

RESEARCH DIALOGUE

in

Learning and Instruction

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The 7th EARLI Conference, Athens—Greece, 1997

**The past and present of EARLI:
Interviews with prominent EARLI members**

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THE PAST AND PRESENT OF EARLI: INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT EARLI MEMBERS

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Foreword
Marja Vauras

During the Athens Conference, three Hungarian doctoral students interviewed some long-standing EARLI members. These interviews partly reflect the history of EARLI and partly witness some important issues we are now discussing within EARLI, such as opportunities for young researchers, integration of new European democracies, publishing, and the power of European research. Hence, the Executive Committee of EARLI felt that it would be of interest to our members to publish these interviews in RD. Although I have summarised the original interviews, I have tried to capture the essence of them.

ERIC DE CORTE

Could you tell us some words first about the foundations of EARLI, the reasons and your role?

The reason for creating this organisation was the fact that until 1985 there was no forum in Europe for communication between people working in the field of research on learning and instruction. I travelled frequently to the United States, and what happened was that I met colleagues from Europe over there that I never met here. It looked a little bit silly, that in Europe there was no opportunity for researchers in this domain to meet each other on a regular basis. That is how the idea came to me in 1983: to see if the possibility was there and the time was right, so to say, to create an organisation like this one. Well, I then took the initiative with some other colleagues, especially with colleagues from The Netherlands, to start this organisation, and the occasion for that was to organise a conference and this conference was organised by me in 1985 in my university in Leuven. It was an invitational conference, to which 140 people were invited. At that meeting it was agreed by the people who were there to create our association, and I was asked to be the first

president. I was the first president from 1985 till '87, and in the Tübingen conference I was elected for another term. I would like to add to that, that a person who was very instrumental in organising the first conference was Professor Richard Snow from Stanford University. On a mission to London to find out what research was going on in this domain throughout Europe, he was very helpful in finding people in Western Europe whom I did not know and who could be involved in this conference and in the association.

How are the new European democracies integrated in the research community?

Well, that has been a concern from the beginning, because it really is a European association that was the idea. At the beginning there was still the old situation with Central and Eastern Europe being dominated, so to say, by communism. Maybe Hungary was exceptional at that time, because it was a country that was most open. We were always striving to involve scholars from Eastern Europe and from Central Europe, but there were often problems, especially economic problems. They had problems to get funding as well as travelling to a conference and they had problems to pay the dues. We have tried to find solutions to that, for example one of the solutions we had in the beginning was, if they become a member, that they should pay only the same amount percentile of what Western Europeans pay; they would pay, for example, ten per cent of the membership. It was always also a problem to transfer money in many countries. So we said, well, keep the money there, maybe it can be used for organising something over there. Still there are economic problems for many people. On the other hand, there is a growing number of people coming to the conference and there is a growing number of people that are members.

The Benelux states, especially Belgium, are so well integrated into the European Research Community. What do you think is the reason?

I think the reason is that Benelux and Belgium have always been a motivator of European integration in general. So you must see that Benelux was, so to say, the first aggregation of European countries. When the European community in the beginning with the six states was influential, Belgium was always very much pushing in trying to get this realised. I think maybe the geographic position in Europe is an element of that: we are at the crossroads, so to say, and it has always been very important for us to be integrated. Belgium is also a small country, so I think that the mentality has always been there, also with respect to research. I think people in my country and many people in The Netherlands have, for a long time, had contacts all over the world, even in the United States. So we have always really made efforts to get in touch with scholars in other countries, because we felt that you can't do science in a small space.

What are the future ways of research in EARLI?

I think you can say now, after twelve years, that this organisation is very well established. And I say myself, when I see this conference, that I could never have anticipated or imagined in 1985 that it would become something like this, so I think it's not an exaggeration to say that it is the most powerful organisation in the field of educational research

in Europe, which is respected world-wide, because if you look through the programme you see that a number of very well known and advanced American scholars were here. There are people from Australia, from New Zealand, from Hong Kong and from all over the world. People who liked to come to this conference. I think also as I heard from several people, that the programme is excellent, of high quality. My American colleagues told me that it is a better conference than the conference of the AERA, in terms of quality. So I think this development will go on. And I think that we should maintain the continuity of this organisation in terms of its quality and in terms of opportunity to have contact with scholars in Europe and also from elsewhere in the world.

