

The IDEA League *Realising the Lisbon Agenda*

Vision

The world in the 21st Century faces significant environment and resource problems; the solution to these is in the hands of scientists and engineers. No single institution can address these issues alone – collaboration between partners will be essential. The IDEA League¹ is a focussed group with a 7-year track-record of collaboration between five university partners, each of which is the leading institution for engineering and technology within its respective country (THES² World University Rankings, 2005 and 2006), and prominent in global scientific and industrial networks. These IDEA partners share a common culture of first-class research that is science led and technology driven, and building on this, our agenda is shaped by the needs and demands of society and industry. Given this experience and expertise, our highly successful partnership demonstrates that it now provides a model platform for addressing these European and global issues.

Research

The key areas of importance for our global society in the 21st century, in which the IDEA partners share excellence and in which we are developing strategic collaborations, are:

- *Energy* – to meet the increasing demands of the developed and developing nations;
- *Environment* – to develop sustainable modes of existence and industrial processing, and better understand the complex mechanisms that support us;
- *Healthcare* – to address the new demands that the demographic shift brings;

Using our collaborative research workshop programme, we are currently identifying key research themes within these areas to define a 10-15 year science and technology road-map. It is our aim to define our joint research agenda before the end of this year; as part of this effort we will identify and involve potential partners to help us realise these programmes

In these key areas, the IDEA partners have academic partnerships with a number of other world-class academic institutions, and strategic collaborations with a large number of leading partners in key industries. The joint commitment within the League to share large scale research facilities will further strengthen our ability to achieve our goals.

Education

Our educational portfolio is focussed on our science and technology strengths with training at bachelors, masters and doctoral levels; our graduates are highly sought after in academic, industrial, commercial and governmental sectors. Collectively, the IDEA League has more than 60,000 students of whom well over 10,000 are registered on doctoral programmes.

In addition to the intrinsic high quality of the academic and technical aspects of the training, membership of the IDEA League provides students at all levels with the opportunity to interact with their counterparts throughout the League – enhancing both academic and social mobility, and encouraging interdisciplinarity. We have jointly developed and implemented a number of quality standards and academic activities including:

- a set of *common education quality management principles*;

¹ The alliance consists of Imperial College London, TU Delft, ETH Zurich, RWTH Aachen and ParisTech.

² The Times Higher Education Supplement.

A position statement, 4 May 2007

- *academic profiles* for graduates;
- *mutual recognition of degrees* (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle);
- *student interchange via IDEA League scholarships*, whereby students can attend a partner institution for an entire masters course or spend several months to study or undertake research in a partner institution during the course of their bachelors, masters or doctoral studies;
- *joint masters* both within the IDEA League and through the Erasmus Mundus scheme;
- *joint Summer Schools* for doctoral students.

Pan-European integration is additionally enhanced by *student-led* summer schools, and sporting and social events.

Innovation

In keeping with the Lisbon Agenda, all of the IDEA League partners give great emphasis to the importance of knowledge and technology transfer. The success of university-led innovation depends on effective interactions within the context of society. New ideas from academia can lead to totally new capabilities in key areas, such as healthcare, environment and energy. Similarly, implicit and explicit needs of commerce, manufacturing industry or the healthcare sector can lead to productive new avenues of research. Hence, relationships between universities and their commercial partners need to be ever closer if needs and possibilities are to be effectively exploited.

All of the IDEA universities are committed to a research agenda that emphasises the application of research in industry, commerce and healthcare. Our technology transfer programmes are an essential part of this mission, and our success is illustrated by the high level of our industrial research funding (up to 30%) and the number of spin-out companies we have established (more than 60 per year). Collectively, we have links to more than three quarters of the European Round Table of Industrialists, and with many more industries beyond this organisation. We also have close links with governmental organisations, such as our national health services. To further our ambitions and effectiveness in this area we have established a Technology Transfer Group within the IDEA League, and knowledge and technology transfer form an integral part of our collaborative doctoral and early researcher training programmes.

IDEA in the European Arena

The IDEA League, with its shared vision and integrated approach to research, education and innovation, is a unique consortium. With its excellence in science & technology and its longstanding record of working together, the League presents an ideal nucleus on which to found Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC), as proposed for the European Institute of Technology (EIT). We are reviewing and formulating proposals for collaborative research and education programmes in the areas of Energy, Environment and Healthcare.

Whilst, however, the foregoing has established the credentials of the IDEA League taking the lead in this activity, we recognise that success will depend upon our engagement with other leading scientific and technological partners.

The essential criteria for academic and industrial partners that wish to collaborate with the IDEA League in this endeavour are:

- excellent scientific and technological resources;
- a strong commitment to technology transfer;
- a willingness to share (large-scale) facilities;
- a willingness to enable access to networks and influence;
- a shared vision of regaining Europe's international position in science & technology.

Together we will make a difference.