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SPIE praises Photonics21 efforts, as EC Digital Agenda VP accepts new Vision document

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From left, Martin Goetzeler, CEO Osram and Photonics21 President, Commissioner Neelie Kroes, and Klaas Vetger, CTO Philips Lighting and Photonics21 Executive Board member, during Kroes' acceptance of the Photonics21 Vision document.

BRUSSELS, Belgium -- Emphasizing the importance of an innovation-friendly market as well as support for research, European Commission Vice President responsible for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes accepted the Photonics21 Vision document from Photonics21 President Martin Goetzeler during the association's general assembly in Brussels on 24 February.

"I am convinced that research and innovation must be at the heart of new growth in Europe," Kroes said in her speech to the gathering. "I believe that photonics is a major opportunity for Europe."

The annual meeting of [Photonics21](#), a voluntary association founded in 2005, is sponsored by [SPIE Europe](#) and other scientific societies as well as industry.

SPIE CEO Eugene Arthurs complimented the work done by Photonics21 and the EC's Photonics Unit in having photonics named as one of only five key enabling technologies for Europe.

"The recognition of photonics both as a substantial market itself and as an enabling technology that is key to advanced manufacturing and substantial consumer markets brings focus and coherence to European efforts both to continue a legacy of research leadership but now also to turn that into economic benefit," Arthurs said. "The enabling aspect leverages the economic impact of photonics by a multiple of at least 20 of the actual photonics content. Photonics21 is putting Europe in a strong position to benefit from the 'century of the photon.' "

Arthurs is a member of the Photonics21 Board of Stakeholders. SPIE President Katarina Svanberg, a professor at Lund University Hospital, and other SPIE members of Photonics21 attended the meeting this week.

According to the Photonics 21 report, the current global photonics market is estimated at €300 billion, and the leveraged impact of photonics in other enabled industries is substantially greater in terms of turnover and employment levels. Of this global market, Europe has an overall share of 20%, rising to as much as 45% in specific key photonic sectors. The photonics companies themselves currently employ about 290,000 people in Europe, and subcontractors employ many more.

In her speech, Kroes cited past efforts including flat-panel displays, where Europe was a research leader but lost out on production to Asia, she stressed the importance of "bridges between potential and the resources needed for commercialization." The EU's role, she said, is "to speed up the path from lab to market."

She invited participants to be bold, and to work collaboratively and efficiently. She encouraged public-private partnerships and urged participants to be "ambassadors" for more research and innovation in their respective countries. "You can count on me to do my bit and to make sure photonics gets the support it needs," she said. She promised to increase her involvement with young researchers and entrepreneurs.



Above, SPIE President and Lund University Hospital Professor Katarina Svanberg and Thomas Skordas, head of the EU Photonics Unit, at the Photonics21 Annual Meeting.

[SPIE](#), the international society for optics and photonics, was founded in 1955 to advance light-based technologies. Serving more than 180,000 constituents from 168 countries, the Society advances emerging technologies through interdisciplinary information exchange, continuing education, publications, patent precedent and career and professional growth. SPIE annually organizes and sponsors approximately 25 major technical forums, exhibitions and education programs in North America, Europe, Asia and the South Pacific, and supports scholarships, grants and other education programs around the world.

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Media Contact:

Amy Nelson
Public Relations Manager
amy@spie.org
Tel: +1 360 685 5478

