

TECH[NOCULTURE

EuroScience: Our Voice On Research in Europe

Episode 1

Full transcript

Guest: Michael Matlosz (EuroScience) [Michael]

Host: Federica Bressan [Federica]

[Federica]: Welcome to the first episode of Technoculture! I'm your host, Federica Bressan, and my first guest is Mike Matlosz, professor of chemical engineering at the University of Lorraine in France, and president of EuroScience, the nonprofit grassroots association of researchers in Europe. Welcome to Technoculture, Michael.

[Michael]: Thank you.

[Federica]: I'm very happy to have an episode on EuroScience, because this is an association the work of which benefits every researcher in Europe and beyond. And it's very important that more people are aware of the activities of EuroScience. So what is EuroScience? This is the most prominent grassroots organization for science technology and innovation in Europe. It's active on many fronts including shaping policies for science technology and innovation, taking part to discussions - for example the one leading to the very important European Charter and Code for Researchers, - shaping the budget in the EU financial framework for Horizon 2020, from 2014 to 2020, and basically it's a voice for and to European scientists. What is the concrete impact that EuroScience can have on these fronts, some of these fronts that I have just mentioned?

[Michael]: Well, a couple of words about EuroScience and what we are trying to accomplish. EuroScience is not just an organization of scientists: EuroScience is an organization of individual members that are scientists and science professionals, we have a number of people who are interested in science and the development of science and the role of science in society and for society. What we would like to do is twofold: we would like to become a forum to bring

together those people who are interested in what science can bring and what science can do and how science and society can interact through the voice of individual professionals working in the scientific arena. That's on one side. On the other side, to use science as a vector for the construction of Europe as a unified continent. The founders of EuroScience were particularly concerned about the need to have a European voice in science as part of the construction of Europe. Europe is not just economics, Europe is not just trade, Europe is not just interactions between the Member States. Europe is also a continent with a very very long historical tradition in science and scientific culture, and we believe as EuroScience that by bringing together those scientists and science professionals in a single pan-European association that we can also contribute to the construction of Europe. And I think that in today's world, if we look back, now EuroScience is about 20 years old, we go back at the time when EuroScience was created, we were much more optimistic about the construction of the of Europe. The European Union right now, there are lots of doubts and their thoughts about how can we contribute in a positive constructive way to building a stronger European Union. And I think that science and scientists can help that in the same sense, though we need to think about how Europe and the European continent can be a place where science can evolve, science can be developed, and science can show its usefulness to all members of society. On the basis of those who are citizens and who are thinking about what science and scientists can do to help develop our societies and not just in the individual countries, but on a continental scale. So I think that our ambition is being the voice of scientists, and not scientific organizations. We are not an organization-based association, we are an individual member based organization, bringing together diverse people who are dedicated to promoting the role of science and its importance for society.

[Federica]: EuroScience has about 2,600 individual members in 77 countries, and 15 corporate members. It's a grassroot association, that means that the decision-making process is bottom up rather than top-down. So how does this happen, how do the members contribute to the decision-making?

[Michael]: Yeah, there are two aspects to that. One is the democratic process: we have statutes that allow us to elect the board - I myself, as president of EuroScience, I'm elected by the members, and the board is elected by the members, - but the democratic process in the election of the board is not sufficient. We need to associate that democratic elective process with outreach activities to those who are members of EuroScience, but also to those who are not members of EuroScience Now, obviously we have a number of different ways that we do this, but the most important and the most significant is the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) which is the largest European conference on the relationship of science in and for society. It's held once every two years in a different European city. We had our last ESOF conference in Toulouse in July [2018] and the next conference will be in Trieste, in Italy, in 2020. This is an opportunity for about 5,000 scientists and science professionals to come together and to discuss, debate, exchange on the place in the role of science and how science can be developed, and science can

be used. We're extremely proud as EuroScience to label an event of such a tremendous size and amplitude and impact. We have a tremendous media coverage of that event. With our 5,000 participants, we also have a number of major press outlets, journalists, that come and look and see what's happening. And we're open on all fronts of the latest developments on how science can be used in an open and fair and useful way. So, how are we as a grassroots organization operating, then through our own or our democratic process as well according to our statutes, but also through the outreach that we have, and in particular through the EuroScience Open Forum.

