



Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the President of ECRN – the European Chemical Regions Network - I welcome you to our annual Congress. This year the event takes place in Usti nad Labem, hosted by our member region Usti. Some of us already know the region. Usti also hosted the High Level Group Follow-up Conference “Delivering the High Level Group results in the regions” in 2009. This event was held two months after the European Commission’s High Level Group had finished its work and presented its final report and recommendations. The topic in focus has been the Competitiveness of the Chemical Industry in Europe.

Competitiveness and innovation are still topics of highest importance. The chemical industry is one of the largest industries in the world. And competitiveness and innovation are essential for this industry. There is an important link between science and industry in that branch. Scientific findings are essential to ensure innovations for the industry. The chemical industry is an enabling industry. Its innovations are also vital in the downstream value chain. Cooperation and working together across the value chain, across sectors, and across scientific fields and industries are success factors for the chemical industry.

In my region, Saxony-Anhalt, we have acknowledged the importance of cooperation. We have brought together the areas of science and industry and merged these policy areas in the portfolio of one Ministry. This way we can ensure that we reach the necessary synergies in the policy-making. As a politician and Minister of this Ministry, I can assure that chemistry is also a part of a society. Chemistry touches almost all aspects of life and the environment. Therefore, chemical actors and stakeholders need to be engaged in a continuous dialogue with the society. The solutions for the challenges and questions of future can only be achieved through cooperation of science, economic, and social sectors. It’s the only way to create a triple benefit! The ECRN Congress is a place to share, to cooperate and to find solutions in order to remain competitive today and tomorrow.

Being competitive in future depends also on another vital aspect – skills. We need to ensure high-quality education in natural sciences and a sound technical and scientific training. Only with clever minds we can master the future! We need to address this topic together - over regional and national borders! For ECRN, this is an issue that deserves and requires attention and specific activities in the next years.

I wish you all very fruitful discussions.
Yours sincerely

Hartmut Möllring

ECRN President