On 7 – 9 June, a record number of 550 participants from 56 countries gathered at the ESMT Berlin for the EFMD Annual Conference. This year we explored “Trends, Technology & Transition”. During the intense two days, we talked about how both corporations and business schools address and adapt to the shifts in society and global economy, such as rising automation, post-truth politics, climate change, the need for more inclusive growth, corporate engagement and impact on society.

During the series of plenary lectures, the delegates deliberated over the role of management education and development in the VUCA world. Paolo Boccardelli, Dean of LUISS Business School & the conference co-chair, outlined ten global trends which will impact management education in the future: globalisation, immigration, income inequality and diversity, climate change, digital disruption as opposed to digital learning, the future of jobs and work, uncertainty in predictions, responsible leadership, and finally, creativity, innovation & entrepreneurship.

In their inspiring discussion, two corporate representatives from Allianz SE, a well-established financial services corporation & Rocket Internet, a start-up studio and venture builder, explained how both companies approach transformation and attract new talent. Raffaella Gabinio from Allianz stressed that despite galloping automation, people are the company's biggest asset. Creativity, social intelligence, adaptive & computational thinking, cross-cultural & virtual collaboration as well as transdisciplinarity are critical capabilities for future workforce. “We move from process roles to more creative and data-driven roles,” she said. Dörte Hirschberg from Rocket Internet seeks flexibility, entrepreneurial and analytical mind-set in recent business graduates. “Hire people for attitude and retrain them for higher purpose,” Gabinio added.

Jeremy Leggett, Founding Director of Solarcentury, gave an engaging speech about visions of civilisation in a time of new despotism and drew some conclusions about the role of clean energy in economic growth and societal prosperity.

“Prices of fossil fuels go up and renewables go sharply down, so fossil fuels make no economic sense,” he declared. At the time when the US government declares its withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, major companies, academia, cities and states have stood up for the
innovative potential of low-carbon economy and pledged to meet the greenhouse gas emissions targets.

“Data is the new oil,” proclaimed Regina Murray, Senior Director EMEA at the Microsoft Education and the last plenary speaker. In the era of fourth industrial revolution powered by the cloud, the way we learn and work will undergo a radical transformation: top down hierarchies will be replaced by networks & relationships; instead of competing for market share, we will be creating new markets; functional-based work in silos will be replaced by project-based teamwork; a future employee instead of spending 30 years in one career will have 10 + careers experience by the age of 40. This will require new teaching and learning models, and some prominent alternative providers are already filling the void.

We also discussed digitalisation in corporate learning, gamification and personalisation in teaching methods, quality assurance and rankings, students’ demographics and impact in management education.

Pencil the next dates in your calendar. On 6-8 June 2018, we meet at Copenhagen Business School.

The conference was sponsored by EFMD’s strategic partner Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC).

A throw back at the live reactions from the conference are available on our Twitter moments feed.