

PRESS RELEASE

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EPSI, European Platform for Sport Innovation: fresh ideas for sparking innovation

Last Friday, June 13, the Domaine de la Brunerie, idyllic public green space, home to sports federations, innovative start-ups, hosted the premier European forum for exchanging ideas and creating synergies in the sport industry with EPSI, the European Platform for Sport Innovation. Organized by the Cluster Sporaltec, Sport Innovation Cluster of Rhône-Alpes (France), this year's EPSI conference was rich with new ideas and fruitful networking opportunities.

Voiron (France), June 13, 2014 – EPSI, a membership-based networking organization in Europe that strives to stimulate innovation in the EU industries related to physical activity, held the third edition of their namesake conference this past Friday, bringing together European sport professionals for discussion and networking. Combining **compelling conferences** by experts in the field, **Mix & Match workshops** focused on eight different topics relating to the sports industry, and **individual B2B meetings**, each participant found something suited to his or her project.



A competitive, socially responsible industry

The central theme that emerged during this year's conferences was the sports' industry's duty to its consumers and society as a whole, as Antonello Marega, Bruno Alves, and Roland Pesty, presidents of EPSI, FESI (Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry), and Sporaltec, respectively, emphasized in their introductions. With obesity and inactivity on the rise in Europe and across the globe, **exercise is more than a public health concern**, but an issue with economic and social repercussions. Thus, the sport industry has the singular opportunity to leverage innovation in the field to make physical activity more attractive and more accessible to European and worldwide populations. This unique position allows the sport industry to thrive economically and expand into new markets while promoting healthy values and benefitting the world in which we live.

New possibilities for innovation by collaboration

Harald Koerger, Senior Sport Researcher at Adidas Innovation Team, started the conferences off by outlining the importance of research and innovation in the sports industry, using Adidas' exceptional business growth as an example. **"It's not enough to bring products to the people; we have to help them get better at their sports,"** he affirmed, and collaborations are at the heart of effective product development, from conception to testing. Adidas has been running performance studies with Calgary University since the 1980s, for example, and works regularly with chemical companies in the development of new materials. Finally, addressing recent developments for rapid prototyping, Koerger warned, **"new ways of prototyping, like 3D printing, make the process faster, but not necessarily easier, because everyone else is getting faster, too,"** and underscored the necessity of product usefulness over ease and speed of production.

Speaking about new forms of collaboration, **Catharina Van Delden, CEO of Innosabi and project partner for ISPO Open Innovation**, a crowd-sourcing platform for projects in the sports industry, emphasized about the benefits of involving consumers in product conception and development for our sector. "Companies have started looking more like networks," van Delden explained. "Earlier, you thought of a company as being an entity with closed boundaries... **Open innovation means opening up these company boundaries and having input very early on, in the stage of ideas, testing, before it even comes onto the market... You can produce products that are very close to the consumer and have less chance of market failure,** but you can also identify trends very early on and make informed decisions." The sports industry, she emphasized, has much to gain from adopting open innovation practices, as it is one of the industries where we see the most user innovation. We can potentially harness the creative force of sport enthusiasts to advance both an individual company's growth and the industry as a whole.

In a presentation of the potential of private-public partnerships, **Jose Freitas, Administrator in DG Enterprise and Industry at the European Commission**, outlined the Commission's programs geared towards Clusters for the 2014/2020 period. Notably, the COSME program offers EU Cluster managers the opportunity to travel to non-EU countries and identify business opportunities with managers of local clusters. The EC is committed to fostering growth through Cluster collaboration, as Freitas stated, **"We believe that you can get critical mass if you bring together clusters from different countries on a qualitative basis. We believe there is a European added value and that we are not replicating what the national clusters do."**

In the same vein, **Magali Bayssiere, National Contact Point H2020 with Lyon Ingénierie Projets** elaborated on the opportunities for SMEs in the EC's Horizon 2020 program that allots 80 billion euros for furthering research and innovation related to science, industrial leadership, and societal challenges. Such private-public partnerships can be powerful catalysts of growth and innovation, as we saw through the examples of **EASY-IMP, creator of wearable meta-products**, adaptable connected garments that can be

used for multiple functions, and **ProFit Field Labs**, urban sites where citizens can engage in innovative sport activities and test new products. Both initiatives are European-funded projects that are currently advancing the sports industry in different and exciting ways.

Putting innovation into practice

The day wrapped up with an afternoon of discussion and debate during the Mix & Match Workshops on topics ranging from new materials for sport (composites, nano materials, etc.) to smart arenas and environments. **Timothée Silvestre**, Sporaltec Cluster Manager and leader of the "electronics and big data in sport" workshop, commented, **"Many actors from the sport sector, in addition to research laboratories and universities, were present during the workshop, which was the occasion to discuss the sociological impacts of smart objects and the issues regarding integrating sensors into textiles."**

The 2014 EPSI Conference was the first time the conference was organized in France, and, by all accounts, it was a resounding success, presenting **fresh ideas for sparking innovation** and a relaxed setting for **valuable discussion and networking**. It is clear that innovation, through new forms of collaboration and original business models in addition to cutting-edge products, is the key to the future development of the sports industry as a thriving sector, but for any innovation to be successful, consumer needs and the societal good must be at its heart.

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