

Address by Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation. Helge Sander. Denmark

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"Sustainable Production: the Role of Nanotechnologies"

Introduction

Honoured Commissioner Busquin, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very happy that so many journalists have travelled from all over Europe to participate in this event.

You have this morning visited two institutes and heard about activities we are good at in Denmark. Both institutes are engaged in the utilisation of the results of research in order to bring new technology out of the laboratories and into commercial life. A process, which is difficult and chancy and, not least, requires a lot of hard work and money.

Collaboration between university research and industry

I am minister for the universities and a number of research institutes. I have a strong interest in the development of these institutions. They are important for the development of the knowledge society.

The Danish Government wants to support the co-operation between education, research and innovation.

Also at the European level, the Danish Government wishes to play an active role in promoting the power to innovate - not least for the small enterprises.

Reaching such goals requires a substantial effort in:

- collaboration between university research and industry
- facilitating innovation
- stimulating entrepreneurs
- increasing the financial resources.

It is important to ensure an up to date framework, incentives and funds to support these efforts.

High level, leading edge research is dependent on strong international networks among scientists. Danish participation in EU research is of significant importance. Participation is important for dynamic and quality in Danish research.

The greater role Danish research wants to play in European research, the more important it is that the domestic platform should be in a good shape.

Danish researchers are faced by great challenges to secure Danish influence in the European research agenda and to use this influence in a way that contributes to the attainment of the goals.

The private sector must enter into a dialogue, to emphasise its needs and wishes and to make its expert knowledge available. Private enterprise must co-operate in research projects and education of researchers.

I am therefore very happy to learn that Danish research institutions have already developed very strong research networks in the field of nanotechnology in close co-operation with industry. The scientific results have intelligently been used in sustainable new products and production processes.

Stimulating entrepreneurs

Enterprises with a strong knowledge base and a strong network have a competitive advantage. Important is the speed of dissemination of knowledge.

We must therefore continue to offer our innovators improved conditions. To do this, there has to be a good educational system, strong research and development, access to venture capital and public regulation of patent rights and standardisation.

There is a need for a large number of entrepreneurs. They contribute to creating dynamics in trade and industry. Many of the larger Danish companies were created decades ago started up by dynamic entrepreneurs. I am sure that we are going to find a number of the future larger companies among the small enterprises started during these years. Most important are the knowledge-based, innovative entrepreneurs.

The Government wants to give many more the chance to start their own enterprise. And a greater proportion should survive the first difficult years. Therefore the Government is working on an action plan for entrepreneurs with focus on better conditions.

Every year nearly 16,000 enterprises are started up in Denmark. But only a small proportion of these, perhaps a few hundred, are innovative enterprises. They have a much more uncertain period of development before the product is ready for the market. And typically much more capital than foreseen is needed.

There is fortunately an increase in the number of innovative enterprises and a parallel increase in availability of capital from a number of sources.

Increased financing

This need for increased funding of research and innovation both in the public and private sector has a very high priority in the Danish Government. In the proposed state budget for the next fiscal year the expenditure for research and innovation will be increased.

This summer the Government approved a new law on 150 percent tax deduction for expenditure on research. But restricted to public-private research collaboration and research training programs.

The venture capital for promoting of Danish business and trade has increased significantly this year.

These are the first steps to reach the goal set in Barcelona in March this year, that the expenditure on research should increase to three percent of gross domestic product by 2002.

European perspectives

A main priority in the research area for the Danish EU Presidency is to increase the innovation effort under the 6th Framework Programme. A visionary and coherent research policy is one of the Community's most valuable tools for promoting economical and social success in the long run.

In a wider perspective, the realisation of the European Research Area is now the most important goal.

International research collaboration must be for both the large enterprises and the small knowledge based entrepreneurs. It is a must that they have capability for doing research. The larger companies have this capability but the smaller enterprises must be supported to be able to participate in EU funded research and innovation.

The 6th Framework Programme represents a clear change from the previous programme with regard to both themes and implementation tools.

Even with a promising 6th Framework Programme, it is important to remember that EU-funded research only represents about five per cent of Member States' total public expenditure on research. Obviously there are profits to be gained, especially if we can increase co-operation regarding the remaining 95 per cent.

The Danish Presidency's highest priority of research and innovation is to contribute to implement the European Research Area. How far are we in Europe willing to go with regard to co-ordination and co-operation in the area of research?

We will emphasise the extension of the European Research Area to include other European organisations, such as EUREKA and COST. All efforts

should be made to co-ordinate research in Europe. And it should cover every aspect, from basic research to strategic research and innovation.

Closing remarks

In closing I would like to thank the Commissioner and his staff who have worked hard to facilitate this event.

I also want to thank The Technical University for hosting the meeting, the institutes for the interesting visits and the three project managers who share their experience with us.

However let me finish this presentation with the expression of my best hopes that all of us take the opportunity to build up stronger networks supported by EU and national initiatives.

Thank you.