

Publication

MICHÈLE DETAILLES' KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG'S PHD GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON MAY 12TH

Dear representatives of the University of Luxembourg, dear graduates, dear guests,

It is with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation of the rectorate to address the celebration of this year's PHD graduates.

I appreciate the honor that this invitation from the university represents for myself and for our industry federation, FEDIL, which I have the honor to chair.

I would like to thank the rectorate for giving me the opportunity to make the voice of Luxembourg industry heard by a select audience.

Dear graduates, allow me first of all to join Vice-Rector KREISEL in congratulating you and to express my admiration for the exemplary academic path you have taken.

Beyond your initial intellectual dispositions, I can imagine how much effort it took, how many moments of doubt you overcame, how much leisure time you sacrificed to finally obtain this magnificent degree. I congratulate you for your courage and for your tenacity put at the service of your intelligence.

The PHD is the final step of an academic training and the beginning of a professional career that you will approach with a very solid intellectual background.

As Vice-Rector KREISEL said in his introduction, the University of Luxembourg has become a true research university.

What a success for a young university! I would like to congratulate the rectorate, the professors and the university community for this great success. A success that honors the country and puts it on the international map of the academic world. The fact that 90% of the doctoral students come from abroad



confirms the international dimension of the university.

As a representative of the Luxembourg business community, I am delighted with this international dimension, which reflects the country's economy and particularly its industry, which is open to the world and a major exporter.

The reception of a large number of highly qualified people in our country contributes to a fruitful symbiosis between the business and academic worlds.

The fact that 60% of PhDs are related to science and engineering should be a good gateway to industry. In a recent survey conducted by FEDIL, it appears that highly qualified profiles continue to be highly sought after by our companies, even after more than a year of pandemic.

I'm sure many of you are wondering about your professional future: « Will the pandemic have an impact on my entry into professional life? » Yes, our economies have been shaken. Yes, some supply chains have been and are being disrupted. Yes, there are big question marks over the future management of the public debt, incurred to fight the pandemic.

But I encourage you to look at the positive aspects of the current situation. The world will continue to be driven primarily by technological progress. The transformation of society will raise organizational, managerial and social issues that will have to be addressed. Your generation will be at the helm! Your excellent education and newly acquired skills will make you a key player in the challenges ahead.

Digitalization and the energy transition are two of the most important challenges. These are also two of the topics that FEDIL has identified in its priorities.

Digitization will completely change the way we work: the organization of work has already evolved during the pandemic. Digitization has made it possible to continue certain tasks remotely.

But this is only one aspect: in industry, even in SMEs, the organization and performance of workshops is improved every day by automation, robotization, 3D printing, predictive maintenance or remote maintenance. Relationships with customers and suppliers are changing. Blockchain secures the traceability of purchases, artificial intelligence transforms commercial prospecting, etc.

As far as the energy transition is concerned, if we look at the means that the European Union, national governments and companies are mobilizing today and in the years to come to move our economies forward in the areas of decarbonization and renewable energies, we can conclude that there is a huge potential for young graduates.

The energy transition has an indisputable potential for economic development.

Like digitalization, it could become a vector of growth and undoubtedly a vector of more qualitative growth.

At the moment, companies can see quite clearly what is wrong with the energy transition, but they are far from reassured about what will be right in the future.

Industry has already made great efforts to reduce its environmental footprint, but the process is far from over.



The pace of decarbonization is increasing: national plans and the European Union's green deal are forcing companies to face up to upheaval in a growing number of market segments.

At the same time, companies are facing challenges in their own production processes.

This development is beginning to look like disruption.

Let's take the automotive sector as an example. The first major players have started to leave a technology while there is still uncertainty and hesitation about the various alternative technologies and their chances of success.

Think of the developers and producers of technologies and products that are destined to disappear in the next two decades because they are incompatible with the goal of carbon neutrality.

You will tell me that these product life cycles have always existed.

Yes, but with two major differences:

We are now experiencing a rapid technological transformation, driven or encouraged by politics. Until now, old products were phased out when replacement products were ready and performing.

There are still so many question marks about the future.

Research and development has a big role to play in meeting these challenges.

Luxembourg has the necessary tools to support the transformation of existing companies and the creation of new activities.

The University, Luxinnovation, or LIST are effective facilitators of the modernization of the economic fabric.

Based on our conviction that the country has an efficient public research center, we have jointly made a proposal to the government with the University.

We propose the creation of a technology park around the Belval site. This initiative aims to bring the uni and the research centers closer to industry. It aims to increase their impact on our economic fabric.

We are thinking of a technology park such as those found at well-known research universities abroad.

A park where companies and institutes collaborate. A park that should, in our opinion, become exemplary in terms of shared facilities, common infrastructure and the application of circular economy principles.

We hope that this idea will catch on and we are ready to accompany its realization.

Alongside digital transformation and energy transition, FEDIL has identified a third priority: talent. We need to attract and retain them. We need to show young people that they can thrive in the industry.

We need to explain to those who are passionate about protecting the environment that industry is not the problem but part of the solution.

We need to tell young people that they will do more to change the world by



being a PhD, engineer, technician or computer scientist than by walking the streets waving flags.

We need to show them that it is our companies that produce and develop the goods and services that will shape their future and the way they live tomorrow.

We need to tell them that cleaner cars, more energy-efficient airplanes, wind turbines, scooters, e-scooters, battery components and accessories, efficient wastewater treatment plants, reusable packaging, robots that make operators' lives easier, software that makes work time more efficient, smart insulating glass, low-energy buildings – all of these are conceived, designed and produced by our industry.

We need to attract young talent. We also need to retain them.

Our companies must adapt to new ways of working, not only by adopting new technologies but also by listening to the wishes of the younger generation and by continuously training our teams.

Technological breakthroughs are transforming our companies, changing the way we produce and disrupting our organization.

We must allow and encourage the adaptation and evolution of workers, whether within a company undergoing transformation or by facilitating the transition from one company to another or from one sector of activity to another.

As business leaders, we know that we must listen to our employees. We need to meet their needs and encourage them to develop their skills if we are to succeed in this war for talent.

Tomorrow, when you're in a leadership role or a position of responsibility in the industry, you'll know that not all companies have the same problems or the same needs, but not all employees have the same needs either. Wishes vary according to age or family situation.

Because, dear graduates, professional life in a company is also punctuated by professional relationships. The ability to mobilize teams, the ability to share your enthusiasm, the sense of fairness, the respect for diversity, ... are qualities and attitudes that you will develop and that, added to your high scientific skills, will allow you to blossom during your career that I wish you long, beautiful and fulfilling.