

President, Vice President,  
Herr Hinterdobler,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to receive the 2014 ECEC Medal of Honour today.

It is an especial pleasure that this honour is being granted me on the eve of the second European Engineers' Day. I am one of those who deeply believe that there is a single body of engineering knowledge, and that our achievements and problems are shared, no matter which European Union country we live in. For those of us who make up the European Council of Engineering Chambers, the sharing of ideas is therefore not only an opportunity, but an obligation.

The observation that the world around us is speeding up is especially true in the science and practice of engineering; in the language of engineering, the rate of change is exponential. The question is: are we as engineers shaping our changing world, or are the circumstances determining our actions being shaped by politicians?

That question is a difficult one to answer. What is certain, however, is that we must strive for dialogue. This is not easy, of course, because as engineers we have been trained for work which is different from that of politicians. But we must show understanding towards them... In other words, we need to "better prepare for the challenges." Just as in the engineering sciences, we must play a leading role in shaping the conditions that determine our work.

Since the years that gave rise to the economic crisis, politicians have been dealing far more with the world of money. They are doing this in the interest of the European Union's citizens, in order to protect their money, their investments, their mortgages and loans.

While leading the field in innovative solutions, we engineers are responsible for infrastructure serving the community and individual tangible assets. Let us acknowledge and seek acknowledgment of the fact that our activities affect the daily lives of EU citizens, community and individual assets and people's living conditions in a way similar to that of, for example, the financial sector or the food industry.

There are encouraging signs, such as the new European directive on public procurement, which enables Member States to eliminate unfair, competition-killing pricing practices in tendering procedures for engineering services. Downward price spirals distort market competition, kill innovation and create opportunities for double dealing. The time has come to put that behind us. In Hungary we are conducting effective dialogue on this issue with national legislators.

Our chambers must be trustees of quality. Intelligent professional regulation is the most important means of safeguarding quality. We must make it clear to our engineer members that we are not striving for restrictions, but for the validation of quality. This is another example from the new public procurement directive, which makes it possible to evaluate personal competences in public procurement. Who could verify this more credibly than the chamber of engineers?

But the second pillar in the promotion of the quality of work is continuing professional development. In Hungary we have introduced mandatory annual involvement in a programme of continuing professional development. In partnership with industry, it is this measure which has enabled us to prevent such programmes simply becoming vehicles – Trojan horses – for mere product promotion. The initial results are encouraging.

We European chambers of engineers must strive to enable our engineers to move freely in the EU's single market, and to ensure that individual membership systems and national distinctions do not hinder this. At the same time, we must insist that joint European regulation accepts the distinctness of national regulations, and that it takes account of the value of local knowledge.

Dear Colleagues,

We have enough matters to deal with. When I had the honour to accept this award I thought of new challenges. I wish the European Council of Engineering Chambers every success for the future!