[Federica]: What is the position of EuroScience with respect to universities, research centers, funding bodies? How independent is it and how does the communication with these other stakeholders work?

[Michael]: The objective of EuroScience is to be independent of specific institutions and organizations. And so that's the reason why we emphasize the individual membership rather than an association of organizations. Now, as an individual myself, I'm of course relatively well positioned to talk about associations of organizations since as you may know from 2015 to 2017 I was the president of Science Europe. Science Europe is an association of research funding organizations and research performing organizations. Obviously the philosophy and the logic and the missions of EuroScience are very different. We really feel that we want to represent the individuals working in those organizations, rather than the organizations themselves. So in that sense we distinguish ourselves from Science Europe, which is an association of research performing and research funding organizations. We differentiate ourselves from the European University Association which is an organization of universities. We differentiate ourselves from other university organizations such as LERU, the League of European Research Universities, and many other organizations such as Business Europe and others. We believe that our role is unique, specific as an organization of individual members, and we have very strong links and relationships with all of those other organizations. And so we try to work together, and you notice frequently that we put out common statements with them, we collaborate with them, and as former president myself of one of those organizations, I know them very well, so I think that it's very important for us not to go alone and not to walk alone. We are collaborating with all of those institutions but we do not want to be operating for those institutions. We want to be operating for those people who are working in those institutions and who are interested in the scientific endeavor as individuals.

[Federica]: Since 1997, the year in which EuroScience was founded, its reputation, its authority, and also its size have grown. How hard is it - if it is, - to develop new policies and have them implemented? Have the institutions receive them, considering that you don't impose them?

[Michael]: Well, again, we're not really an institution, we're a representative body of those

people who are interested in the dynamic that we are trying to promote, and I think that what we tried to do is to make sure that our membership is up to date on what's happening, and that our governance structure is in phase with those things that are happening in the world. We're very happy because I'm speaking to you as someone who is familiar with the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA), we're very happy to have as a newly elected board member Brian Cahill, who is extremely well connected to the Marie Curie activities into the Marie Curie Alumni Association. We believe that it's also our role in an outreach to work with those kinds of organizations I mentioned in my previous remarks: the associations of official institutions, but we also have the kind of outreach to, for example, organizations such as the Marie Curie Association of early stage researchers, where we feel that we want to be able to accompany the new movements of the way research is happening and the way researchers are moving along. Obviously the current context of Open Science and the entire Open Science agenda is very very important. What we want to be is a sounding board, a forum for debate on these issues. We don't want to impose anything, but we want to accompany those movements. The changes in technology, the changes in the way science is operating, over the last few years, is leading to major evolutions in the profession of scientific researchers. And I think that right now probably one of the most important things whether we're in the private sector, in industrial research, and in companies, or whether we're in the public sector, in universities or research performing organizations, the way that science is done, the way that young early-stage researchers are entering the profession, and the professional norms that are associated with that are changing, and I think as a member based organization, with individuals, we're well positioned to help in the debate on those issues, but we don't want to impose anything on the way people operate. We are very very respectful, obviously, of the scientific freedom of our individual members, and also of the freedom of action of all the institutions associated with the scientific endeavor.

[Federica]: We all benefit from the work that EuroScience does, especially researchers as a category, whether they are members [of EuroScience] or not. But it's also very important to get involved and to be active. So can you tell us what the benefits are of actually becoming members of EuroScience?

[Michael]: The direct benefits of being a member are being able to participate actively in our democratic processes, to be able to input directly into what we are doing as an organization that's visible, and I would encourage as many people as possible to join the association. It's not very expensive. What it does, by having a larger membership base, is giving us more legitimacy and more weight in the positions that we are going to be taking. We look at a recent context of the development of the new Horizon Europe policy by the European Commission: obviously we're in a new process of the co-decision between the European Parliament and the council. Looking forward to how are we going to proceed with pan-European funding of the research activity in the public for the next seven years, obviously the voice of EuroScience

reflecting the concerns of our membership, that those expressions of concern and interest and proposals are much more relevant, much more influential, have much more weight if our membership base is larger. And so, as new president of EuroScience, I am trying to find ways for us to increase our membership, and perhaps this podcast will help that. We currently have a newsletter which is called Euro Scientists and there's an opportunity for people to express themselves. I think this is the kind of exchange that we need to make sure that EuroScience is not a static organization, but is a dynamic living organism, and that's through our membership.

