

Welkomstwoord University Diner op 3 april 2019 in Feestzaal Gouvernement aan de Maas

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this Maastricht University dinner. This dinner is being held for the 13th time, but I promise you there's no significance in that number.

On the contrary, we will be focusing this evening on the future. A rosy future for people, animals and the planet.

I am welcoming you as chair of the Limburg University Fund (in Dutch also known as SWOL). But last week in my other role – as governor of Limburg – I welcomed a very different group of people. In the equally round chamber upstairs: the chamber of the Limburg parliament.

That group consisted of forty-seven newly chosen members of this parliament. New members of parliament – of which thirty were really new – whom I immediately introduced to the best recipe for success:

the Rhineland governance model. The model in which the Province does not act alone, but in collaboration with partners. Partners including clever minds and smart entrepreneurs. With whom we also built the four Brightlands campuses, which are intended to help Limburg to take the lead in innovations.

Ladies and gentlemen, you could call this dinner a typical Rhineland dinner – organised by the clever minds, with the smart entrepreneurs at the table, (in this *Feestzaal*) in this house of the Province of Limburg.

A typical Rhineland dinner in which we traditionally give the floor to someone who can testify to the strength of the breeding ground, that we are creating together here in Limburg. A powerful breeding ground for a rosier future.

This evening, our speaker will be our world-famous Professor of Vascular Physiology Mark Post.

World-famous for astonishing the world in two thousand and thirteen with the first laboratory-grown hamburger. In just about every country, he made the television news with his cultured meat burger.

This first cultured hamburger I believe that cost about two hundred thousand euros... That's what you call a real Big Mac, but slightly too expensive for a menu with chips and a milkshake.

Mark Post will introduce you tonight to the future of this ground-breaking innovation.

A novel food that can provide an answer to the world food problem, and to an excessive environmental impact, and to animal suffering. And that's when you are really talking about a rosier future.

If you hoped (or feared) that we would also serve cultured meat tonight, then I have to disappoint (or relieve) you. It's not allowed yet. However, as we have also now discovered the Rhineland lobby – going together to The Hague – it looks as if we will receive the green light. So who knows, maybe next year?

Ladies and gentlemen, last year we said farewell to the director of the University Fund – Jos Kievits who retired – but this year we are welcoming for the first time the new director: Bouwien Janssen. You heard and saw her already.

With her arrival, the fund will continue to attract resources for scientific research and education. After all, science remains a vital building block for a better future for the next generations. That will also be clear from Mark Post's speech.

But under the leadership of Bouwien Janssen, the fund wants to be even more of a link between the University and its surroundings. With particular emphasis on supporting researchers who are looking for answers to issues, relevant to society or the business community.

As an entrepreneur, you may consider the University Fund to be the gateway to the University. It gives you access to the right network and allows you to profit from all the benefits that the University has to offer. Or to put it even better: the University Fund can be your ultimate broker in the Rhineland model.

Which brings me to a second fixed element of this University dinner: the presentation of an award.

An award to a PhD candidate at Maastricht University, who has had a special focus on valorisation, or scientific knowledge that can be marketed.

And in line with tradition, it is the President of Maastricht University – Martin Paul – who will be presenting this prize this evening.

And that brings me to the third and final tradition – next to a speaker and the award presentation: the opportunity to express my thanks.

My thanks as chair of the University Fund to everyone who has contributed to this evening. And to everyone who has facilitated the strong growth of the Limburg University Fund in the past years.

Starting 53 years ago as I did as a young Maastricht schoolboy, or joining last year as some of you did, staying hopefully the next 53 years.

You can be sure that the University – and this region – benefits enormously. Which is why I would like to repeat what I said in previous years: please continue to support us. It is more than worth it. And it is also for your own benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a very enjoyable evening together. In the great Rhineland tradition.

A Rhineland where we are used to start with a toast.