

Creative Ideas Open Innovation

Preface by Signe Ratso, Deputy Director-General – Directorate-General “Research and Innovation”



Dear Lion or Leo,

The future economic success lies in research and innovation, not only the ability to develop and design new cutting-edge technologies and new innovative products and services, but also in their successful application in order to cater the needs of the whole society. Lions, as an active part of the society, can create and collect innovative ideas how to better serve their own community. So the Lions motto, “We serve”, sounds high-powered forever.

Henry Ford is famously quoted as saying: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses". Today no one can imagine life without cars, planes, personal computers or smartphones. The mobile telephone and internet ultimately changed the way we communicate with each other. How many people send letters by mail today?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already providing huge benefits in the areas like health care (reading X-ray images and providing more precise diagnosis than doctors), search engines like Google that we are using on a daily basis or machine translation which can provide adequate translation in a matter of seconds. You don't think about AI when you book your hotel or flight tickets online. AI has the potential for huge efficiency gains and increasing productivity of virtually all sectors of the economy from manufacturing to transport, logistics and services. Robotics can offer similar advantages.

Every technological revolution has resulted in the loss of jobs. At the same time, with new technologies, demand for new skills and new jobs will arise. Who will regret the loss of a job as a telephone operator today? With AI, what we lose in automation we will gain through the need for more computer scientists, engineers, linguists, psychologists, etc.

So why are people so worried about these new innovative technologies? Because they are changing our lives. Innovation challenges the world as we know it. Lions and Leos can help fellow citizens to adjust to rapid changes.

Innovations, however, do not happen by themselves. They rely on creative minds and breed in the environments that are conducive to creative thinking.

For this to happen, we first need educational systems which promote creativity and not just repetition of well-known facts. School children should have an opportunity to test new approaches to scientific problems. Only then, will it ensure that we have scientists and innovators in the future.

To give you an example: Robotex as a robotics competition first started in Estonia in 2001 by Tartu University and Tallinn Technical University. Since then, it has expanded to 11 countries across 5 continents as robotics

educational framework, including also conferences, exhibitions, workshops and attracting thousands of school children every year. Once you have created a robot yourself, you will not be afraid of new technologies.

In order to prepare for technological innovations, it's not enough to acquire skills at school and at university, you will also need to learn and develop your skills throughout your life! Lions and Leos can set an example as learners and/or mentors.

We are at the cusp of a new wave of innovation as a result of the convergence of digital technologies with the physical world. These innovations are already transforming our economies and redefining entire industries. Any economy in the world can only stay ahead of the competition if it stays on the frontier of cutting-edge research and innovation.

This is why the European Commission has put forward a proposal on Horizon Europe, a Framework Program on Research and Innovation with unprecedented size – EUR 100 billion for the years 2021-2027, containing also a pillar, Open Innovation, addressing in particular disruptive and breakthrough innovation and helping companies to scale up their innovative enterprises.

Let's help make European society a sustainable, modern and happy!