

International Conference ESAFORM 2012

Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 19:30

"Schloss" of the University, Schlossplatz 4, Aula

Words of welcome

Salutation

Dear ...,

dear guests of our city,

Ladies and gentlemen, we are happy to welcome you as guests.

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Ladies and gentlemen, some of you may have found out a little about Erlangen before arriving in our city: you may have done so, for example, using the "Erlangen App" that you can download onto your iPhone. Perhaps you listened to music on your iPod or another mobile player on your way here. In any case, you will already have been in touch with a piece of Erlangen because the MP3 data compression standard was invented in Erlangen. Researchers of the Fraunhofer Institute for integrated circuits devised this technology.

Ladies and gentlemen, unfortunately we cannot offer you a magnificent cathedral or wonderful half-timbered houses. On the other hand, Erlangen is considered a prime example of a planned city of the baroque era, although it is true to say that its best features are only apparent at second glance. I will not go into detail about our many attractions. Rather, I would advise you to take a little tour yourself. In Erlangen everything is easily reached on foot.

Ladies and gentlemen, here in Erlangen, you are in a city with a rich history but also with an interesting present and a promising future. The present-day appearance of today's city, now 1010 years old, has been marked by three events.

One formative date for Erlangen was 1686. That was when many refugees, especially Huguenots from France, found a new home here. Marquis Christian Ernst of Brandenburg-Bayreuth had an ideal baroque city built for them next to the existing mediaeval Erlangen. Even today you can recognize the grid-like layout of the streets, the square blocks of

houses with courtyards, the reformed church, the early 18th-century château still dominate the inner city and are considered architectural gems by experts.

The second date that is important for the city is the foundation of the Friedrich-Alexander University in 1743. Looking back today, we see this as the start of a development that led to the modern high-tech location Erlangen.

And finally, establishment of the Siemens-Schuckert-Werke after the Second World War was a stroke of luck for the city: it was the start of a development that led to the modern business location.

Nevertheless, the "small" city kept its special charm – which is certainly partly due its Huguenot and baroque cityscape, but also to the beautiful surrounding countryside here at the heart of Central Franconia with the nearby idyllic "Franconian Switzerland" as an ideal recreational area.

That people like living here is also due to the excellent working conditions. Thanks to a number of state and private research institutions, the city, early on, developed a reputation as a centre of microelectronics and laser technology that is among the best in Europe. In this context, I would like to mention the two Fraunhofer Institutes and the Max-Planck Institute for the Science of Light.

But a further field plays a decisive role in Erlangen today. When I first came to office in 1996, I announced that I wanted to develop Erlangen into a sort of "national capital of medicine" because of the unique competence in medicine and medical technology that is clustered here. This vision is both founded on the fact that every fourth job is now in medicine and healthcare and that medicine has a long tradition in Erlangen, including the first ether anaesthesia or construction of the first X-ray machines or artificial insemination, which are just some examples of innovative inventions and excellent clinical performance in the city. 24 university hospitals, the hospitals Waldkrankenhaus St. Marien and Klinikum am Europakanal provide top-level medical care. The second largest university in Bavaria with its medical faculty, which has an excellent reputation nationally and internationally, and the over 100 companies located in Erlangen with the focus fields medical engineering, pharmacy and medical software have already earned the city the nickname "Medical Valley".

After so many hard facts, let me briefly explain the soft factors in favour of the location. Erlangen is not only a nice place to work but also to live. The Markgrafentheater built in

1715 is one of the oldest baroque theatres in Southern Germany, and is home both to the classical theatre, the international puppet theatre and the international student theatre. The small but fine old city is mainly characterized by a very lively student pub scene with a large number of bars and restaurants.

And finally, large-scale events have a special charm, above all the almost 250-year-old beer festival or Bergkirchweih. Around 1 million people, many from abroad, flood onto Erlangen's beer festival grounds at Whitsun to enjoy 12 days under shady trees drinking beer brewed specially for the occasion.

But other large cultural events have put down roots in Erlangen, too, and earning the city the name festival city: chief among these are the International Comic Salon and the Pötenfest, one of Germany's most renowned literature festivals.

Of the city's 106,000 inhabitants, 14,000 are of non-German origin. They come from a total of 136 nations and engage in a peaceful dialogue in the city. We are very proud of that. We are aware of the importance of this cultural enrichment and appreciate the impetus that outsiders bring into the city, which is expressed in our motto "Open by Tradition".

Ladies and gentlemen, this city is typified by its strong inventive spirit. Clever and resourceful minds have come up with everything from pencil sharpeners to ether anaesthesia, from astronaut foods to the stent, which is inserted into coronary arteries, to the MP3 standard I mentioned earlier. A few years ago, a scientific study found Erlangen to be the city with the greatest creative potential.

And on that note, we turn full circle to our technical faculty, which stands for innovative power. The technical faculty of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg is doubtlessly one of Germany's top technical universities – which is confirmed both by the various league tables and by the many prestigious prizes recently awarded to researchers from Erlangen.

Technical progress, such as is being made here in the technical faculty, offers a multitude of opportunities for modern jobs with a future. A significant role is played by the intensive and fast transfer of science and technology. The close cooperation between science and business provides the basis for ambitious research and successful product innovations. In international competition between regions, the technical faculty provides the conurbation of Erlangen-Nuremberg-Fürth with optimum conditions for innovations, which benefit the economy, the labour market and thus everyone who lives here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I have succeeded in giving you at least a small impression of our city and was able to show just how multi-faceted our city is. Once a quaint Huguenot town, the city has developed into an important and successful high-tech and university location.

Ladies and gentlemen, on this note, I welcome you once again to this very fitting location for this conference. I wish you all a successful meeting. May this conference make a valuable contribution to a rich exchange of experience about future developments in metal forming and may your stay in our city be a memorable one.

Thank you.

Dr. Siegfried Balleis