I think what is important is that the research policy that we have started is progressing. The journal *Learning and Instruction* is now also very well known and recognised. You can see here in the conference that we are starting a new book series in learning and instruction. I'm one of the members of the editorial board and we hope that in the coming six months the first book will be out. The Executive Committee is making efforts to improve the newsletter in terms of its quality. This I think is a very important communication channel for researchers that is also stimulating to publish and to do research.

I think that there is a problem with the future of this organisation in terms of maintaining it. You know it has become so big that we probably will have to look for another way of management. And the reason for that is that in the past, for example, conference was organised at the university. The secretary of the organisation has been a regular scholar. With a small organisation you can do that. But now we have to look to creating a permanent secretariat. With people who are professionals and who take on the work, because it's no longer feasible for the scientist to do all this work on top of what he has to do every day. From an organisational point of view, we have to look at that. People in the Executive Committee are trying to see if in the European Community there is a possibility of finding administrative support for this organisation. But we will have to see that.

On the Research Students' Day, Professor Lodewijks said that the use of only the English language could be dangerous, because most of the Dutch researchers publish in English and don't use the scientific terms in their mother tongue.

That is indeed a problem. In The Netherlands, for example, I have experienced that, because this year I organised the Dutch Educational Research Association meeting. In the beginning, there were very few submissions, because people were prepared to go to meetings that are international, and they were also prepared to publish in English. I think whether you like it, or don't like it, you will have to live with this situation, for some time. What are your alternatives? I said when I created this organisation that I would like it to be a monolingual organisation because, if you start in Europe by accepting French also, you will have to accept the German language as well, and then the Spanish will come. You always have language problems in Europe. I think that people should be contributing to this European space, probably in English for the time being, but this should not be an obstacle to their also being active in their own country, in their own community, and to publishing in their own language. So I think that you have to find a way of balancing these two things, because I don't think that it would be better if we change this. How could we change? And I must say, in the beginning when this organisation was started I said, the common language of communication for the time being is English. On the other

hand, I see that people have made a lot of improvement in terms of the quality of their English, the way they present their materials. We have learned a lot in these years.

Well I think, what I would like to ask is, what is important in the development of the association? I think that it is very important to continue to do research that is very closely related to educational practice. The concern should be theory building. So many researchers have left the laboratory to go into the classrooms to do their research. And I think this is an important tendency. But we should be careful, we should be concerned in developing methodologies that allow us to do these kinds of research in such a way that we can arrive at theoretically valued conclusions. My theory is that research should indeed make it possible to improve educational practice, and we meet to think about how we can bridge the gap between educational practice and theory. One element in this respect can certainly be that we should build communication channels with legible practitioners who need to be involved in our research, because I think that we can learn a lot from the practitioners and there should be good communication between educational research and practice. So that's a concern that I think important for the future.

Another concern I have with respect to EARLI as an organisation is that we should do more – and it has been a start here with the Research Students' Day – to create opportunities for young scholars to improve their skills, their capacities, to help them in scientific writing. Of all the things that I have in mind has always been that there would be, for example, a kind of summer school for young scholars which would give them an opportunity for intensive contact with more established colleagues, so that we can extend the quality and the research potential in Europe. That's what I would like to do.

HEINZ MANDL

Your country is so well integrated into the European Research Community. What do you think is the reason?

In some ways I think Germany is integrated into the European Research Community, but it could be better. In some ways – as a background to why we are integrated – Germany is a big country and has a lot of connections with other countries in Europe. But I think there could be some more connections, especially also with the Eastern European countries and Eastern European connection with the Soviet Union, and so on. Germany has some centres where researches are going on which have connections with other countries.

What role does EARLI play in European research? What do you think? Is there a unified European research direction?

I think EARLI plays an important role in European research. Because in former times, before EARLI was founded, we met mostly in the United States, and I met Eric De Corte in Pittsburgh several times and also in AERA meetings several times in the States. This was one of the reasons why we founded EARLI. So we could come together, not in the United States, but in Europe. And so, I think, EARLI plays an important role now in bringing European researchers in learning and instruction together, and it helps also to a

better understanding of what's going on in Europe, not alone in research, but also to understand the philosophy of people and also nations and countries. From this point of view, EARLI plays an important role not only in research, but also in understanding, and to come into a kind of European community.

