



Maria da Graça Carvalho, MEP
Chair of the Knowledge4Innovation
Forum in the European Parliament

The European Innovation Summit reaches its 12th anniversary and represents again the perfect opportunity to speak about research and innovation, together with the friends of Knowledge4Innovation and its wide community of partners. We always try to keep up with the times, but this year is a special one, given the increased digitalisation of our activities. For the first time ever, we are having a virtual Summit, all online.

The pandemic and the need to recover from all its impacts show once again how innovation must be a central element in the European answer. Doctors, researchers, teachers, business owners, and many others, have seen how innovation was the main resource they had to fight against an unprecedented situation. It is about the discovery of a vaccine, but also about how to palliate the symptoms or to help those infected by the virus. It is about finding new ways to communicate with our loved ones when we could not leave our homes, how teachers could make students engage from the other side of the screen, or how companies could step up in the digital transformation to be able to maintain their businesses in a changing ecosystem. Innovation is the cornerstone of the European plans, but also of the national measures to implement the recovery package. Innovation is the main driver to achieve the targets to ensure that we move to a greener and digital society and economy, whilst ensuring a strategic and open resilience.

Less than one month ago, Knowledge4Innovation organized one of the first events launching the idea of a European Innovation Area, which will be developed under the guidance of Commissioner Mariya Gabriel. On that occasion, we stressed together how investing in innovation means investing in the European way of doing things. We can then be more resilient, autonomous and set our standards worldwide when it comes to emerging technologies. The 12th European Innovation Summit is devoted to finding the proper ways to boost the European Innovation Area and make our European innovators worldwide champions. We will touch upon the role of innovation in the recovery plan, but also the need to boost it to achieve the targets to reduce fossil emissions in the proposed timeframe. The construction of an ecosystem where innovation can flourish is a precious objective that a European Innovation Area can contribute to. We need to attract talents, to nourish their efforts and protect their rights to work. Women are particularly disadvantaged as women innovators face even more hardship to get funds or access to resources and this is why I am glad that this year we give voice to awarded innovators and other experts that together with Commissioner Gabriel can explore ways to increase the institutional attention towards women-driven initiatives, investments and initiatives.

The summit is also about Artificial Intelligence and Big Data, focusing on their impact on society and developing a positive narrative towards these new technologies that promise to change our habits but still hold a certain level of skepticism among European citizens. The topic is very wide and will be tackled in events with specific angles on health, green transition and competitiveness, but it is through platforms like the K4I European Innovation Summit, that we can show how artificial intelligence can have a constructive tangible impact on our daily lives, on our society and on our overall competitiveness.