



Speech by Kristel Baele, President of the Executive Board
New Year's Reception 2018 (8 January 2018)

'Erasmus University: A Vibrant Academic Community'

Dear all,

On behalf of the Executive Board I would like to welcome you to this New Year's Reception. I would like to start by wishing you and your loved ones good health and happiness in the new year. It's great that you've joined me and my colleagues here, for our first event in 2018. I hope you have enjoyed the holidays and that you are well rested and ready for an exciting, brand-new year!

Ladies and gentlemen, in this short speech, I'd like to talk about achieving things together, as 'One Vibrant Academic Community'.

But first I would like to take a look in the rear-view mirror. Instead of *talking* to you about what we have achieved in the past year, we have decided to show it to you. Let us look at the video that was made featuring the highlights of 2017. [highlights film]

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you all for your efforts in making our university the great institution for Higher Education that it is today. I feel lucky to be surrounded by so many talented, dedicated and hard-working colleagues.

Very often the spotlights are on the President or the Rector. But it is YOU, educator, researcher, facilitator, who *makes things happen* for our students on a daily basis. The future academics will one day make a difference in the world. Today *you* make a difference, for them and for us. I sincerely thank you for your relentless dedication & engagement in doing so.

On the day we launched that website, we gave everybody a chocolate bar. But not all bars were the same. Inspired by Willy Wonka, we slipped a Golden Ticket into one of them. The prize: a brand new iPhone X. Here today to pick up his prize: Max Peeters!
Max, please join me onstage

Dear all, there's one common denominator in the highlights you've just seen in the video. They all reflect our willingness to work together, in big teams, in small teams. They reflect our stamina and creativity and our dedication.

I'd like to share a recent example of a brilliant, interfaculty and interdisciplinary cooperation in a situation that I, and I am sure you as well, have observed very closely.

On the afternoon of Thursday 19 October, we had to close Polak Building effective immediately. The building's structure was under scrutiny and we did not want to take any risks. It was a dramatic decision, with far-reaching consequences. A potential disaster, you might say.



But in a matter of hours, the problem solving, hands on mentality of our community members proved to be very effective. I had the opportunity to watch all these colleagues doing their utmost to service many students and fellow staff members.

Classes were rescheduled in no time – not one of them had to be cancelled! -, a significant number of new study places were created and plans were set in motion to move the facilities that were located on the ground floor. Students, employees and media were informed immediately. An amazing achievement, all done in one evening!

I'm sure we'll see many more examples of this sense of community, of close cooperation, in the year ahead. It's in our shared values to serve and support our students, our staff members and each other.

The coming year we will celebrate the 105th anniversary of our university, and many other events, that will be communicated in due time. Let's take the time to celebrate them together. There will be challenges along the way, expected and unexpected, as there will be every year. But I am confident that we will accept these challenges and face them, as One Vibrant Academic Community

Together, we will continue to bring Erasmus University forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to conclude with a well-known saying: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. And I propose a toast to our continuing cooperation in making 2018 a very successful year!

Happy New Year!