

Broad Support Builds for the European Plurinational Degree in Engineering

On the morning of 29 June, the Salle Monory at the French Senate was filled with various stakeholders: a senator, a ministry director general, university presidents, an engineers federation, policy officers of alliances, a semiconductors company CTO, a former Italian prime minister, to name but a few. They gathered to discuss the EUt+ concept of the European Plurinational Degree in Engineering, designed to allow graduates to study, be mobile and get their degree recognised across Europe without months of red tape.

The event, "The European Degree: a driver for excellence, competitiveness & sovereignty ", was hosted by Senator **Vanina PAOLI-GAGIN**, who has made the proposal one of her priorities, with the European University of Technology alliance (EUt+) closely involved throughout the day's discussions. Speaker by speaker, support for the idea grew throughout the morning, and that progression is itself part of the story.

A question of competitiveness, not curriculum

Senator Paoli-Gagin opened by putting her political weight behind the proposal, framing it as a matter of European competitiveness rather than a simple academic question. She laid out what she called a dual talent crisis: a production shortfall, with 2 million STEM positions unfilled across the European Union, and a circulation failure, with only 6% of EU labour mobility relying on the Union's own recognition system.

She was candid that existing instruments (i.e Bologna, joint degrees, the European Universities Initiative) have each moved Europe forward without closing one specific gap: European education is excellent, but a degree earned in one country still isn't automatically understood, trusted or usable when a graduate tries to study or work in another. People can move around more easily, but things are still not completely smooth. That is precisely the gap the European Plurinational Degree in Engineering model is designed to close.

A necessity for the society and the Economy

Timothée Toury, Secretary General of EUt+ emphasised who the degree needs to serve and where additional efforts on inclusivity needs to be done. The real test, in his view, is whether the degree can reach those who wouldn't otherwise choose a European path at all, and in doing so, offer a tangible reason to believe in the European project to people who currently see little in it for them:

"If we build a European degree just for a couple of happy few students, what will the other 99% of students think? We need to bring Europe to those who will not go spontaneously toward Europe."

Returning to the practicalities, he turned the argument into a direct call for others to move now:

"It is no longer a matter of discussing it; it is now a matter of implementing the fully fledged European Degree."

The price of fragmentation



The first roundtable turned the ambition into a business case. **Eva Barteková-Hédoin**, EUT+ policy officer, opened with research on the scale of the shortage. On the supply side, EU is already falling behind: the EU produces roughly 39% fewer ICT graduates per million inhabitants than the United States. On the demand side, the gap is only set to widen: by 2035, once retirements are factored in, some 5 million engineering and research roles are expected to need filling across Europe.

Vincent Casillas, CTO of the French semiconductor company **SiPearl**, gave the hiring manager's version of the same problem. Building processors for Europe's exascale supercomputers, the company has had to open sites across several European countries, in large part because the engineers it needs are simply not able or willing to relocate, forcing the company to bring the jobs to the talent rather than the other way around. The same fragmentation complicates hiring itself: Casillas described spending the first ten minutes of nearly every interview trying to translate an unfamiliar

qualification into something he can compare to a degree he is familiar with.

A European Plurinational Degree in Engineering would address this at the root, rather than patch it after the fact. As mobility and a genuinely European experience would be built into the degree itself, graduates would already be used to studying, working and moving across borders long before they reach the hiring stage, and employers would no longer need to translate or second-guess what a qualification actually represents. Recognition, in other words, would stop being an obstacle. As he put it, what matters most is knowing *"that it means the same and that it's reliable"* wherever it was earned.

Dirk Bochar, Secretary General of **ENGINEERS EUROPE**, offered a structural explanation for why trust doesn't yet fully exist, despite the instruments already built to try to create it, such as the EUR-ING title, joint degrees, and various accreditation labels that certify individual programmes. Useful as far as they go, none of them embeds trust directly in the qualification itself. His conclusion was sharp:

"Ambiguity is the enemy of trust in the same way as variation is the enemy of quality."

Trust, he argued, is empirical: built through shared experience rather than declared through a label. This is exactly why it makes sense to start with European University Alliances: a handful of willing countries can begin building that trust together, instead of waiting for all EU member states to agree and move at the same time. European university alliances like EUt+ have a crucial role to play: as coalitions that already exist and already function, they are natural test-beds for piloting the plurinational model before it scales further across the continent.

