

Speech of Mayor Fritz Schramma for the inauguration ceremony of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on 13 November 2004, 15.00 Uhr, in the agency's new building, Ottoplatz 1 (RZVK building)

Vice-President Barrot,
Vice-President Verheugen,
Minister Stolpe,
Minister President Steinbrück,
Mr. Goudou,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Nearly seven months ago, we gathered together in Cologne's historic city hall to sign the administrative agreement and lease contract for this beautiful building.

At that time, I said it was a good day for the City of Cologne.

And that good day has led to many others.

Headquartering this important European agency underpins our city's international status.

It boosts Cologne's position as a business location and benefits the local property market.

The establishment of the European Aviation Safety Agency therefore not only marks a new era for the aircraft industry, but also the start of a new era for the City of Cologne.

Today is, again, a good day for Cologne – and for EASA too.

In the Köln Triangle you have found a domicile, which, in the best sense of the word, is outstanding.

The transport connections, location and design of this high-rise building in Deutz are excellent. I am sure you will feel very much at home here.

And this applies not only to your working environment, but also to the way of life in Cologne. You will soon notice how likeable people here are and how pleasant a place it is to live in.

This is also due to the open-minded and tolerant nature of the inhabitants of Cologne.

Strictly speaking, we have been international since the Romans founded Cologne. The ancient veterans' colony not only gave Cologne its name, it also represented the cross-section of people living Roman Empire.

I'm sure that all the staff of EASA will quickly feel very much at home in Cologne.

The first-rate transport links are a great advantage. Cologne lies right at the heart of Europe – for centuries it has been an intersection on major trade and pilgrimage routes.

We hold a top position within Europe thanks to our good transport infrastructure.

Our airport is on track for expansion and, thanks to the new rail link, is only 10 to 15 minutes away from Deutz. Cologne/Bonn airport is the new German hub for low-cost airlines. From here, they can reach scores of European destinations, at economic rates and in the shortest possible time.

Düsseldorf airport, which is roughly 30 minutes from here, further expands the travel options.

The new ICE high-velocity trains have cut travel times between Deutz and Frankfurt airport to less than one hour.

Other important transport infrastructure projects, like the much-needed enlargement of the expressway ring road around Cologne, and the improvement of railway connections, are also in progress.

In all of these measures and more, the federal government remains a partner that we in Cologne can rely upon for support.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The smooth functioning of cooperation across all levels of the task force is but one example of the healthy climate in our cathedral city.

One important task for the City of Cologne was to provide adequate educational facilities for the children of EASA staff. This has been achieved – and we have cooperated well in many other areas.

I therefore wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in the cooperation. First and foremost, EASA itself, then the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Housing and the North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry for Transport, Energy and Regional Planning.

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We will continue to provide all necessary support to EASA, because Cologne is proud to have you here.

Please accept my best wishes for your every success here in Cologne.

Thank you for your attention.