

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Amsterdam is doing well. Throughout the city startups are thriving and every year more international corporations open offices in our city.

Also, on April 8th of this year the European Commission awarded Amsterdam with the iCapital-award. This award declared Amsterdam the European Capital of Innovation for the next two years. For us, the award is an acknowledgment for the fact that Amsterdam is well regarded worldwide for being a creative, innovative, and international business hotspot that serves as a gateway to Europe. But Amsterdam, and its greater metropolitan area, has another, somewhat lesser known strength: it is also one of the top knowledge cities in Europe. Surely Amsterdam is home to a thriving ecosystem of innovation that creates jobs, attracts talent and feeds entrepreneurship. But what makes this city unique is that our innovation ecosystem is powered by a close collaboration between the city, our world-leading universities, a great variety of scientific and corporate research institutes and the many local science-based entrepreneurs and innovators.

The innovation process in Amsterdam is guided by a set of principles, including openness, pragmatism, agility and the embracement of diversity, that all stakeholders share – from researchers and scientists to businesses and the City of Amsterdam. Every day they work in line with these principles in order to deal with the modern-day urban challenges we are facing.

This makes Amsterdam the perfect place to test new knowledge and scientific inventions and to bring these new ideas to the market. Think of mobile parking apps, smart energy systems in homes or brand new material to make streets absorb rainwater better. Our region is increasingly able to translate science-based solutions into practice, and to do so quickly, thanks to the outstanding infrastructure that the city provides to its startups and academic spin-offs.

Some cool examples: Scyfer, a startup that originated from the Ace Venture Lab incubator, specialized in deep machine learning. They now work together with Tata Steel to detect errors in a much more efficient way. So the steel plant can create a better product with less waste. And Kevin and Neil, who take the stage right after me, are the founders of Supreme Dutch. They were the runner up finalist of this award in 2014. During their studies at the University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam (HvA) they invented the indestructible bicycle tire. They selected the right partners and today they are close to introducing this new concept to the market.

One more: Photanol – creating fuel out of bacteria and sunlight. How cool is that? AkzoNobel en Shell already teamed up with this new company.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure for me to be here on this prelude to the 11th edition of the Amsterdam Science & Innovation Award. Quite a special prelude even, because it is the first time in 11 years that a dedicated Science & Business matchmaking event is being organized in order to connect the best and brightest science based innovators to the business sector.

I sincerely hope that this will be the start of a long lasting tradition. Not only does it strengthen our position of a science based economy, but it is a necessary ingredient to further the goal of Amsterdam to be in the top five of economically best performing metropolitan regions in Europe.

As I see it, the Amsterdam Science & Innovation Award is strongly embedded in the science communities across the city, from the Amsterdam Science Park in the east where we are now, to the VU Campus in the south, the AMC in the south east and various faculties of the universities of applied science scattered in the area. Combined, this concentration of knowledge clusters include over 100.000 students and 10.000 academic staff, teachers and researchers.

Amsterdam is proud to have such a strong knowledge infrastructure. We will continue to support its development. Just recently seven Amsterdam-based knowledge institutions worked together to draft a new and additional technology transfer proposal called IXAnext, which explicitly aims to encourage the growth of science based start-ups and university-business collaboration. We look forward for this program to starting soon.

It seems clear that we need science, both to tackle the challenges of today and in order to stay an attractive and competitive city tomorrow.

The Amsterdam Science & Innovation Award is a perfect platform to illustrate just how science can do so. Since its start 11 years ago it has generated over 500 science based innovations.

And ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you will hear new ones later this afternoon, so I invite you all to stay for the award ceremony that will follow this matchmaking event. I trust the finalists of 2016 will inspire you and I hope that many more great ideas will follow.

Thank you.