

Press release

February 5th, 2015

Networking Platform for Applied Research in Europe

International conference on "Mobilizing Universities of Applied Sciences for Horizon 2020" brings together scientists from 20 countries in Brussels and paves the way for successful international cooperation projects

Brussels/Munich – With more than 150 participants from twenty European countries in attendance, the networking conference on "Mobilizing Universities of Applied Sciences for Horizon 2020" that was organized by the Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR) in cooperation with the EU Commission and took place on February 4th, 2015 was a complete success. Many representatives from EU institutions were also on hand, including Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Research & Innovation at the European Commission. These impressive figures reflect the high level of interest that universities of applied sciences have in expanding their involvement across Europe. The aim of the conference was to inform these universities about the variety of support options available in the EU for innovative research projects and offer them an international networking platform to initiate new projects.

While universities and industry have a long successful history of working together with partners in other European countries when it comes to research, development and innovation, many technical colleges and universities of applied sciences are just beginning. "Their chances of obtaining EU funds for transnational projects are very good," says Martin Reichel, CEO of the Bavarian Research Alliance. For instance, the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, which was launched about one year ago, attaches more importance to practical application in the field of research than the former 7th Research Framework Programme.

One key objective of the conference was to point out the opportunities that are available specifically for these types of colleges and universities. "Universities of applied sciences are in an excellent position to benefit from and contribute to the EU funding programme Horizon 2020. The added value of the universities of applied sciences lies in their skills to bring research results to the market, reach out to regional partners and foster cooperation with industry, notably SMEs," said Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of the DG Research & Innovation, European Commission.

Networking – the key for successful projects

The conference also proved to be an important platform for intensive networking activities. Which universities in other European countries have a similar research profile? What are their areas of specialization and expertise that round out an innovative project? Many colleges and universities presented their expertise and specific project ideas, for which they are currently looking for cooperation partners. Furthermore, the conference addressed the underlying political and structural conditions, which are one of the reasons why many technical colleges and universities avoid taking such a step on a European level. Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of the DG Research & Innovation of the European Commission, and Bernd Sibler, State Secretary of the Bavarian Ministry of Education,

Science and the Arts, were on hand to highlight the political aspects, while the chairman of “The Bavarian Universities of Applied Sciences” (Hochschule Bayern e.V.), Prof. Dr. Michael Braun, and Mathias Rauch, Head of Fraunhofer Brussels, contributed their own experience from day-to-day work. Sibling emphasized that all Bavarian universities of applied sciences already have very successful cooperation projects with local and regional industry partners. The point now is to leverage their strengths and know-how on the European level in a targeted manner and utilize all available opportunities.

Direct connection to the EU for Bavarian scientists

The Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR) was founded in 2006 as an institution to help support universities and technical colleges located in Bavaria in their efforts to receive research and innovation funding from the EU. Events like the current networking conference serve as an instrument for paving the way for Bavarian researchers to participate in European programmes. 16 Bavarian technical colleges and universities of applied sciences took advantage of this opportunity on February 4th to make promising contacts on an international level.

With its EU liaison office, BayFOR offers a permanent point of contact in Brussels. The liaison office represents the interests of Bavarian universities on a European level, it increases their visibility and acts as their intermediary establishing contacts with European institutions. This considerably enhances the prospects of Bavarian applicants succeeding within the European Research Area. "Technically, we act as a guide and intermediary, regardless of whether a scientist is seeking a speaker for an event or has questions relating to his research project," says Karin Lukas-Eder, BayFOR Representative in Brussels. The liaison office is also important to universities of applied sciences which aim to place issues in European research policy in a targeted manner. EU representatives are also interested in obtaining input about current research trends in Bavaria.

New address for BayFOR in Brussels

BayFOR's EU liaison office moved in Brussels at the beginning of January 2015. The new location is now at Rue du Trône 98, right next to the European Parliament. The building serves as home to a number of research organizations, including, among others, the "European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations" (KoWi), Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association, the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) and many representatives of the IGLO Network (Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices).

About the Bavarian Research Alliance (BayFOR)

The Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH is an organisation whose purpose is to promote Bavaria as a centre for science and innovation within the European Research Area. It supports and advises scientists from Bavaria and stakeholders from the private sector on European research, development and innovation funds. The focus is directed at the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon 2020”. As a partner in the network for SMEs “Enterprise Europe Network” (EEN), BayFOR provides specific advice for SMEs which are interested in EU research and innovation projects. BayFOR is a partner institution in the Bavarian “Haus der Forschung” (www.hausderforschung.bayern.de/en). For further information please visit www.bayfor.org/english.

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