

Mr Bütof,
Ms Stenros,
This year's NICE Jury,
The Candidates,
Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Capacity for innovation is a direct indicator of economic development and a society's future potential.

Studies show that innovation drives structural change and economic growth, which implies that start-up activity in a country will be linked to its capacity for innovation.

This applies to Europe, too.

As Tessa Jowell, the former British Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said in a speech back in 2005,

We need to concentrate our efforts on where our strengths lie – in adding value through innovation and creativity. We need to invest in the skills and potential of our people, and to create an environment where creativity can flourish, and enterprise is rewarded.

In the same speech, she then went on to make a highly pertinent point:

*Couple this with the fact that at no point in our history has the pace of technological change been so rapid or so far reaching – and so the importance of our creative economy moves centre stage.
A healthy creative economy is vital, if Europe's knowledge economy is to continue to flourish.*

In 2016, the EU Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science has led efforts to establish a European Innovation Council. The group's statement of intent begins as follows:

No Future of Europe without Innovation.

Europe can and must remain at the forefront of global innovation. Europe's future will be created by entrepreneurs that integrate the worlds of bits, atoms, neurons, genes and art and create business models and social innovation in ways that bring substantial value to society, the economy and the environment.

If this statement is viewed alongside Tessa Jowell's speech from over a decade earlier, two things become clear:

1. The subject of innovation remains as important as ever!
2. The subject of innovation still isn't where it needs to be!

Federal policymakers in Germany take a similar view. Matthias Machnig, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, recently remarked, 'strengthening innovation and investment needs to be a clear priority'.

But what exactly do we mean when we talk about innovation?

The OECD is one of the industrialised world's leading research institutions. One of its publications is the OSLO Manual, which systematically distinguishes between different types of innovation:

- Product innovation
- Process innovation
- Organisational innovation
- Marketing innovation.

However, these distinctions aren't enough. It is clear that we also need to develop special environments for innovation and to change ingrained ways of thinking.

This is something that has also been discussed by Prof Dr Andreas Pinkwart – North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitisation and Energy – in a study conducted by the Leipzig Graduate School of Management that he led. He identified the following areas where action is required:

1. Culture

- Society needs a more positive attitude towards entrepreneurial risk-taking.
- Germany needs to transform its culture of mistakes and its attitude towards failure in order to unlock potential for new ideas and business ventures to flourish.

2. People

- Schools need to place greater emphasis on teaching creative and entrepreneurial thinking and skills.
- Universities need to place greater emphasis on imparting the knowledge required to start a business, and to improve interdisciplinarity.

3. Capital

- The supply of venture capital needs to be increased. There continues to be a lack of adequate support from business angels as well as a lack of sufficient funding for later stages of development in companies.

4. Cooperation

- Collaboration between universities and industry needs to be further expanded in order to increase potential for innovation.

Interestingly, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy explored new possibilities in this direction in its recent study on non-technical innovation.

To quote one passage from the study:

Promoting non-technical innovation is to a certain extent completely uncharted territory.

Whereas technical innovations typically go through an extended trial phase within companies and their concrete form is often fixed by the end of this process: for example, a new engine that is then produced in that form for several years, non-technical innovations generally require relatively short development processes within companies, but often only develop fully in interaction with users – the market often functions as the laboratory for such innovations.

These examples illustrate how important it is to have a concept of innovation that reflects the complexity and variety of innovation today. This is especially crucial given that we have been taught that innovation is primarily technological in nature, which continues to affect how we talk about it and, ultimately, how we act. Tackling the challenges of the future will require a much broader understanding of innovation. We urgently need new ideas.

And that's where the NICE Award comes in.

On the initiative of the European Centre for Creative Economy in Dortmund, the Network for Innovations in Culture and Creativity in Europe (NICE) was initiated in 2013 by a consortium of 15 cities, universities and individuals from ten countries. Today, it has 32 partners from 15 countries. The Network is funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The annual NICE Award, financed by the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitisation and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, aims to promote innovations from the cultural and creative sectors, especially those that spill over into the wider economy and society.

The NICE Award prize money is jointly provided by the City of Bochum, the City of Dortmund, the City of Essen, the City of Gelsenkirchen and the Ministry for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitisation and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The N.I.C.E. Award 2017 theme:

Creating an Inclusive World – A Call for Transformative Innovations

Globalisation and digitisation have helped to drive freedom of expression and exchange, cultural diversity and intercultural tolerance. In addition, civil rights, participation and social inclusion have incrementally become a standard part of policy that aims to create an open, global and digital society without any form of exclusion.

A value-based society needs to be reflected in economic actors who base their decisions on the principles of sustainability and social responsibility.

That's why the NICE Award 2017 invited individuals, teams and organisations from the cultural and creative sectors to propose surprising and experimental solutions that help to build an inclusive society in this high-speed world of digital and global disruption.

Today, we are going to see the results of this year's call. I hope we can all enjoy an inspiring evening filled with innovative inspirations and ideas.

