

How to foster innovation to meet the global gap of novel vaccines: Learnings from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, EIT

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Infectious diseases remain one of the greatest global challenges for both the developed and the less developed parts of the world. Vaccines are the most promising hope to control infectious diseases worldwide. The encouraging progress made in relevant scientific fields, but also in the arena of novel manufacturing technologies has enabled vaccine innovation, but still the number of novel vaccines coming to the customers is rather limited. Many believe that top class research and education per se lead to innovation. However, when taking a closer look at, how research, education and business create innovative chains of added value, it is clear that entrepreneurship plays a crucial role within the “knowledge triangle”. To overcome this dilemma, but also the fragmented innovation landscape in Europe, the EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology), was set up by the European Union in 2008. The EIT is devoted to create favorable ecosystems for entrepreneurship-driven innovation by joining the three sides of the knowledge triangle of research, higher education and business. At the heart of the EIT are the innovation factories, the so-called KICs. The EIT is providing seed money to the KICs that in turn are led and run by CEOs, on the basis of respective business plans. Each KIC works within five or six co-location centers spread across Europe and they enable people from universities, research centers, large and small businesses, and other relevant partners to work together face-to-face in integrated teams. This ensures that excellence driven innovation factories are real focal points of integration where innovation is facilitated. The first three KICs have been successfully implemented. Together they form 16 co-location centers across Europe and are addressing the following topics: Climate change mitigation, sustainable energy and future information and communication society. The EIT will invest into a second wave of KICs which also will target health care challenges. The author will discuss how the vaccine arena may be able to learn from the current experience to improve the build up of innovative ecosystems that meet the global challenges.

Biography

Alexander von Gabain obtained his PhD in Genetics at the University of Heidelberg and held a Post-doctorate position at the Stanford University. In the 1980s and 1990s, he was Professor at the University of Umeå and at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, as well as an advisor to pharmaceutical and biotech companies. From 1992 to 1998, he was Chair of Microbiology of the University of Vienna at the Campus Vienna Biocenter, Austria and has helped to build the public private partnership of the Vienna Biocenter/IMP. In 1998, he cofounded Intercell AG and led the company as CEO until it was successfully floated on the Vienna Stock Exchange in 2005. From 2005 to 2009, he was Member of the Executive Management Board and CSO of the Company. Since then, he has been serving the Company as strategic advisor and chair of the Scientific Advisory Board.

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