



## ETUCE Statement on the European Institute of Technology

**Adopted by the ETUCE Executive Board  
in their meeting on 10-11 May 2006**

**With reference to the request for consultation 15 September 2005, the European Commission's subsequent Communication of 22 February 2006 (COM (2006) 77), and the meeting in the Commission on 25 April 2006 on a future European Institute of Technology, ETUCE issues the following statement:**

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ETUCE shares the underlying objectives of the proposal for a European Institute of Technology (EIT). However, we have major reservations about the proposal as it stands at present. Above all, a new initiative of this kind must represent 'added value', and must not disrupt the existing high quality work which is being done in European higher education institutions. An EIT, if established, must be funded by new money, and there must be a commitment to it as a public institution. It must not upset the existing delicate and complex relationship between public higher education provision and the private sector. It must operate as a network disseminating expertise and knowledge more widely in Europe, not as a monolithic institution drawing resources to the centre.

ETUCE recalls the European Commissioner Jan Figel stating: "Despite Europe's many successes in research and education, recent evidence indicates a difficulty in translating these achievements into competitive advantages for European enterprises. Europe, with few exceptions, is falling behind when it comes to the creation, dissemination and application of "new knowledge". Mr. Figel continued "a European Institute of Technology could play an innovative role in supporting knowledge transfer, attracting the best researchers and companies from around the world to work in partnership".

ETUCE also recalls President Barroso welcoming the public consultation: "Together we need to strengthen Europe's potential in research and technology, by stimulating research careers, by encouraging European researchers to stay in Europe and by attracting the best brains from around the world to Europe".

ETUCE acknowledges that huge expectations have been expressed from many sides regarding the creation of a European Institute for Technology.

### ETUCE notes:

- That the diagnosis of the European situation is mainly made with the US and Japan as benchmarks. In this context, it is important to take into consideration, as the European Commission also acknowledges, the flow of talented early-stage researchers and university teachers and researchers to the US, which underlines that people are the real carriers of knowledge.
- That the benchmarking with the US reveals areas in research and innovation where Europe is excellent, but also areas where Europe performs less well.

- That the EIT would benefit from having a clear mission statement. On a general level, the search for excellence in research in the academic world and at the same time bridging the gap with businesses and innovations can be identified as a permanent mission for the EIT.
- That in the debate on the EIT there has been only limited reflection on how to handle research areas where Europe is lagging behind or where Europe is losing its most talented human potential to its global competitors. This more defensive task that could be of a temporary nature should also be considered among the missions for the EIT.
- That a number of key organisations, including the EUA and ESIB, have expressed reservations about the EIT.

**ETUCE states:**

- We conditionally support the creation of the EIT in order to develop and strengthen the triangle between research, education and innovation, provided our serious concerns are met.
- In setting up the EIT, a network approach should be chosen to build on and complement existing facilities and ensure the best geographical coverage of experience as well as supporting developments in less favoured parts of Europe, and to avoid the creation of a monolithic institution undermining existing provision.
- The EIT's mission statement should focus on why the EIT is needed and should, in addition to the elements identified above, also focus on the need for coordination to ensure no overlapping e.g. with the European Framework Research Programme or duplication of research initiatives in general.
- We also perceive and support the idea of the EIT being an innovative approach to bridge the gap between the academic world and business. However, we believe that the EIT must maintain high standards of academic freedom and independence if it is to have credibility in the academic community and if it is to have a serious role in scientific innovation.
- Working with knowledge is characteristic of the academic world and is by its nature both competitive and internationally oriented. The expectations for the EIT as a new institution are very high considering that the EIT do not yet have any track record or earned reputation. The EIT cannot be and should not be discussed as an "instant MIT" that solves the problems of Europe, but must build on a network of existing experience and expertise. It must prove itself by delivering added value.
- Too high expectations in connection with the EIT might lead to an increased risk of the EIT being criticised of being a failure. This might harm the support for research and the creation of the knowledge society in the longer run.

## **ETUCE calls upon the Commission to ensure:**

- That the funding of the EIT is done sufficiently without taking or blocking existing resources in the higher education and research area, and makes a real positive difference to the capacity available and adds a strong element of pan-European cooperation. The funding and organisation of the EIT is not clearly described in the Communication of 22 February and therefore raises some crucial questions. The formulation in the Communication: “substantial core funding in the beginning” is too vague and gives the impression that the EU will not support this institution in the long run. This is a long-term project and must have security of funding. There cannot be a reliance on private sector funding of the core activity of the EIT without undermining its viability and jeopardising academic freedom. It should be clear that the need for financial support of the EIT should not be used as a justification to cut resources in (higher) education and research in existing institutions in different European countries.
- It is however important to note that the willingness to invest is a measure and a signal to other partners on how strongly committed the EU is to develop the EIT. The reputation and the track record of the EIT will of course attract, or put an end to the interest of, other actors to fund the EIT.
- That the idea of seconding resources from existing organisations, which are in many cases probably the research units and similar departments at universities and other research centres with excellent track records, will be critically considered and examined further. How will the universities be involved, what will they gain, how will IPR and personnel questions be handled? In particular what inducements and protections will be offered to the staff, and what protections offered to the staff who do not go to the EIT? These are all questions that need to be addressed beforehand. There must be assurances about the involvement of the representative unions of the academic staff at the national and the European levels.
- That collective agreements concerning the conditions for researchers and other personnel are negotiated with the respective national social partners, or that these conditions are laid down in a European framework agreement including questions like mobility, transfer, social benefits and intellectual property rights. Existing provisions like the European code and charter for researchers need to be fully respected.
- That the rules for governance and management of the EIT will keep a sound balance between public, private and commercial interests including representation from academics, researchers and other personnel.
- That research driven by the EIT is autonomous at a high level. The right balance between autonomy and selectivity should be based on scientific and collegial values. The EIT should carry out its mission independently but in cooperation and partnerships, where selection and evaluation are based on academic excellence.
- That Member States can draw on the results and output of the EIT. The primary aim should be to benefit the community as a whole. Industry and the private

sector should not exclusively and preferentially gain from the distribution of the benefits and results of the future work of the EIT. It is essential to consider how institutions not directly involved in the EIT can benefit from a “spin-off” situation, which can widen the dissemination and enhance the quality in mainstream institutions.

**In conclusion:**

ETUCE supports the creation of the EIT, if the proposal is developed to meet the concerns and reservations mentioned above.

We believe that the EIT can only become a valuable asset if closely connected through networking, to the range of knowledge resources/facilities that already exist within Europe at a number of levels, and if the EIT promotes further cooperation between existing institutions, and creates ‘added value’.

Such a network, possibly coordinated by the EIT, is necessary for the circulation of knowledge and for an effective and efficient addressing of questions, expectations and needs from business, industry, research and education in the EU member states. We assume that in many cases, such answers and solutions are already available but not known to the institution/company that has posed the question and/or problem. In other cases, the EIT should organise, i.e. facilitate and/or contract out, projects and studies aimed at generating/developing a solution for those particular problems.

But at the same time we must warn that a particular interest for the EIT should not divert attention from boosting the knowledge production, enhancing the quality, and securing the best possible conditions in general for the higher education and research institutions.

We must reiterate our concern for the careers and jobs of the staff who will be directly or indirectly affected by the establishment of the EIT, and our concern that appropriate trade union protections and rights are fully available to them.

We expect the Commission to continue to involve ETUCE in the further work on creating the EIT.