

Speech
for the reception for
the Optical Technologies Dialogue Forum
on 13 May 2009

Ms. Erler,
Distinguished guests from the Commission,
Dr. Löwe,
Dr. Wenig,
Representatives of the Berlin-Brandenburg optics cluster,

2009 is the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. That makes this the right time for scientists and entrepreneurs from the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg to be meeting with Commission representatives to showcase the regional capacity and potential of our optics cluster and to present our region as a partner in meeting the goals of EU programs.

I am confident that the presentation and discussions were able to show that Berlin and Brandenburg are working hard at putting the position expressed by the Commission in its communication from November 2008, "Towards World-Class Clusters in the European Union," into practice. In that communication, the Commission stated that "sustainable growth and job creation in the EU increasingly depend on excellence and innovation as the main drivers of European competitiveness."

Berlin and Brandenburg are banking on a strategy of reinforcing shared strengths we already have, the core of which are five joint clusters:

- Biotechnology, medicine, pharmaceuticals
- Media/Information and communications technology
- Transportation engineering
- Optics, and
- Energy technology

Future-centered strategies were drafted for all five clusters, and key projects were developed as a cooperative effort between science and industry.

A second Berlin-Brandenburg “innovation summit” will take place on September 9, 2009, and the results of the joint key projects will be presented at this event.

Because our region puts a high percentage of its gross domestic product into research and development, it has an unusually high capacity for innovation.

Berlin managed to achieve the main goal of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs already in 1995. And in 2005, more than €3 billion was spent on research and development, 3.84% of our gross domestic product.

Economic opportunity in the future lies in the expertise-intensive sectors I just mentioned. To give you one example, we were able to increase the number of people working in the technology fields of biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, medical technology, transportation engineering, optics and microsystems technology, and information and communications technologies in our capital city region by 15% between 2003 and 2007. That makes a clear statement about the region’s good prospects, despite the fundamental structural change we are still dealing with.

Cooperation between science and industry is at the heart of many European and international projects. The goal is to achieve excellence by building broad-based networks.

By founding the technology platform Photonics21 in 2005, the EU Commission created an advisory body that provides vital impetus for the development of the European Research Area in the field of cutting-edge optics. The platform has seen rapid and impressive growth in the number of members, which shows how interested research institutions and companies are in working on the big themes of European development. Companies and research institutions from the Berlin-Brandenburg region were involved in establishing this platform and have kept up their work on it in various working groups. Let me express my sincere thanks to our region’s representatives for this commitment. Some of these dedicated people are also here for the dialogue forum.

We are also seeing very valuable cooperation on the Interreg IVB project “Baltic Sea Innovation Network Centers” (BaSIC), which has 18 international partners from the political, economic, and scientific sectors. Berlin is the lead partner for this project.