**Dr.-Ing. Willi Fuchs, Director VDI (The Association of German Engineers)**

**Address for the event**

**„More Engineers For Europe"**

**28th April 2009, 18:00, Stanhope Hotel, Brussels**

Mr. Bytoft,
Mr. Wauters,
dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you also on behalf of VDI, the Association of German Engineers.
I am very pleased that you came today to discuss about why we need more engineers in Europe and how we can satisfy this need.

I would especially like to thank FEANI President Lars Bytoft, Secretary General, Jan Wauters, and the FEANI staff for their excellent support and cooperation in organizing this joint event.

Please allow me to briefly introduce my organisation before I offer some thoughts on today's topic for further discussion.

The VDI represents 139,000 personal members. This makes us one of the largest technical and scientific associations in Europe.
At our headquarter in Düsseldorf we have some 120 staff members who manage about 60 working groups composed of engineering experts from our membership. These working groups are committed

to fostering the expert dialog and the dissemination of know-how on technical issues.
As a financially independent, politically unaffiliated and non-profit organisation, the VDI is recognised as the voice of engineers in Germany both within the profession and in public.
I am proud to say that we are also a member of the FEANI.

Let me now turn to the subject of our discussion today: “More Engineers for Europe”.
An important context in which we are discussing this topic is the EU’s preparation of an economic renewal strategy to replace the Lisbon Agenda.

The “Europe 2020 strategy” aims at turning Europe into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy.
VDI fully endorses this overall objective.
I genuinely believe that Europe needs these ambitious objectives as well as a comprehensive strategy that inspires and guides the policy decisions in the next decade.

Engineers will play a crucial role in putting the Europe 2020 strategy into real life practice:

Engineers are key drivers of technological innovation and its application in the market place. The innovation generated by engineers is indispensible for achieving higher economic growth as well as for creating new jobs, securing clean energy supply, sustaining natural resources and tackling the challenges that are associated with global warming.

Ensuring the availability of a sufficient number of well-qualified engineers across all countries must therefore be a policy priority for the EU as well as its individual member states.

In my country, Germany, we have been experiencing a shortage of engineers since several years which has harmed the economy and threatens to become a major obstacle for German competitiveness in the future.
The shortage, defined as number of job vacancies for engineers exceeding the number of unemployed engineers, peaked in 2008 at 64,000.

It subsequently became smaller during the economic downturn. However, despite the 5 percent drop in GDP last year and still sluggish growth,

there are some 30,000 job vacancies more than there are unemployed engineers who could possibly fill the positions if they all had the needed qualifications.
Because of the persistent shortage of engineers, business opportunities have been missed and economic growth has been dampened.

The Cologne Institute for Economic Research (IW) reckons that the shortage of engineers has led to a loss of the added value of 3.2 billion euro in 2009 in Germany.

With the economic recovery both the need for engineers as well as the resulting loss of production is bound to increase substantially in the future.
The situation will be further aggravated by the demographics. In the future there will be too few young engineers to replace those who retire.

Germany urgently needs a reversal of these trends. Otherwise it is hard to see how we can maintain our strong engineering and production capacity which has laid the foundation for the economic and social development in Germany over the past decades.

Also because of VDI's efforts to bring the issue to the attention of policy makers, the German government is increasingly becoming aware of the strategic importance to ensure the availability of a sufficient number of well-qualified engineers.

A key challenge in improving the situation is addressing the issue of the somewhat boring image engineering has among kids, teenagers and students. For example, a recent VDI survey shows that only one out of ten pupils in Germany would like to become an engineer. For some reason, being an engineer is apparently nothing that the youngsters would in any way label as "cool" or "hip", especially not girls and young woman.

We must change this! Not only in Germany but also in other European countries which are facing similar challenges.

Already in 2002, the European Commission published a study with the title "The crisis in the production of human resources for science and technology". This insightful report provided recommendations for the member states to counteract this development.

However, eight years later the need to address the lack of well-qualified engineers in Europe seems to be at least as pressing as it was then.
The new study “European Engineering Report”, which will be presented today by Dr. Erdmann from the Cologne Institute for Economic Research, will help us to better understand the labour market situation and qualification of engineers in Europe.

I am sure that this study together with the contributions from our other distinguished speakers will offer good ground for today’s exchange of views on how to provide more well-qualified engineers; engineers who are very important for the future of our economy as well as the success of the emerging Europe 2020 strategy.

Thanks again for joining us today. I look forward to a lively, interesting and fruitful discussion.