

**Welcome address for the participants in the
Optical Technologies Dialogue Forum on
13 May 2009**

Mr. Strohmeier,
Mr. Oehler,
Professor Tränkle,

I am delighted to be able to welcome all of you to the Berlin-Brandenburg Optical Technologies Dialogue Forum.

The dialogue forum has given the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg a format for showcasing our region's strengths in Brussels and for discussing the problems involved in cooperation.

The optics industry has a long history in Berlin and Brandenburg. Almost 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the two federal states have agreed on a joint strategy to promote innovation. By cooperating across state borders, we aim to achieve greater economic growth in the optics industry and in four other clusters. The many industry leaders who have come to Brussels for this dialogue forum show us how highly they rate cooperation on the European level. The participants are very interested in presenting the region as a partner in implementing the 7th Research Framework Program. Their goal is to give the Commission's representatives an idea of what they can do and of the wide range of areas covered by the optics cluster and the network.

They hope that discussions with members of the Commission's Directorates-General will lead to new insights benefiting the optics industry in its further development.

One important issue is finding ways to get small and medium-sized companies more involved in EU programs.

We have an interesting program and a lot of hard work ahead of us. I am looking forward to in-depth, productive conversations, and I view today's dialogue forum as the start of a discussion process that we will be able to maintain over the long term.

I would like to thank the Commission for its willingness to be part of this dialogue and the Berlin-Brandenburg Optical Technologies Network for organizing the event. In this spirit, I would like to wish you a very productive day.