

- *Es gilt das gesprochene Wort* -

Dear Mr. and Ms. Clevers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all: on behalf of the Trustees Committee, I would like to thank the Körber Foundation for this beautiful Welcome Dinner in honour of our awardee, Mr. Clevers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These days, Europe is at the centre of our thoughts and concerns. If we were to tell the success story of *European Science*, however, there are thousands of biographies that could serve as a starting point: for example, Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Conrad Röntgen, to name just a few. But we could also choose a name much less known to the public, the name of Henry Oldenburg. He wasn't from Oldenburg, or from Hamburg (unfortunately!), but actually from Bremen. Henry Oldenburg died on September 5, 1677; basically just yesterday - plus another 339 years back in time. No big scientific theory carries his name, but he still made a considerable contribution to science in the Newtonian era. How did he do so?

The answer is: He was a diplomat of science. He was a good natural philosopher, but an even better networker. He founded the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, the first peer-review journal in the world. All big thoughts from all over Europe would land on his desk.

The life of Henry Oldenburg illustrates two facts: firstly, how much of a joint *European endeavour* science has always been. And secondly: how much the success of this European endeavour depends on the passion of those who act behind the scenes, those supporting science and scientific exchange.

The *European Science Prize* of the Körber Foundation is part of the puzzle here. It speaks to the scientific community in Europe as a whole.

And it acknowledges the fact that we can and must contribute to the progress of this shared European endeavour – no matter if we are scientists ourselves or if we are just supporting scientists.

Ladies and Gentlemen, science of and in Europe is as great as ever. European science may no longer dominate the scientific world as it did in former centuries. But it is lively, strong, internationally highly visible, and truly competitive. And: it is based on strong interaction and exchange - driven by joint European institutions like CERN or ESO or EMBL and propelled by joint European programs like the ERC or Marie Curie exchange programs of the EU.

Our children can study at universities throughout the world, and a new generation is coming up who feels very much European. Within a period of time that historians would consider rather short, Europe has proven to be a real success story. It is also obvious that the European Community promotes good living and progress – not only in science. And so it was difficult for me and many of my colleagues in the UK to understand that the majority of the population does not feel the same way, but regards the European Community as a barrier for good living and progress.

The Brexit could have dramatic consequences, also for science. Europe's success rests on many pillars: one of the most important, in particular for science, is the mobility of people who can freely choose where to study or work. This now is under threat. If things go wrong, the UK *and* continental Europe will be weakened in their research performance.

World-class universities attract the best minds, but Great Britain has also largely profited from European funding and mobility. Most ERC Grants to a single country have so far gone to scientists working at British universities. Now there is a feeling of uncertainty. And Switzerland, too, is increasingly turning its back to Europe.

Due to its planned immigration quotas, it is now only allowed a partial association with Horizon 2020. If there is no agreement at the beginning of next year, Switzerland could receive the status of a non-member country.

Europe will have to define new structures in order to avoid any exclusion of Great Britain or Switzerland. Especially, as we face a new time in mankind's history as the digital era is gaining more and more momentum.

We have to focus all our efforts to ensure that Europe's performance is kept at the high level it shows today. Otherwise, we won't ever be able to catch up with Asia and the United States in the digital race.

Science must raise its voice against tendencies to reverse progress in Europe. The Max Planck Society will continue strengthening its ties with Europe. We run Max Planck Centers together with UCL, EPF Lausanne and ETH Zurich, for example.

We are establishing a new Center together with the University of Cambridge. And we plan to expand our cooperation with other top institutions throughout Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, interconnectedness is an essential condition for great science in Europe. Henry Oldenburg knew this, Kurt Körber knew this, and Hans Clevers knows this as well. When Hans Clevers won the *Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences* in 2013, he decided to invite all his lab members, past and present ones, to a huge party in Amsterdam to say thank you.

I think the party was attended by more than 100 people, and they were probably coming from all over the world, with a large fraction coming from Europe! This is a fact that Kurt Körber surely would have loved about Hans Clevers. Besides the fact, of course, that Hans Clevers is a brilliant mind, as already pointed out by Rüdiger Wehner.

His ground-breaking achievements convinced all of us in the Trustee Committee. But Hans Clevers is not only a great scientist, he is also a great European scientist, and therefore I am really happy that he will be honoured tomorrow with what I would call the most prestigious Science Award of Europe: the Körber-Prize.

I don't know whether you have already plans in this direction, Mr. Clevers, but I think the *Körber-Prize* sets the stage for the next big lab party! I'm sure that such a party would demonstrate once more how important mobility in Europe is and that we

should not sacrifice this achievement on the altar of populists throughout Europe who falsely claim that our future lies in isolation and nationalism!

Mr. Clevers, tonight we want to celebrate your accomplishments and thank you for your great science and contributions to science. Please accept our warmest congratulations!