

The Future of Research Between Public and Private organizations: A Crossroads for Europe

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FBK, AIRC Foundation, Human Technopole, IIT, and Telethon Together for the Future of Scientific Research

As part of the 20th edition of the Trento Festival of Economics, dedicated to “Fatal Risks and Choices. Europe at a Crossroads,” **Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK)** hosted a high-level roundtable, involving the **most prominent private research foundations in Italy: AIRC Foundation, Human Technopole, the Italian Institute of Technology (IIT), and Telethon.**

The event, moderated by **Luca Orlando, journalist for Il Sole 24 Ore**, offered a unique opportunity for dialogue among leading scientific research institutions, with the aim of sparking debate on the current and future challenges facing the Italian and European research systems, within a global context marked by significant digital, ecological, and geopolitical transformations.

At a critical moment for science and innovation, the five foundations explored the potential of forming **a strategic alliance to address shared challenges**, focusing on key issues such as: the enhancement of human capital, protection of intellectual property, public-private synergies, and the ability to attract and nurture new talent.

“In a context where global challenges demand increasingly solid, interdisciplinary, and high-quality scientific efforts, it is essential to connect the strengths of Italian research,” said **Ferruccio Resta, Fondazione Bruno Kessler President**. *“Not only to strengthen infrastructure but also to promote recruitment processes suited to contemporary complexity. On this basis, at the Trento Festival of Economics, FBK—together with AIRC Foundation, Telethon Foundation, the Italian Institute of Technology, and Human Technopole—sends a clear message: the value of the scientific ecosystem lies in operational best practices, cutting-edge infrastructure, and a focus on people. The*

Talent Development Program is a concrete example of this: through this initiative, FBK recognizes and supports the diverse callings of its researchers, investing in their potential and promoting a research culture based on a plurality of approaches and a shared vision."

Daniele Finocchiaro, AIRC Executive Advisor, stated: *"In sixty years of constant commitment, AIRC has allocated more than 2.5 billion euros to cancer research, significantly improving survival and quality of life for those facing a cancer diagnosis. Today, it is the main private funder of independent cancer research in Italy, operating with a sustainable model based on strategic vision, scientific courage, and structural investments. At the heart of this vision are young researchers: the engine of progress and a guarantee for continuity. The Foundation invests in their talent through scholarships, brain drain reverse programs, and support for independent projects, aiming to train a new generation of scientists capable of tackling the challenges of future medicine. Investing in youth means building the research of tomorrow today. Without a solid and guided generational turnover, research risks losing momentum, impact, and capacity for innovation."*

Giorgio Metta, CEO and Scientific Director of the Italian Institute of Technology, added: *"The model of the Italian Institute of Technology has proven effective in combining basic research with technology transfer, one of the core pillars of our statutory mission. This is demonstrated by the creation of 38 startups by IIT, the presence of over 1,300 active patent titles, and more than 900 signed commercial collaboration agreements—including the establishment of joint laboratories—serving as structural tools that bridge the gap between research and industry. After nearly twenty years of experience, we have the opportunity to align the actions of Italy's leading research foundations to optimize the use of public resources and amplify the economic and social impact of science on our country."*

Gianmario Verona, President of Human Technopole, further commented: *"Today more than ever, scientific research requires an integrated and interdisciplinary approach capable of connecting life sciences with data science, technology with medicine, and knowledge with innovation. At Human Technopole, we have built an ecosystem that values human capital, attracts talent from around the world, and promotes a culture of open innovation. But to face major global challenges, a shared vision is needed: only a strategic alliance between foundations, public institutions, and businesses can generate the critical mass necessary to make Italy and Europe key players in the science of the future. Our commitment is to contribute to this vision by creating a replicable model of sustainable and inclusive innovation."*

Finally, **Francesca Pasinelli, Board Member and former General Director of Telethon Foundation**, concluded: *"Strict evaluation criteria have enabled the Telethon Foundation to fund outstanding research projects over the years, leading to the development of therapies for severe rare genetic diseases. The protection of intellectual property and effective technology transfer have made these treatments accessible to patients while generating value in full respect of the Foundation's non-profit nature."*

At a time when global competition demands rapid and structured responses, the initiative highlighted the need for **increasingly close synergies between public and private sectors** to generate critical mass, efficiency, and effectiveness in addressing major challenges. The participating foundations shared replicable models and best practices, emphasizing how cooperation can act as a multiplier of impact for the entire scientific and industrial ecosystem of the country.

A strong and shared message emerged: scientific research is not just a driver of innovation but a strategic lever for positioning Europe in the new world order. And Italy, thanks to these centers of excellence, can play a leading role.

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