

WHERE DO WE FIND THE NEW IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS?

In addition to technological innovations, now and increasingly in the future the service, social and combined innovations will have an important role and substantial influence. This will also have a big impact on the research and development work.

The birth of innovations is predominantly based on academic research in universities and development work in companies, now often in cooperation with the academia. In the future, the role of customers, consumers and individuals and their needs will strongly grow. Those who understand this development will be more successful.

Remarkable changes are happening in the world of universities. The strongest universities, with best professors, most qualified researchers and large international contacts will be the winners. These universities will produce the best future innovations, too.

What is the most important field where future innovations will be needed? There is more than one important field. The development must happen in all fields, although some require more, some less. We must innovate actively in the following areas: pharmaceutical, information, telecommunication, engineering and new materials including nanotechnology. Additionally there are many special fields for important research and development work like safety and crime prevention, activities for senior citizens, social sciences, etc. Today's popular topics are to better the environment and climate change. Definitely, these fields will need radical and significant research, development, innovations and activities for centuries to come but will we find enough? The most successful innovations are cost competitive, technologically modern, user friendly, sustainable, and have positive social influences.

The aging population will be a big challenge in many countries, partly due to earlier innovations in health care. Some innovations exist for senior citizens, but this is typically an area where new combinations of services, technology and social innovations will be needed. These markets are waiting for something new already.

New approaches will be needed for the innovation process and development work itself. In addition to new opportunities in universities, the companies and their stakeholders must understand that innovation is a long term investment, which should not be impacted negatively by the quarterly results of the company. Also in the current economic environment, companies must continue to invest in innovation. It is the question of the success of the company in coming years or decades!

There should also be more active collaboration between researchers, micro companies and large corporations, which have better resources and market knowledge to complete future innovations and bring them to the market faster than the competition. This also needs to be actively managed.

A lot of new technical, service and social improvements will come, but the biggest innovations will be needed in new ways of thinking within human minds and political decisions. Then the results from innovations will come to popular use. The markets will show whose innovations have been needed, and the history tells later on, which innovations have helped the mankind.

It would be easy to say that let's create and innovate only what we need. This is partly true. However, in practise the customers or consumers seldom know in advance, what they may want or need. Who could've wanted a television, a mobile phone or an internet before they were invented and available, but now are essential parts of our daily life? Thus we have to trust in new innovations in the future.