



## COSMOS HUMBOLDT MULTIVERSITY CONFERENCE

# Tenerife - Island of Knowledge

By Sabine Virgin

Cosmos Humboldt Multiversity, established in Tenerife for the last six years, sees itself as a think tank for finding new solutions for current problems.

Following the example of Alexander von Humboldt and his brother Wilhelm, the project follows the principles of multidisciplinary exchange: a successful concept that is regarded as trend-setting for the 21st century.

This is evidenced by the varied programme which has been arranged in recent years by the organisation's founder Prof. Günter Koch. So far it has consisted of more than 30 events with participants from around 20 different countries and was implemented mainly in cooperation with the University of La Laguna (ULL). In the case of its latest conference, with the theme 'Island of Knowledge', the ULL was again involved, this time in cooperation with the Astrophysical Institute of the



The organisers and guest speakers of the conference

Canary Islands (IAC) which hosted the event.

### Why Tenerife?

In his opening presentation, Prof. Günter Koch summarised the advantages of transforming Tenerife into an 'island of knowledge'. In addition to tourism, Tenerife already has an extensive network of promising investments and sectors of varied disciplines. These include

the Astrophysical Institute of the Canary Islands, the Centre for Biomedical Research and the Institute of Tropical Medicine, the D-Alix Supercomputer, the Centre for Renewable Energies (ITER), the Science Museum in La Laguna and the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) in Santa Cruz. This enumeration alone shows how much potential already exists on the island in order to think outside the box in a multidisciplinary way.

In addition, there are the two technology parks that are in the process of being set up, with the aim of attracting new companies.

From a geographical point of view, Tenerife's good connections with 160 direct flights via two airports, the internationally operating port and the strategic location between three continents make Tenerife ideal. Incentives for companies include tax breaks and Euro-

pean jurisdiction, as well as a good quality of life for employees, all factors that can be used to find multi-layered solutions to current problems.

The Astrophysical Institute of the Canary Islands is a good example of a high-quality knowledge centre. It's a breeding ground for learning, via the flow of scientists and trainees from all over the world and through close contacts with political and public bodies both in the Canary Islands and elsewhere, and also through the transfer of scientific knowledge into technology suitable for everyday use, so that the general public also benefits from the research institute.

It would be a good thing if politics too were to adopt this concept of 'cross-thinking'. Following the example of Sweden for instance, the only country in the world that currently has a Ministry for the Future at its disposal, where the threads for new future concepts converge. Prof. Koch believes that: "On

Tenerife too, such a control centre could be an important point of connection within the government".

### Current economic situation

Rodrigo Trujillo González, lecturer in applied mathematics and expert in research and internationalisation at ULL, presented some facts to identify present weaknesses. For example, the Canary Islands' gross domestic product (GDP) has risen by about 3.5 per cent since 2014, and further growth of about 2.5 per cent is forecast for 2018. This is a positive trend, but it doesn't impress the population. The Canary Islands are structurally comparable to the Balearic Islands, where GDP growth was 3.8 per cent. However, these are the only comparable values. While unemployment in the Balearic Islands is generally 16.7 per cent, in the Canary Islands it still accounts for almost 22 per cent. Even more serious is the comparison of youth unemploy-

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