[Federica]: Who can apply for membership? Do you need to be a researcher? And in any stage of your career?

[Michael]: Any stage of the career. In fact, the association is for researchers, scientists, science professionals, including journalists, science journalists, and others, and also European citizens, that are interested in what science can do in and for society. So it's very very open. Our membership is not selective in the sense that we want to restrict it to any particular group.

[Federica]: What happened in 1997, what were the conditions that led to the decision to start such important association? And who was actually taking care of these things before then?

[Michael]: Well, the recognition, in the 1990s, that there was no equivalent in Europe of an association like the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, "triple AS") in the United States was considered as a handicap for not only science in Europe and the place of the voice of science and science professionals in Europe, but also for the construction of Europe. And so there was an initiative coming out of a number of concerned parties, believing that it was important for us to have something which was a grassroots organization of science and science professionals, similar - not identical obviously, we have our specificity, but similar - to what was developed in the United States with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Now, we have to be aware of the fact that we are running about 150 years behind, so even though we're very proud that EuroScience now is more than twenty years old, we have to put that in perspective with more than a century and a half of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Obviously, EuroScience is a much smaller organization, but we maintain very close collaboration with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a number of other organizations around the world that are working on the advancement of science. What we felt at that time - I was not there, but there were others that felt at that time, - it was necessary to have a pan-European organization? and not Europeans and the individual member States. I think that was part of the development of the construction of the European Union, and the development of consciousness of our European identity. In European culture we have a lot of very very positive things to be proud of, and one is our scientific heritage. Scientific, cultural heritage: we have excellent scientists in Europe, we have an excellent science tradition, and so building unified Europe on the basis of science is a

very good idea. What you need though for that to happen is for the scientists to come together, and at the same time this allows science to be heard, because if each individual country by itself is expressing itself, we are not getting a common voice on those issues that are important for us. So, I think that those two things came together, that coalesced, and that led to the creation of this small association. And we made a very very big leap forward when we started with the very first ESOF in 2004, in Stockholm. It was a real watershed in terms of getting EuroScience on the board, having a main event with a lot of media recognition, so that our voice became even stronger. So, I think that if we look over the last 20 years now, we've been able to develop an association which has a voice, which is recognized which is known. We now need to go further, we need to increase our membership base and we need to develop actions which are relevant, so that we make ourselves visible and our voice heard in Europe.

[Federica]: One of the key points on the EuroScience agenda is to enhance the contribution of science to the well-being and prosperity of mankind. As researchers, we are often asked to explain in our project applications, for example, how our research will impact society, possibly in the short term. I'm a strong believer that investing in knowledge and culture does have benefits for everybody in society, but when I have to explain it in words, sometimes in conversations, even to convince a skeptic, I struggle to explain how there can be a linear connection between investing in culture and research, and the well-being of society. It's probably a 1 million dollar question, but I would like to hear it from you. Can you express this concept, and also say what the role of EuroScience in this is?

[Michael]: Well, I think part of the answer is in your question: you talked about the difficulty to identify a linear relationship between the scientific endeavor and scientific process and a scientific method, and well-being of society. And I think the answer is that it's not linear. It's not a linear relationship, it's a much more indirect, complex, implicit relationship between what we are doing as scientists and what we are doing in terms of the development of knowledge, understanding, exploration, and discovery, and the incorporation of that into our democratic societies. Now, obviously, in the current context this is very very tricky. We know that rational thought is not so easy nowadays, that our democratic societies are going through a crisis in terms of representativity of rational argument. The reason for that is the very high level of emotion that our citizens, our friends and neighbors have about many many issues, and in some cases when those issues are related to technological developments coming out of new knowledge from scientific research there's fear about how this might be used or what it might be good for or bad for. And I think that we can no longer, as a scientific community - operating in what we do best, which is exploring discovering, understanding, developing knowledge, - to do that completely independently of our relationship as citizens in society. And so I think that there's a new paradigm that we have to find and we have to develop, which is how can we as scientists... because, you know, all of us who are scientists, we're also citizens, so we're also part of this democratic process in our countries, about how things develop and how we