I think, there has not been, till now, a unified European research direction. Most of the research in Europe is strongly influenced by research in the United States, and in some ways there are some directions which are more European-like, but till now, I think, we have been very much oriented to what's going on in the United States. If we achieve a more unified Europe and more integration, I think there also could come out some more European oriented research and we can also then influence what's going on in the US.

How do you think the new European democracies are integrated into this research community? What activity do they show, and how can this be improved?

I think the new European democracies are coming more and more into a research community, and it's growing, and we see more and more researchers from these new European democracies, and the kind of activity they show now can be improved. They are coming to EARLI, and if they present their research they can get feedback, they can get a lot of connections. So I think they should contact the others in Europe and in some way try to visit them, or try to exchange papers and activities and come to other conferences beside EARLI. This can improve the integration. And in some way it's also a language problem, because they had not in former times a chance to speak English. But it's a problem we have throughout Europe. I say, to speak English is not so easy, and so it's always easier for the US. people or people from England. And in some way there is a difference in European tradition. Some smaller countries always publish in English, but Germany does not publish so much in English, because we have a big community, with Austria and Switzerland, to communicate. But that's a kind of disadvantage, not a real advantage, because, a lot of research going on in Germany is not widely known. For instance, if you are in The Netherlands, you are forced to publish in English, and you also should say that the people in the new European democracies should start to publish a lot in English to come into the European Community and to come into the world-wide community of researchers.

What connection do you have to EARLI?

I was one of the starting members and, in the beginning, a member of the Executive Committee, because I was a second organiser of an EARLI conference in Tübingen in 1987. After that I became a president of EARLI. And so I tried to work and do some activities, also to have a journal. We got an opportunity to publish our research in *Learning and Instruction*. Now we stimulate a book series on learning and instruction.

How far are you satisfied with this conference?

As for the conference, I think it's quite good, and if you look at the programme, there are a lot of very interesting themes, and it covers a lot of most important topics which are going on now in learning and instruction. So I think this conference is a real success

and there are many interesting invited speakers, interesting sessions, and discussions going on now. There are also a lot of opportunities to communicate, meetings and receptions, where you can come in contact with other people. Well, I think, this conference is a real success.

MARIO CARRETERO

Your country is so well integrated into the European Research Community. What do you think is the reason?

I think Spain is, generally speaking, well integrated into the European Research Community. But I would say it was recently integrated. So I would say, it's well integrated, but not really very much. I think the most important reason is language. Spanish scientists don't speak English or other European languages very often because foreign languages were not very important in Spain for a number of years. So I think it is an important reason. But I would say, in general, people are willing to integrate, and people are willing to collaborate with European colleagues. I would say the quality of research is pretty high, so I think that it's just the matter of language and also the matter of time. For example Spain became a full member of the European Union in 1986. Well, you know, these types of things take time.

What role does EARLI play in European research? What do you think? Is there a unified European research direction?

I think EARLI plays an important role in European research, in the sense of being a common place or common direction for research. Probably it could play a better role, and I think there are a number of ways where EARLI could play a more important role, maybe establishing some kind of co-ordination with funding agencies or giving more direct ways of improving or changing research.

Do you think it necessary to divert from the American research direction?

That's an important question. I would say, in general, European educational research is to some extent influenced, very influenced, by American research. So probably we should find more our own way in doing research. But it's an easy thing to say, not an easy thing to do. Because what we call maybe an American influence, is on the other hand international influence, so it's hard. And on the other hand, it's important to consider that educational research in the States has had a lot of support for many years. Compare, for example, how many journals exist in the States about educational research. In Europe, we don't have more than five. So it's not only a qualitative issue but also a quantitative issue. It also takes time to get enough power too, academic power, research power, to be more influential.

I don't think there is a unified European research direction, I would say, of this style. If, for example, we compare this EARLI meeting with a similar meeting in the States, American Educational Research Association, AERA – and this is not only my opinion,

but also the opinion of many European and American colleagues – this EARLI meeting is different compared to the AERA meeting, because EARLI meeting is more reflected, there is more reflection here, more theory, less quantitative data, more long discussions. So this would be, in my opinion, a kind of direction for the European style of research.

What connection do you have to EARLI?

