

SIBBM Science and Society Round Table:

“The Human Technopole and the Future of Italian Research”

Held during the 2019 SIBBM Seminar, STILL available in STREAMING at the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aeZgBEGDGw>



On June 11th at the *Opificio Golinelli* in Bologna, took place the Round Table “*The Human Technopole and the Future of Italian Research*” (Special Guest Iain Mattaj, Director of the Human Technopole Foundation, panelists Valeria Poli, President of SIBBM, Gennaro Ciliberto, Direttore Scientifico Istituto Regina Elena, Board of Directors-ACC (Alleanza Contro il Cancro), President FISV (Federazione Italiana Scienze della Vita), Manuela Battaglia, Telethon Chief Scientific Officer and Salvatore Sciacchitano, Ministry of Health. The round Table was broadcasted in streaming, still available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aeZgBEGDGw>.

The opening was by Iain Mattaj, who presented his plans for the Human Technopole and its relationships with the rest of Italian Biomedical Research. In particular, he stated that all services, and in particular the cryo-EM, will be made available to Italian groups external to the Technopole, and that there will be programmes supporting short and long periods of research c/o the Technopole both for junior and senior scientists. He made the point that a healthy research ecosystem needs both big research centers and disseminated Institutes/laboratories at Universities and public research centers, and expressed the hope that the Government would take up this unique opportunity to make the most of the investment in the Human Technopole. The discussion, led by Valeria Poli who, after reconstructing the history of the Human Technopole initiative and of the reactions of the Italian research community, strongly made the point that the training of young scientists, something the Italian system is still very good at, needs healthy research groups at the Universities, IRCCS and Research Centers, while many groups are now slowly dying and closing down for lack of funds.

Gennaro Ciliberto, after praising the system of the IRCCS (Istituti di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico), which warrant translational research quality, pointed out that, while the number of IRCCSs has increased from 35 to 52 in the past years, the financial resources have not been implemented, risking to compromise the stability and efficiency of the system. He also made the point that, though the investment in the Human Technopole is positive, the lack of other public basic research investments puts at severe danger the Italian research system as a whole. Manuela Battaglia praised the Human Technopole initiative with which Telethon looks forward to interact and collaborate, and underlined that a Research Agency like those active in most Western Countries is strongly needed in Italy. Finally Salvatore Sciacchitano highlighted the change of the Italian politics towards research represented by the big investment in the Human Technopole, which he believes will profitably interact with the IRCCSs, and stated that soon the Ministries of Health and of University and Research will devise a common research funding strategy. The discussion with the public was lively and, doubts and worries notwithstanding, ended on a note of wishful optimism that we hope we will be collectively able to convey to our policy makers.

The contents of the round table were recently published in two online articles by “About Pharma”, one of the most authoritative Health Newspapers in Italy (<https://www.aboutpharma.com/blog/2019/06/12/la-promessa-di-mattaj-rilanciare-la-ricerca-italiana-con-lo-human-technopole/>) and by Sanità Informazione (<https://www.sanitainformazione.it/omceo-enti-territori/ricerca-human-technopole-pronto-nel-2024-mattaj-neo-direttore-alleato-con-istituzioni-e-universita-per-permettere-allitalia-di-diventare-un-paese-piu-competitivo-nella-ricerca-bio/>).