put in practice things that we've learned. And I think that the scientific community perhaps in the past was too comfortable in its isolation from the rest of society. We wanted to be pure in our thinking, and not be influenced by problems associated with the way people might think about what we are doing. We're very strongly attached to our freedom, our scientific freedom, our ability to go and look and see without anybody orienting what we see - and that's of course extremely important and it must be preserved, - but at the same time that doesn't mean that we should not be aware that we are ourselves actors of society, and that people are legitimately concerned about what we are doing and what the impact might be of what we are doing. But this is going to be in a very indirect way. What I feel myself personally is that we underestimate the inherent value of better understanding of what is happening around us to the success and progress of democratic societies. As an American, somewhat of American origin, we frequently say is a very very famous quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln that says: "If you feel that education is too expensive, try ignorance." I think that we're sort of in that kind of situation: refusing exploration, refusing discovery, refusing knowledge creation, refusing understanding of what's happening around us is not going to be a solution. We need to accept that understanding things requires looking in a clear, open way at what is happening, and then making sure that the translation of that knowledge into any potential action is controlled by our democratic institutions. This means that scientists must be aware of this, it means the scientists must think about this in their communication, it means also that scientists cannot be in a posture of simply dictating what is true to everyone else, without listening to what the society is saying to us. So this means that we need to develop mechanisms for constructive, positive dialogue, between ourselves and others, and EuroScience as an association has a special role in that. And that's the reason why our Open Forum is called an Open Forum: we feel that every two years we should bring people together, including people who are curious about what we're doing, to help them to better understand, but also to help us to better understand, what the expectations might be from what we are doing. I don't think this is contradictory with scientific freedom. I think that scientific freedom is part of the method that we use when we are exploring something. It doesn't mean that we should be insensitive to listening to what other people want to tell us. That doesn't mean we should be oriented in what we're doing in our research, but we should be listening to perceptions of how these things are felt by our fellow citizens.

[Federica]: Researchers are invited more and more to engage in outreach activities, to communicate their work to the general public, and to develop the skills to do so. And in general this is a very good thing. I have a feeling sometimes that one of the motivations, though, to encourage us to do this is that there is a need to restore trust in the general public for the work that we do. So, if we explain it to them, and they understand it, they will evaluate whether their tax money is well invested or not. And if we "sell" our research with a good message, then we will convince them that this is the case. I was once involved in a contest where I competed with other scientists in communicating my science to an audience of young adults, and one of

the goals there was to explain our research work in a way that would be so clear and convincing that any person in the audience would evaluate for themselves whether that money was well invested. And I was a bit skeptical of that: communication is good, but the general public does not necessarily have the critical tools to evaluate such thing. So I was a bit skeptical on that regard. I would like to ask you, what's your take on this? Do you see that in this desire to communicate science more and more, to make it an integral part of your research work, there is also this element, this need, to restore the trust of the general public in science?

