

28th Conference of Rectors and Presidents of European Universities of Technology

Science Minister Hele Sander's speech at the 28th Conference of Rectors and Presidents of European Universities of Technology – Climate Change and Sustainable Energy: The Roles of Universities of Technology – at the Technical University of Denmark 18 September 2009.

(Check against delivery.)

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the invitation.

Everywhere, there is a growing demand for sustainable energy. There is no doubt that technical universities are very important when it comes to the development of new green technologies.

Denmark as a green nation

Over the last 25 years Denmark's economy has grown by around 75 percent – with nearly stable energy consumption. This shows that with an active energy policy it is possible to maintain high economic growth while at the same time safeguarding the environment.

The long term goal for Denmark is to be a green nation, 100 percent free of fossil fuel. Sustainable energy is central in this matter. Sustainable energy is important to reduce green house gasses and fight climate changes.

Today the use of sustainable energy has increased to over 15 percent of overall energy consumption in Denmark. It is the government's goal that this proportion must be doubled by 2025.

At the same time, export of new technologies within the energy sector is important to increase future growth and welfare in Denmark.

In 2008 the Danish export of energy technology reached a new record level, amounting to more than 8 billion euros. The Danish government supports the development of alternative sources of energy. This for instance includes the development of wind power, hydrogen and fuel cells and low energy buildings.

Never before has so much money been allocated to the area of energy research in Denmark. In 2010 the Danish state will assign more than 130 million euro to the area.

Public private partnerships

It is extremely important that universities and the private sector work together if the climate challenges shall be met and conquered. We must ensure that new ground-breaking research within the universities find its way to enrich society. In this matter there is a growing recognition – also in Denmark – that public-private partnerships are a useful way to develop new technology.

Since 2003 the Danish Government has launched a wide-scale reform of the Danish universities. Universities have been merged and professional boards have been introduced.

One objective of the reform was to increase the collaboration between universities and business. In this matter, the Danish government has launched several concrete initiatives to promote public-private partnerships.

This entails:

- Establishment of public-private innovation consortia and knowledge networks.
- A so-called industrial PhD.
- Guidelines to secure contractual agreement on joint research projects.

By the end of this month I will launch a document on green research and innovation.

Some of my new initiatives will aim at bridging our research and innovation efforts to create even stronger public private partnerships for green technologies. The idea is to promote the establishment of green consortia of enterprises, universities and other research institutions.

Education of future specialist and researchers

Let me now turn to another precondition for the development of green technologies: The education of future specialist and researchers.

I am impressed by the broad range of activities initiated by the Danish universities when it comes to education regarding climate change and sustainable energy.

All over the country new courses, programmes and other educational activities have been introduced in the run-up to the COP15. At the University of Copenhagen there are more than 180 courses and masters' programmes related to climate change.

Here at the Technical University of Denmark, there is an impressive range of activities on the educational level. The university is at the cutting edge in Europe when it comes to research in sustainable energy and offers unique possibilities of high-level education on issues related to climate change.

Recently, DTU has engaged in an exciting and visionary collaboration with the Technical University of Munich and the Eindhoven University of Technology. The idea is to start a European graduate school in sustainable energy technologies.

A 'school of thought' that can foster the development of excellent young scientists to combat climate change by research and innovation is very positive and has my strongest support.

Final remarks

The long term goal for Denmark is to be a green nation, 100 percent free of fossil fuel. In this matter sustainable energy is vital.

There is no doubt that technical universities – and universities in general – are very important when it comes to the development of new green technologies.

However, we must also make sure to combine the knowledge of the universities with the efforts and investments of private enterprises. And universities must ensure a future supply of

young scientists that can combat climate change by research and innovation. The climate changes shall be met by knowledge and innovation.

I wish you a good conference.