



Speech by Karien van Gennip, minister for foreign trade to PICNIC '06: Cross Media Week, Amsterdam, August 24, 2006

Introduction

- Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure for me to speak to you here briefly, a month before the PICNIC Cross Media Week begins.
- Because PICNIC is aimed at an international audience, I will speak English. That way everyone here will be able to understand.

The importance of networks and creativity

- Ladies and gentlemen, the world is getting smaller and smaller. And our economic ties with the rest of the world are getting steadily closer. ICT, the Internet and our increased mobility have pushed globalization into a new, higher gear.
- In this context effective national and international networks become more and more important to economic success.
- At the same time the importance of creativity for the competitiveness of companies is increasing.
- Therefore this Cabinet has worked hard on establishing stronger links between the creative and other sectors as well as between companies in the Netherlands and international networks.

PICNIC Cross Media Week

- World markets for media, entertainment, telecom and technology are fusing into one market.
- The Netherlands has been a pioneer of globalization for a long time. Thanks to our internationally-oriented, open economy, our commercial spirit and our language skills, we are fully integrated into global economic development.
- So I am convinced that we will manage to reap the benefits of the latest stage of globalization, driven by digital technology.



- New national and international networks are crucial for the cross media industry. Forming these networks is what Cross Media Week is all about.
- That's why I was positive about the initiative from the start and agreed to support this new networking event, together with the City of Amsterdam, on the condition that the business community matched our contribution.
- Thanks to the organizers and your enthusiastic, active participation as corporate partners and network partners, business community support has been a big success.
- PICNIC '06 is an excellent opportunity to pick up new ideas and contacts, so that you can both innovate and promote your national and international business activities. After all, the Internet makes the world your market.
- This way PICNIC can help reinforce the Netherlands' image as an international "Gateway to Creativity".

The importance of creative industries for the Netherlands

- The creative industries in the Netherlands are growing fast. More than 230,000 people are already working in the field, with total sales of over 8 billion euros a year. And from 1996 to 2004, it grew by no less than 25%.
- Our country holds an internationally prominent position in fields like design, architecture, dance. Just think of Droog Design, Rem Koolhaas and Tiësto.
- Creativity has great added value for both manufacturing and the service industry.
- And countries and cities with a lot to offer in the performing arts and a rich cultural heritage attract a more creative, highly educated workforce.
- This growing importance of the creative industries is widely recognized by the Innovation Platform and this Cabinet.



Importance of cross media for the Netherlands

- Cross media companies are part of the creative industries.
- By mixing images, sound and text, as we see more and more on the Internet, cross media provides an outstanding example of a field where technology, innovation and creativity come together.
- The Cross media industry in Amsterdam is growing by 5.6% a year – twice as fast as in the rest of the country.

The Netherlands' investment climate

- The Netherlands offers an attractive investment climate for companies in general, but especially for cross media companies.
- We have world-class ICT infrastructure – just look at:
 - the Amsterdam Internet Exchange;
 - superfast connections like Surfnets, the fastest in the world;
 - the world's second-highest broadband density, second only to South Korea;
- Content is also a strong point:
 - The Netherlands has dynamic international publishers, TV program makers and companies that play leading roles in digital technology and online services like Endemol, Ilse Media, e-Buddy, Marktplaats and Guerilla Games.
- Amsterdam is one of Europe's major cultural centers, including for multimedia development. The tolerant character of the city attracts creative minds from all over the world and international trends catch on fast here.
- I saw how widely the Netherlands role is internationally recognized on one of my recent trade missions to South Korea. Dutch creativity is highly prized, and Dutch people are in great demand as advisers.
- In addition, our highly educated, affluent population and above-average spending on ICT make us an important test market for multinational companies.



Government

- The government wants to reinforce the position of the Dutch economy by making choices, betting on excellence and investing in our strengths.
- The creative industries in the northern Randstad are one of those strong assets. So my regional economic policy for - Flevoland, Utrecht and North Holland - pays special attention to this sector.
- These policies focus on establishing stronger links between creativity and economy and between companies and international networks.
- PICNIC is a excellent example of an event that builds en reinforces these links.

Conclusion

- Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for me to sum up. As I said, the Netherlands is a leader in the new digital economy.
- To preserve and deepen our leading role, we need an optimal investment climate and strong new networks linking Dutch and foreign companies.
- The Netherlands is a creative hotspot. We were a creative hotspot in Rembrandt's time, 400 years ago, and we still are today.
- This is an exceptional asset, which gives the country a certain distinction.
- I wish you and our foreign guests, who will also be here next month, an inspiring PICNIC and many new contacts and insights, perhaps leading to promising innovations.
- Thank you.