer development. This book offers a practical four-step customer development process and offers insight into what makes some start ups successful and leaves others selling off their furniture.

Rich Man, Poor Man, Irwin Shaw

Márton Szöke's pick is not really a business book, but a novel. Still, by attempting to define qualities common to successful people, Shaw's work has inspired a generation of leaders.

The Power of Habit, Charles Duhigg

Rosa Vilarasau's choice takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. A great insight into how to develop the characteristics necessary to succeed as an entrepreneur.

TED Talks

For quick motivation you could avoid books altogether and go with José Manuel Leceta's tip. There are now more than 1,500 inspiring presentations from innovators and entrepreneurs at www.ted.com to stir your curiosity.

15.15

The Awards

The hall is alight with reporters' flashbulbs and the sound of last minute interviews. There is a rumble of chatter as participants predict the outcome. The participants may be dispersed throughout Europe, but the atmosphere in here is reminiscent of a college fraternity. KIC representatives cluster around their nominees and offer words of encouragement.

As the EIT Director, Jose Manuel Leceta peels back the envelope... there is a moment of silence.

The 2013 CH.A.N.G.E Award winners:

Kate Hofman (Climate-KIC). Kate's GrowUp technology offers a sustainable model for urban agriculture through vertical growing and aquaponics. Kate is growing tonnes of salad and other greens in downtown London, so watch out for her goodies on the shelves of your supermarket in the near future.

Dorottya Maksay (EIT ICT Labs). Dorottya developed Homebuddy, a website that enables students and older people to help each other. Older people rent out rooms in their own homes to students at low cost. In return students help with cleaning, shopping and other chores. Simple, but brilliant.

Eduardo Appleyard (KIC InnoEnergy). Eduardo is an advisor to SolarAid, a social enterprise which aims to bring affordable solar lighting to one million African homes. A product prototype has already been developed. Their team's solution is ideal for parts of the third world that are still without access to mains electricity.



The 2013 Venture Award winners

Dominik Peus (Climate-KIC) developed the world's first carbon neutral coal. The biocoal has the same heat value as fossil coal, but without the emissions. Incredibly, this coal is carbon neutral. Hot stuff!

David Tacconi (EIT ICT Labs) was so bored during his rehab for a footballing injury, that he came up with Riablo, a technology which helps patients manage their own therapy in an enjoyable way, by playing motion based video games. Riablo even enables clinicians to monitor patients' progress online.

Lionel Chaverot (KIC InnoEnergy) is addressing a problem we're all familiar with – rechargeable batteries that don't hold their charge. His company Enerstone has developed a chip to help manufacturers improve batteries' efficiency and limit their environmental impact.

You can read about all our 2013 winners and watch their video interviews at:
<http://eit.europa.eu/entrepreneurship/2013-awards/winners/>



16.00

Closing remarks

Following the excitement of the awards ceremony, we end with a toast to all the winners, and a few final thoughts from EIT Chairman Alexander von Gabain.

Alex thanks the winners, the nominees and the organisers for their active participation and sums up the significance of what the EIT and the KICs have achieved.

Participants bid each other farewell and make their way to the exit where their airport transfers await. They may be travelling thousands of miles, but the hope is that this event has brought the EIT community closer together.

“It's clear that what we're witnessing with the EIT and the KICs is an emerging movement that will demonstrate that Europe can set the pace of innovation in the world.”

Alexander von Gabain, EIT Chairman

An international affair...

The EIT Awards is a truly international gathering. Participants have arrived from over 20 European countries. What's more, by nationality, participants represent every continent of the globe (apart from Antarctica).