A sovereignty dimension

A further idea ran through the day: that a European degree, designed well, is also an opportunity to strengthen Europe's technological independence, not only its talent circulation. **Stéfane Fermigier**, of the EuroStack Industry Initiative Foundation, pointed out that without a deliberate focus on sovereignty, a European degree risks simply training excellent engineers for careers built on non-European technology. Designed well, on the other hand, the same degree becomes a lever: a way to make sure the next generation of engineers is trained on European technologies and platforms from the outset, not as an afterthought. As he summarised it:

"The European degree must be designed as a sovereignty instrument."

Former Italian Prime Minister **Enrico Letta** linked the conference directly to his European competitiveness report, submitted to the European Council and now underpinning the "One Europe, One Market" plan launched in April.

Letta drew a direct comparison with the euro: countries that feared losing their national identity by adopting a common currency now count themselves among its strongest supporters, with 80% of citizens in favour and no appetite to go back. He argued the same logic applies to a European degree, as he said:

"Imagine what it would be like to raise the flag of the European university diploma recognized everywhere in Europe without the need for all this bureaucracy. It would be fundamental for companies too. It would be a very simple way to clarify and simplify."

He emphasised that the European Degree is a way to be more effective together without losing what makes each national system distinctive. His conclusion was direct:

"We have to do it for different reasons. If we do it, we help families, we help students, we help universities. If we have a European university diploma, it is to help the strength of the different national tracks. [...] It is time to unite. It is not a way to lose our identity."

Building on what already exists

Timothée Toury laid out the mechanism EUt+ has been building with all stakeholders. The starting point: Europe does not need to invent a new curriculum, only to extend what already exists. Rather than being issued by one single member state, the degree would be co-issued by a coalition of willing member states, so recognised automatically in each of them. Essentially, it works the same way as the Schengen Area or the Euro: a country can issue a visa or currency on behalf of several others because they have agreed on a common framework.

Rather than being awarded by a single HEI under a single national authority, the European Plurinational Degree would be awarded by this single institution with authorisation of several Member States to confer the qualification with legal effect under each of their national frameworks. Consequently, the degree would bear the names of all participating Member States, ensuring automatic recognition in each of them.

He explained that some member states already have, or are actively developing, the legal basis needed to make this possible, and interest is spreading well beyond the countries leading the effort.

Proof that it can already work



The second panel, moderated by **Emīlija Sarma**, EUt+ policy officer, shifted the discussion from political ambition to the practical pathways for implementation.

Thierry Coulhon, president of **Institut Polytechnique de Paris** and of the **EuroTech Universities Alliance**, spoke to why a pragmatic, incremental approach is the right one for this moment. He pointed to growing engagement from European university alliances as evidence the idea is already taking hold from the ground up: for members of alliances such as his own, cross-border cooperation is no longer an optional extra but, in his words, "*vital*" to their institutions' futures.

Similarly, **Frederique Pain**, director of **ENSCI - Les Ateliers** Paris, drew on a longer-running example of close cross-border collaboration in higher education and highlighted that long-term collaboration between institutions work is based on the trust built across and a deliberate choice to keep all administrative complexity invisible to students.

As the Director General of **ESSEC Business School**, **Vincenzo Vinzi**, offered a note of realism from business education: mechanisms matter, but institutional culture needs to evolve with them for real change to take hold. He also pointed to a longer-term priority, making sure Europe not only trains talented engineers, but also gives them good reasons to build their careers within Europe.

Government backs the ambition

Following the panels, Olivier Ginez, Director General at the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, welcomed the initiative on behalf of the French government in clear terms and placed the conference within a longer institutional history at the Senate, and pointed to accreditation convergence and mutual evaluation between national systems as the practical basis on which trust between countries will be built.

Closing: sovereignty, trust, speed, and a story

Taken together, the morning made one thing clear: talent, trust, sovereignty and scale, discussed all morning as separate topics, all pointed toward the same solution. That convergence reflects how EUt+ has approached the European Degree from the start: as a genuinely European framework, built together with the political, industrial and academic actors who will carry it forward. For EUt+, that is the real outcome of the day, evidence that the proposal is ready to move from a well-argued case to a shared European undertaking.

Summarising the discussion, Senator Paoli-Gagin noted that the day had surfaced four consistent threads: sovereignty as a model and a target, trust as a prerequisite, speed as a vital energy, and a story about Europe still waiting to be told. She called for a coalition of the willing to move now, warning there was no time to lose:

"For Europe, this is genuinely a question of staying alive."

She closed the conference with the line that summed up the room's mood better than any other:

"Yes, we can, and let's just do it."

EUt+ would like to thank Senator Vanina Paoli-Gagin and the French Senate for hosting this discussion, and every speaker and participant who took part and helped shape it. This is the cross-sector momentum EUt+ has been working to build, and we look forward to continuing to drive this work forward, together with our partners across Europe.