

Thinking ahead: higher education in Antwerp

8 juni 2010

Ladies and gentlemen,

下午好 **Xiawu hao** (Goedemiddag)

欢迎大家到世博会比利时馆 **Huanying dajia dao**

(Welkom in het Belgische Paviljoen)

Hereby I welcome you to Antwerp week at the Belgian Pavilion on the World Expo.

As governor of the province of Antwerp I am very happy and proud that every week in this Pavilion is kind of Antwerp week. Even the architect of this Pavilion is from Antwerp. The contribution of Antwerp spearheads is remarkable. Lots of the crown jewels are shown here permanently. Diamonds, fashion, creative economy, smart logistics, sustainable development,...

That is no coincidence. The province of Antwerp is a highly prosperous industrialized region in the north of Belgium, one of the founding members of the European Union.

The capital of Belgium, Brussels, is home to the headquarters of the European Union and a host of other international organizations and corporations.

The province of Antwerp is widely acknowledged as a powerhouse of the national economy. The province is strategically located in Flanders, Belgium's Dutch-speaking region but well known for its highly-educated multilingual population. Antwerp is responsible for 19% of the added value in Belgium and for 33% in Flanders. When looking at export our province is accountable for 28% in Belgium and 47% in Flanders.

Economically, Antwerp has long been recognized as one of the world's premier cities for diamonds and fashion, and host of the second biggest petrochemical cluster in the world.

This combined with the general high quality of life makes our province the ideal place for world class high education and scientific research.

And we take education and research serious. From our schools and universities we expect that they participate in social debate. Scientists and researchers should not shy away from the problems that we face in this modern age. When working closely with government they can lead us towards permanent and prosperous long-term solutions. Not only government but also the private sector can benefit from close cooperation. I don't need to tell you that the challenges are enormous. The greying of our population, global markets, climate change, using new technologies in marketing, living in diversity,...

Ladies and gentlemen,

It should not be surprising that the governor of Antwerp is proud of what her province has to offer. But because you are researchers and representatives of universities I can imagine that you need to see it for yourself or at least study it.

The alumni present can help you with this research. When entering Belgium they were ambassadors for their country and university. Now we consider them as ambassadors for also our universities, for the province of Antwerp and Belgium as a whole. We cherish them in a network of mutual interest.

This seminar 'Thinking ahead: higher education in Antwerp' is a good start.

Without further ado, I wish you a productive seminar.