[Michael]: I think that the scientific community, in particular those of us who are operating in the universities and in the research performing organizations in the public sector, have to be aware that we are being supported financially by public taxpayer funds. And I think sometimes in the past we forgot that. And I think it's very important today to realize that we do have a responsibility to the society, to our fellow citizens who are paying for what we are doing now. Having said that, that doesn't mean that the people who are in the best position to suggest to us what our lines of research might be are those people who are paying the taxes to us. So we have to think about what kind of constructive dialogue we can develop. I suspect that one of the first steps is to perhaps develop a posture which is a little bit more humble and a little bit more modest about what we are doing as scientists. You know, we are not the only people on earth who have the truth with the capital T, and that we know everything, and we should just make sure that everyone understands what we believe. I think that in the past, when we talked about science communication, it was very often a one-way communication: explaining to a taxpayer why it was a very good idea for them to give us the money to do this, because it has direct consequences. That kind of dialogue I think needs to be replaced by something which is more open and more two-way communication. Now, two-way communication is very tricky. This means that we're going to have to accept the fact that there will be some contradiction, that people might not agree with us, that we need to respect other people's positions and opinions. This is not necessarily something that we were in the habit of doing 20 or 30 years ago. So, we probably should start thinking about how we can develop a different attitude about the way we look at questioning from the general public. I don't think that this goes through simplifying and oversimplifying what we are doing, obviously, we are specialists, we are specialists in our own area, even between ourselves among ourselves we are not always so good at communicating in dialogue. And if you think about someone who's a specialist in a particular scientific area trying to dialogue with someone who's specialists in another scientific area, this also requires some modesty, and some curiosity, and some respect for what the other person is doing. So I think that in a general sense, what we maybe should try to do is to think about how we can develop the dialogue skill in the research community. This might be something that we should be thinking about with organizations representing early-stage researchers, how can early-stage researchers become more sensitive to the importance of constructive two-way dialogue with other stakeholders. I think this is something that in the past was not considered as specifically important. The importance in the past was very often focused almost exclusively on peer

communication. So this means that someone who is specialized in a particular area would be trying to communicate the interest of his work to other people in that same specialized area in order to have recognition. This obviously will continue to remain important, because we are in specialized scientific fields, but we need to add to that some additional dialogue capacity and skill that allows us to talk to people in other specialties, but also to talk to people coming from other horizons, and coming to us maybe with a different way of looking at the world. That's going to be quite difficult, it's going to require opening up our own minds, thinking a little bit out of the box. We don't want to lose our fundamentals, we don't want to lose our scientific freedom, we don't want to lose our rigor, and we don't want to lose the importance of what we are doing in advancing the science in our own disciplines, on scientific frontiers, but we need to somehow think about how we talk about that, and we should probably not do it in a very arrogant self-satisfied way, we should do it in a more open way, expecting that maybe other people might look at these things a little bit differently.

[Federica]: The trust issue is somehow built in also the Open Science movement: ensuring transparency brings all sorts of benefits and it is a moral duty, transparency of scientific results, and also processes, but there is also an urgent need to fight fraud forgery and plagiarism in science worldwide. EuroScience is concerned with research integrity? How? And how does it support the Open Science movement?

[Michael]: EuroScience has a general position of being very very favorable to the current agenda concerning Open Science. I believe that as a grassroots organization with individual members, what we can do in addition to supporting what we might call institutional initiatives, in particular this one this week concerning Open Access, and what funding agencies can do to support and promote Open Access - I think that EuroScience in addition to supporting those institutional or technical advances, what it can do is also to think about how does this change the culture of the way scientists work in the center, the way scientists operate. And I think that that's where a grassroots movement and an organization that organizes once every two years an open forum of discussion can really be useful, [and that] is to think about what does this change for us, I mean it's not just a technical thing, I mean it's not just saying "well, now the funding agencies will require people to produce documents in a certain way." It's important that we have clear rules, that we have principles about the way we want to increase transparency, that we want to make scientific results, scientific information available to the general public. In this connection, as you are aware, the current movement towards Open Access publishing is also related to the question of financing in the public sector: when researchers are financed by public funds this means that there's taxpayer money being used to support this activity, this means then that it should be possible for our fellow citizens to have access to this information, as well as our fellow scientists, without having to pay for it again. Obviously, they have already financed the production of this these documents, they should not necessarily be to pay for it again to have access to it. This is a very very important issue, and I think that if I would

