



Laudation of the President of the Max Planck Society

Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

In honor of Stephanie Wehner, winner of the Körber European Science Prize 2025

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– Check against delivery –

Ladies and gentlemen,

Unfair tariffs are a big issue today, but they were an issue already over 600 years ago. In 1389, the city of Delft started the construction of the *Delfshavense Schie*, a canal that connected Delft with its harbor. This allowed the Dutch city to bypass the tolls of neighboring Rotterdam. But an even more important issue was security, and the best way to achieve it was to have your own access to the sea.

Today, Rotterdam has absorbed Delft's harbor and, as you know, established itself as Europe's leading port. Yet, the key issue remains to be security. That is why, in 2022, Rotterdam started a big new project. They established completely secure communication, linking four different organizations of the port.

What was inaugurated three years ago in the Port of Rotterdam, is nothing less than a quantum network! This network is a milestone – not only for the port but for the entire world of communication! Because it proves that quantum communication is possible and can work in the real world. What is especially exciting is that this quantum network is based on some of the building blocks of the world itself, on atoms and photons. This is a great example of how fundamental research can lead to groundbreaking applications.

Dear Stephanie Wehner,

Your work is crucial for these exciting developments. Out of your work emerges nothing less than the quantum internet of the future—made in Europe! Your team developed the world's first operating system for quantum computer networks. To me, this is like a harbor pilot guiding maritime traffic, but in the quantum world, incredible!



Dear guests,

Did you know that Stephanie was an “ethical hacker” when she studied computer science at Amsterdam? She deliberately tested computers for how secure they really are. After earning her PhD in quantum cryptography, she conducted research in California and was teaching in Singapore. Since 2014, our prize winner has been a professor at the University of Delft.

By the way, coming back to Delft: The Delft canal offered secure access to the sea and thus to a global trade network. Such international networks have driven society for centuries. And in the future, we require secure networks for communication and data exchange. This is one other reason why Stephanie Wehner so much deserves to receive the Körber Prize! Many congratulations, and all the best for the future!