

## Speech 1st Cobbenhagen Summit

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It is my pleasure to close this important meeting with a few closing remarks.

Just like professor Glaeser I am a real fan of cities. I am intrigued and fascinated by the mysteries and possibilities of so many people living together in such small areas. In Edward Glaeser's words: 'the strength that comes from human collaboration is the central truth behind civilization's success and the primary reason why cities exist.'

Being a father of three young children living in the city, I am especially aware of the many challenges the new generations face in urban environments.

Today, we have enjoyed great contributions today at our first Cobbenhagen Summit. I am so very proud to have all of you here.

Professor Cobbenhagen is the founding father of our university. He was inspired by catholic social-economic ideas, based on the Papal Encyclicals 'Rerum Novarum' of 1891 and 'Quadragesimo Anno', published in 1931. Our university motto, Understanding Society, is inspired by his work and that of many other colleagues over time. Understanding Society will continue to be the university's mission, as it very well emphasizes current challenges and needs of society and the focus of research and teaching of our university.

The university has many ambitions, and in order to achieve those ambitions we need to make clear choices driven by the highest standards for academic quality. To succeed, we need regional and international cooperation. Especially in Brabant there are unique opportunities to innovate by combining technological and social innovation.

It is clear that our Brabant region is in many ways already very successful. We have seen lots of proof and examples of that today. Of course we should enjoy our successes, but we should stay alert and not lose momentum. I have noticed that many of you feel the need to boost the region's power once more. Many initiatives are put in motion. I truly believe that in the near future this region can make much more of a difference in Europe and throughout the world. Being highly entrepreneurial, this is a task that many of us take seriously. I take the opportunity to bring forward the need for a much more focused and comprehensive strategy for the region on education and innovation. As we know, investments in all sectors of education are the best way to improve the economy.

Many of us being responsible for research, education and innovation feel the need for much more investments. There is a road ahead of us. Investments are needed, not only from local, central and provincial government, but also through private donations (the wealthy people including our very successful alumni) and the institutions themselves. In Brabant, the two research universities will look more intensively in increasing our cooperation in research and

education, preferably in conjunction with the universities of applied sciences and of course also in close cooperation with business and government, based on an inspiring agenda. A combination of the power of the south-east of Brabant, with Brainport, and the south-west, with the Delta Region, offers many more possibilities for developing strong proposals for European funding in Brussels as well.

Discussing the development of the Bangalore and Silicon Vally regions, Edward emphasized on the importance of education. 'Much like Bangalore, he writes, 'the Valley achieved this status by making its luck with education.' 'Facebook started on college campus, and its founders knew what kind of information undergraduates wanted to share.' Although there are reasons for concern about the future of Silicon Valley - being a single industry - Glaeser is optimistic about its future because, amongst other reasons, 'it has superb educational institutions and continues to invest in its schools and universities.' 'The single best way to create a smart city is to create schools that attract and train able people.' Glaeser is not the only one to point out the importance of education for economic growth.

Recently, US secretary of education, Arne Duncan, gave a remarkable speech on the importance of education. Duncan, and I quote, said: 'Ask the hard questions, even when it means shaking things up and challenging the status quo. And -- regardless of politics or ideology -- in the voting booth, cast your ballot in local, state, and national elections for those who will invest in education – in quality preschool, in college opportunities that families can afford, in schools that offer more to your kids. Every politician says they are pro-education – but how many get beyond the platitudes and easy sound bites, and actually walk the walk?

Now, before I get really taken away in my plea for an even stronger investment agenda for education and innovation, I would like to thank you all for being here and for making this first Cobbenhagen Summit a memorable event.

Finally, it is my honour and pleasure to announce that together with our partners we have decided that we will organize a second Cobbenhagen Summit here at Tilburg University. There and then, together, I hope we will be able to present the elements of a joined agenda for education and innovation for this beautiful region. The region deserves a truly ambitious and inspiring agenda and concrete actions alike. To benefit the wellbeing of all we really have to work more closely together. Today is an important and inspiring first step on the road ahead.

Thank you very much for your attention and once again, for joining us.