Speech New Year’s Reception, 8 January 2019
Kristel Baele, President of the Executive Board

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Executive Board I welcome you to our New Year’s reception. This is always a good opportunity to reconnect and catch up on everyone’s stories.

I hope you all have had a great time with family and loved ones and that everyone is well rested and ready for the new year. It is good to see you all again. The Christmas holiday is always a good time to look back and contemplate the year that lies behind us, recharge ones batteries and make plans. I myself, certainly did this.

There have been a lot of highlights last year, which we could not have achieved without you. Therefore I would like to thank you all for your hard work, motivation and inspiration and for your commitment to our university.

Now, let us look at some of these highlights.

It has been a dynamic and memorable year because we have celebrated a number of anniversaries:
- Our university’s 105th anniversary with its theme Science Meets City
- ISS celebrated its 66th Dies Natalis and positioned itself as Erasmus by the Sea
- ESSB marked its 55th birthday
- We celebrated 20 years China Centre and
- 60 years IHS

Each of these anniversaries has been celebrated in style, one of the highlights being the event in the Nhow Hotel in September: Science Hotel and Science Open on our own campus the following day. During these events, the connection between the university and the city and its inhabitants was marked in a very special and innovative way. A number of scientists presented their research findings to a crowd of interested
citizens in a series of workshops. We hope to hold such events again in the future.

2018 also has seen special moments in the careers for some of our staff members, of which we are very proud:

- During the opening of the academic year the EUR prizes were presented. Daphne van de Bongardt received the EUR Research Prize, Maarten Frens was awarded the Education Prize. The Professor Lamberts Prize went to Maikel Samsom and Sadaf Solouky, Eva Janssens received the Professor Bruins Prize and the Rotterdam Thesis Award befell Evan van der Holst.
- There were 4 new fellowships at Erasmus MC and 10 at Erasmus University.
- The NWO Stevin Prize for Professor Marion Koopmans. Her achievement reduces the time it takes to diagnose people with contagious diseases from 3 days to only six hours.
- This year’s Vici Grant, a grant of 1.5 million euros funded by NWO’s Talent Scheme, was awarded to Dr Gijs van Soest of Erasmus MC, who will use this grant to study biochemical traces in order to learn how cerebral and cardiac infarcts can be prevented.
- 8 of our researchers received a Vidi Grant, a funding within the NWO’s Innovative Research Incentives Scheme.
- The Veni Grant, a grant for researchers who have recently received their PhD, has been awarded to no less than 6 researchers of Erasmus University.

- Renske Keizer joined the Young Academy and Pearl Dykstra was appointed member of the board of the International Science Council.
- And two of our staff members have been appointed and reappointed as members of the Education Council of the Netherlands, Ilias El Hadioui and Pieter Huisman. This important council advises the government on policy and legislation regarding education.

We also had a significant number of staff changes in strategic positions:

- In June Rutger Engels took over the office of Rector Magnificus from Huibert Pols.
• In November Roelien Ritsema van Eck joined us as the new member of the Executive Board. This was quite a historical moment in light of diversity, as it is the first time that the Board consists of two female members... and a very emancipated man! Roelien will be presenting the Top Support Awards later on.

• There have also been significant changes in the Board of Deans: Victor Bekkers at ESSB, Hans Severens at ESHPM, Dymph van den Boom as interim-dean at ESHCC and Hub Zwart at ESPhl.
• And finally three new directors: Brigitte Widdershoven as director of Academic Affairs, Lieke Skidmore as HR-director and Monique Thomas as interim-director for the University Support Centre.

We are very happy that all of them have chosen to come and work with us.

And of course there have been special moments in 2018 on our campus:
• After months of hard work, Polak Building was reopened. Students quickly found their way to the study spaces again.
• We made a start on renovating Tinbergen Building, which meant that Erasmus School of Economics had to move to their temporary location in the E and N Building.
• We celebrated the openings of the Sanders Law Library, the Diversity & Inclusion Office and of course the Food Lab and the Education Lab, with which we can truly show our innovative streak. Be sure to pay all of them a visit if you haven’t already done so. Later this month the Mayor and the Aldermen will pay a visit to the Foodlab.
• And just before the Christmas break, Erasmus MC received the Rotterdam Architecture Prize 2018 for their recently opened new wing.

Also the new strategy for 2024 is taking shape as a result of true co-creation. After the launch of the 7 priorities, the Strategic Design Labs have worked very hard on generating ideas that will lead to the Strategic Plan, which will be presented in September at the opening of the new academic year.
Although I think this is quite an impressive list of achievements, I’d like to add a few more: the Erasmus Trustfund has so far acquired a handsome 30 million euros and students, staff and alumni raised no less than 29,000 euros for scholarships during the Erasmus Charity Run.

And let us not forget the Dies Natalis, the Eureka Week with a record number of new students attending, the flag parade around the Hofvijver to commemorate ISS as Erasmus by the Sea, the Rotterdam Lecture by Derk Loorbach and the unveiling of the new artwork on the northside of our campus, Die Stein des Weisen.

However, success does not come without some setbacks, and we did have a few of those in 2018.

- Tendering the renovation of Tinbergen Building has not been successful yet. We’re working hard on finding a company that’s willing to do the construction work on this landmark building.
- Student numbers are increasing, which on itself is good, but we do have to take a lot of measures in order to assure that students have enough study spaces and sufficient facilities.
- Many of us are confronted with work pressure. Some during peaks in the workflow, others unfortunately experience it on a daily basis. In 2017 a plan was made in close cooperation with the University Council and EUROPA. 2018 saw the start of the implementation. Further progress will be closely monitored by the steering group presided by the rector. Rest assured that this topic will continue to feature prominently on the agenda.

But enough retrospect for now. Let us look ahead and see what the new year has in store for us.

- There will be more changes within the Board of Deans: on 1 February Frank van der Duijn Schouten will start as interim dean for Erasmus School of Economics. Recruitment for the permanent position will start mid 2019. The term of Steef van de Velde, the dean of RSM will end in September of this year. Recruitment for his succession is already in progress.
• 2019 is also Tinbergen year. We will celebrate that 50 years ago Jan Tinbergen received the Nobel Prize for Economics. There will be various events to mark this special occasion, one of them being the Tinbergen Lecture on the 13th of June.
• There will also be some more events marking our 105th anniversary. This year Erasmus University’s gift to the city will be a series of lectures for children at schools in February. A great way to share our knowledge and get children acquainted with science.
• We will start the construction of a new Sports Building and improve on the study spaces for our students.
• And finally, we will, as I said earlier, launch the new strategy in September.

All in all we are doing well. We can be proud of what we have achieved so far and we have every reason to look forward to what lies ahead.

And now I would like to invite our new member of the Board to the podium. She will be presenting this year’s Top Support Awards. Roelien, the floor is yours.