I organised the third EARLI conference in Madrid in 1989. Also I was a member of the Executive Committee and I have been a member of the programme committee on two more occasions, here and in Turku. Considering this question, take for example my experience in Spain in 1989. In 1989 something very funny happened. As I said, I organised this conference in Spain. Most of my colleagues in Spain told me, well, you are crazy, because Spanish people are not going to be interested in participating in a conference which is only in English. People in Spain are not going to be interested in becoming a European researcher so fast, so the conference is probably going to be a success for the rest of Europe, but not for Spain. They were wrong. We organised this conference in Madrid in '89, just three years after becoming a member of the European Union. And, out of 500 people, 100 were from Spain. So 100 people from Spain really participated. Interestingly enough, about 80 people out of those 100 were presenting just posters, because they were not able to present a paper. But they were there. So when we mention differences such as language and so on, it's important to give an opportunity to people, to encourage people, even if those difficulties exist.

ROGER SÄLJÖ

Your country is so well integrated into the European Research Community. What do you think is the reason?

I think, Sweden has been well integrated for a long time. Sweden is a small country and we have a small language like you. So there was an early emphasis on learning a foreign language. Most people used to learn German, but in the war they changed to English for political reasons. The research on education is important, it's the major tool of social development. In 1950, the Nordic countries had already created a European union up in the North, without passports or anything. And I think, this international attitude became very prominent and most people see it as a positive thing. There is always criticism of American dominance, of America, especially during the Vietnam period, but basically they realise they have no way in higher education of teaching, learning, research and science, unless you speak English and are willing to learn. So, many universities now have English as their working language, more or less in research departments, and I think this is good. It's interesting, because it helps to do it the other way round, we can't teach the western world Swedish.

Do you publish in Swedish?

Yes, we do, you have to publish in Swedish as well. I think working internationally doesn't take away anything from what you do nationally. You can also publish nationally, and,

in education, many people are also working in applied areas, so that's necessary to work in Swedish. I think it's important in EARLI and other international settings that you also present your national problems and that you can discover that other countries are doing exactly the same thing, and they are having very similar problems. Particularly in education, which is becoming more and more alive. So that probably is my short answer to that.

What role does EARLI play in European research? What do you think? Is there a unified European research direction?

The interesting thing with EARLI is that I don't think it creates a unified research direction, but it's a meeting place for people. I think EARLI can play an important role as a meeting ground, as a place where you can co-operate and create prepared co-operation, projects. But the European traditions would much rather maintain a difference of traditions and people you know, discuss and argue across traditions, and I think many of the traditions which are dominant, also in the United States, originated from Europe, like Piaget, Vygotsky and Gestalt psychology, because people migrated from Europe. Then I think, something happens to these traditions, because they get moulded or shaped in the more narrow American conception of research. So I think we can use traditions, but develop them and explore them more freely than you can. And also I think that it's good for research in international communication that you have created a counterbalance. My wish is that EARLI is an international organisation, but it's based in Europe, so has an origin.

How do you think the new European democracies are integrated into this research community? What activity do they show, and how can this be improved?

As I see it, they are still learning how to co-operate and they still have practical problems, at least for some countries. But there's much more interaction, connection, and co-operative activities developing. So I think EARLI could be used as a means for creating activities together, research projects, and also summer schools and exchange problems. The problems in the various Central and Eastern European countries are a bit different. Some are very close to being integrated, and others also have severe economic problems. When I was educated I didn't know anything, I never had any contact with people from Poland or the Soviet Union, not even the Baltic states, which are very close to Sweden. But nowadays we have lots of contacts through EARLI and other things, so it's a remarkable change.

I think that, especially, the new and younger generations of people at universities and in the new democracies, should get an opportunity to meet other people, to really get to know other people. It's not just reading what they are doing, but also meeting them. So I think this is something that might seem slow to some people, but for me it's a remarkable difference of the past ten years. It's very different. There was absolutely nothing in Germany for some time, and I didn't know anything about psychology education in Eastern Germany. There was no information or anything else, and you had to look for it very actively. Now it's a very different situation. There is Poland, which I didn't know anything about. Now several Polish people are here and we have lots of contacts with them. So that's developing, and also many of these countries realise that it's important. It's not

until you are integrated in everything you know, culture, education, production within the system, we become sort of partners.

What connections do you have to EARLI?

I am an editor of the journal *Learning and Instruction* and this is my fourth year, and next year I am spending my last year. And I am a member of the Executive Committee of EARLI. When you are a journal editor, you automatically become a member, so you are not elected, but you become a member. And then, I have visited all the EARLI conferences, except the first one in Leuven. And the next time it will be in Gothenburg. I am moving from my old university to Gothenburg, and start working on Monday. So that will be very nice.