just for a second widen the scope of this, about the question of publicly funded research and scientific research endeavor in public institutions with public funding, we are touching on a very important aspect of what is sometimes called "universal public goods." We believe that there are activities in the scientific endeavor which are generating knowledge which should actually be available in a general sense to humanity and not just to individual sectors. It's a little bit different when we're talking about private financing, and in particular operations which are done within enterprises and companies, where they have a right to protect some of the knowledge which is generated, because they are using their own funds on an internal basis. This is recognized, but I think if we now go and look at the the public issues, then we need to think about how is the movement towards more transparency, more openness, the technologies associated with that, for the circulation of information, how is that changing the way scientists and science professionals are working. And I think that EuroScience is in a unique role to be able to help in this debate. And again coming back to the important role that you mentioned, and that I've already mentioned concerning the role of EuroScience for early-stage researchers and research professionals, I think we have a role to play, and the larger our membership base obviously the more relevant will be those debates that we are holding. And on these issues, it's not just rules: it's also a culture of the way we do things, and the consequences of that on how science works and how science operates. Again, making sure that we maintain our values and our principles concerning scientific freedom, but it's gonna change, I'm convinced, over the next few years, the way research is done, and I think that this - if you think about issues around text and data mining, if you think about issues around social media and the role of social media in the circulation of research results - this is going to make profound changes in the way things are done. And this means that the canonical approach to research publication is probably going to be moving a little bit, the target is going to be moving a little bit, this means that evaluation of research performance is going to be moving a bit. This means that careers are going to be changing, this implies a very large number of things that only individual scientists in a collective movement of a grassroots organization can really debate on. Again, without imposing anything on anyone, we're not a normative organization, we are really a forum for exchange and discussion on these issues. And I hope that in Trieste in 2020, when we come together - and I hope that you will be there - that we will have an opportunity to debate on these issues, and I'm sure between now and then things will also have moved quite a bit.

[Federica]: You mentioned the word "humanity." Humanity is clearly not just Europe. Besides, scientists and researchers travel, so in Europe now we have researchers from other places in the world, and European researchers travel and bring their own culture with them. Being yourself of American origin, can you tell us something that you think is specific to Europe something, that is a strong point that we should be proud of, and probably, you know, export as a value, and maybe something that we can learn from North America, for example, and is there actually a dialogue between EuroScience and similar associations across the world?

[Michael]: Well, as EuroScience of course we have a group of organizations, the most important of which is the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that we meet with regularly. I will be at the AAAS meeting in February [2019] in Washington, so... I know very well Rush Holt, the current director of the AAAS, we dialogue regularly. Obviously, this particular situation today, concerning the way science is seen and the way science is developing in the US compared to Europe... I think that the role of Europe is today to maintain fundamental values on the scientific method, and the very very strong importance - which is perhaps not recognized as much as it should be in other parts of the world - the importance of academic and scientific freedom. And I think, legitimately that citizens paying for publicly funded research [can] suggest (through appropriate democratic institutions such as the Parliament) orientations for where scientists might want to orient their research, what they want to look at. What I have often said is, it's possible to suggest areas in which scientists may wish to perform research, but what you can never do without totally denaturing the whole scientific endeavor is to tell scientists not what they should be looking for but what they should find. And that is a very very fundamental point, and I think that we have a very strong historical, cultural heritage in the area of scientific freedom and scientific method in Europe, as the continent where all of this started. And I think that we have a special role in the world: the European science and the European values around science have a special role in the world. And I think that when we're thinking about the construct of a unified Europe, and thinking about a European research area, and what that can bring not only to Europe but also to the world, I think it's those values that are important in the way science operates, in the way science works.

[Federica]: I admit that your answer surprises me a bit, because I am European, I'm aware of it, I am pro Europe, but I would not put freedom among the top values. In the context we are talking about, I think that in project proposals in Europe it's very important to say what you're gonna do, what you're gonna find, what the concrete product will be, if it can be brought to the market, who benefits from it directly, indirectly, in the short term, in the long term, and if it tackles some societal challenges. It all makes sense but it's a lot of constraints on your research idea, whereas the impression that I got speaking to colleagues from North America, especially during the past year, is that you only need a great research idea and there's less pressure on ensuring a result. So, I'm a bit surprised that you put freedom among the top values of research in Europe.

