EINDHOVEN ENGINE: SHORTENING TIME-TO-MARKET, BINDING TALENT

Every true entrepreneur will recognise the phenomenon: you Translating knowledge into ready-to-market innovation tends to be a slow process. The linear track via the Technology Readiness Levels, from idea to application, takes too much time. The Knowledge Workers Granting Scheme from the 2008-2009 financial crisis years, under which redundant engineers from industry teamed up with academics and graduates from universities of applied sciences, demonstrated that multidisciplinary collaboration helps reduce the time-to-market considerably. It has inspired people such as Prof. Maarten Steinbuch (professor at Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) and scientific director at High Tech Systems Center (HTSC)) and Guusstaaf Savenije (CEO at VDL ETG) to develop the Eindhoven Engine, says Katja Pahnke, general director at the TU/e High Tech Systems Center.

'The Engine will become an entity where PDEngs, PhDs, students at the University of Technology, universities of applied sciences and intermediate vocational training institutes work with engineers from one or more companies. We bring the educational and industrial chains together, also physically, in order produce an exponential acceleration. Research is no longer conducted in a linear fashion, but in parallel collaboration at the levels of fundamental and applied research. Cross-fertilisation between those parallel projects at one shared location will drive this rapid acceleration. Whereas a typical PhD project now lasts four years, a typical Engine project will take two to three years,' says Pahnke.

formulating a key goal of the Engine. But that is not the only goal. 'We’re suffering from a labour market shortage here. By bringing young talent from the university – often from outside the region – in contact with industry at an early stage, we hope they will stay and find a job in this region after their graduation.' That is why the Regional Envelope is funding the Engine. In mid-March the government announced its decision to invest 130 million euros in the business climate of the Eindhoven Brainport, to which the region itself will add another 240 million euros. The initiators of the Engine intend to use 20 million euros from the Envelope for the Engine in the coming five years, supplemented with 60 million euros from the region. 'After that, the Engine will have to be able to pay for itself, from the funding from research clients.' The Engine will employ hardly any staff itself. Projects will be carried out in jointly developed facilities on a ‘co-location’ basis. The ambition is, however, that about 50 people from education and industry will become active in five or six projects this year, marking the start of the Engine, says Pahnke. These projects will probably be selected in the coming summer by the Engine Core Team, consisting of representatives of both worlds.' Maarten Steinbuch and Guusstaaf Savenije are the standard bearers and Clement Goossens of TU/e is the project manager. The official kick-off of the Eindhoven Engine is expected to take place this autumn.

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