[Michael]: Well, I think it's a question of confusion between the European scientific culture and the framework programme of the European Commission. I would not want people to misunderstand that all of European research is the rules of the framework program. Okay, so, I think that what we have in Europe - compared to other parts of the world including the United States - is that we have very strong institutions, with very large research performing organizations with permanent staff, that are not constantly going out looking for funding. And so, I think that this contrasts with other parts of the world, where frequently people are even

for their basic daily operations going out towards other funding sources. And so, I think in that sense we still have a quite a strong tradition in Europe of maintaining academic research positions for people. Of course, this is becoming more and more difficult, and obviously societal acceptance of this needs to be explained and justified, but I think that we do have that historical tradition.

[Fedrica:] Before being elected president of EuroScience, you have been in other leading roles in other organizations. How is it different now, to be president of EuroScience? And what does this mean to you?

[Michael]: What it means to me is that this particular position is very different from anything else I've done, because we're talking here about trying to find mechanisms and ways to associate individual researchers in a grassroots movement. It's far from obvious, and so that's the reason why I'm very very happy that this podcast is going to be able to reach out to those people who might be able to help us with this by participating actively in what we are doing as members and as contributors. In the past, I have frequently been working in areas - for example, my recent presidency of Science Europe - where I worked as a head of an association of organizations: the interests of those organizations are relatively easy to identify, so you only have... well, for example, Science Europe has 43 members, they're research performing organizations and research funding organizations. Obviously, some of them are small, some of them are large, some of them are from big countries, some of them are from small countries, some of them are performing organizations, some of them are funding organizations, okay, so, you may have a half dozen different positions on a given topic, depending on the interests and the obligations and the remit for those different organizations. It's very very different when you have 2,600 people, who are each individuals, and each with their own specific personal motivation. This means that you need some sort of mediation, and this is the reason why the types of events that we organize, which are open fora, are extremely important, so that everyone can express themselves, finding a way to channel that into a vision of what is happening. It is going to be very challenging, but I'm looking forward to it. I find that very motivating and stimulating to think about how you can get all of these... everyone has got their own vision of what they're doing, and so this is very very special and very different from what I've done in the past.

[Federica]: You of course inherit, embrace the fundamental mission of EuroScience, but is there something personal that you want to bring to the table during the years of your presidency?

[Michael]: What I hope is to be able to develop, as I said, the membership base, develop the actions. I think it's very important also that EuroScience work carefully on the alignment of what we are doing, so that everybody can see clearly what does EuroScience do, what does it not do, what does it mean, what does it not mean. And I think that being the voice of the

science and science professionals in Europe is our role, it's our mission, and we should make sure that everything that we do is clearly oriented towards our mission. And my experience in the past is that, as someone who is the leader of this kind of an organization, you have to make sure that you're very clear. I'm looking forward to working with the new board - we had our first board meeting in July [2018] and I feel a very very good atmosphere of moving forward together. We have a very diverse board with people coming from different horizons, different experience - private sector, public sector, different countries, different types of activities, - but all of us committed and engaged in moving forward our organization so that it becomes more visible, more aligned, and more helpful. And so, my objective over the course of my term of office as president is to bring us forward, and to help us to better serve our missions as EuroScience.

[Federica]: I would like to thank you so much for your time. I encourage our listeners who were not familiar with EuroScience to check it out online, maybe subscribe to the newsletter, some links will be available in the description of this episode. If I may speak for myself: I was born in the early 80s, and most rights have been handed to people like me, in my generation. We never really had to fight for anything comparable to women's vote, divorce or abortion laws. So there is a subtle danger that we always think that either things are good or somebody will take care of them for us. That's why I think that it's very important to get involved, to be aware of what's going on, because rights are never to be taken for granted, if anything they need to be preserved, and there's still a long way to go. So get online and learn about EuroScience and the good it does. I thank you so much again for your time, and I wish you good luck for the years of your presidency.

[Michael]: Thank you very much for inviting me. I'm very happy to have contributed to your podcast.

Thank you for listening to Technoculture! Check out more episodes at technoculture-podcast.com or visit our Facebook page at [technoculturepodcast](https://www.facebook.com/technoculturepodcast), and our Twitter account, hashtag [technoculturepodcast](https://twitter.com/technoculturepodcast).