Could you tell us a few words about the journal 'Learning and Instruction'?

This is the 7th volume of the journal, which comes out now. We publish about 1 manuscript from 5. So we accept 20 % or reject 80 %. And it's a very international journal, and it's now in the social citation index and current contents. We have just recently been evaluated by an organisation which is called ISI. (Which is the Institute of Scientific Information in the USA.) They decided to include us, which is very good for the journal. They require that the journal has been appearing a certain number of years before they will include it, because they have had some bad experiences with a journal they included, and then these journals didn't appear. But we were evaluated and got a very good, actually a top grading, so we are in there now, we have our contents in PsychInfo and so forth. The most important one is clearly the SCI index. Next year we will increase our publication from 4 issues a year to 6 issues. We have a circulation of slightly more than 15 000 copies per issue, which is quite good, because it's a specialised journal and it's quite expensive. It has been going up dramatically in the past years, and we are also trying to encourage people to send in manuscripts, even if they get rejected. We try to provide intensive comments. We use peer reviewers, and I also write long letters, in which I explain what you have to do in order to be published, because it's part of EARLI to create a community which can communicate with each other. Because we have language differences, we have research differences, and we must take this seriously and also give people feedback. I think this is the most important thing of EARLI, that you create this platform. So it's going quite well. Our big problem is the publication delay. After a manuscript is accepted it takes more than a year before it's published. And people are not happy about that really. But this is going to be better now. When we get 6 issues. Publication delay must come down to under a year because otherwise it's not good.

I think it's a good forum, and we have nice international peer reviewers, and so, I think, it is mostly working quite well. It's a lot of work to keep it running, but it's very positive work. There's a very high proportion of women who publish. Nowadays, since recently, I am having all manuscripts reviewed by a woman. And we have a high percentage of women who publish, and so it's quite representative of EARLI as an organisation. That's positive.

What are the advantages of EARLI to young researchers?

I think EARLI can provide a network, in which you can work and do research. I mean, this is the big function of organisations like this. That nowadays in many countries, in order to do research, you have to be internationally anchored or have an international connection. You need the assistance, the help of discussion partners in other countries, because much research is so specialised that it's only in those small countries, with a very small number of people who do this. And you all know each other, and I mean, it's too small a community you meet. The advantage is to create networks to enroll in SIGs and that way to get contact and connections, and get involved in this exchange in the seminars, and so on. So I think this is one of the most important things, and there is a very high percentage of young scholars who can come here as well.

HANS LODEWIJKS

Professor Lodewijks, would you be so kind as to tell us the reasons for the foundation of EARLI?

There were two reasons: First, a conference in Fribourg, Switzerland, on text-comprehension, where the invited speakers were all Americans. The second is that I went several times to the AERA (American Educational Research Association) conferences to the USA. I always met European colleagues from Germany, Belgium etc. , and why should we meet as Europeans in Chicago or Los Angeles? So together with my colleague, Robert-Jan Simons, we went out to Europe to visit some people; and we talked about how we could settle a European form for research on learning and instruction. Sitting on a train between Fribourg and The Netherlands we were thinking about the name, writing down every combination of Europe, Association, Research, Learning, Instruction. At that time Richard Snow was a visiting professor in Europe, and he had a list of all the universities, where people were doing investigations on our research-field. Then we set up the organisation just by having an invited conference in Leuven. We had only 150 members at that time. The regulation and the structure of the organisation were settled at the first conference.

On Research Students' Day you talked about the danger of most Dutch researchers publishing only in English. What will happen to the smaller nations' language?

Well, the young Dutch researchers do not publish anything in Dutch journals, because this would not be of importance in progression. It is a dilemma-like situation: Scientific work is a global work. You should take part in the international situation. But on the other hand the society and the research community of your country want to profit from your work. We, at our university department, have a kind of policy: A researcher should have at least one international publication a year, then you can publish wherever you want. I am fond of publishing in more popular or in scientific journals in Dutch. But my students feel the pressure to publish in English.

How can you explain that The Netherlands can play a leading role in the European Research Community, and concerning the list of members, Holland is on the first place and Germany, Great Britain come second and third?

We have had for 25 years a very well developed educational research structure. Almost every university has good educational research departments, and we have national and academic funds to support them. Educational research has been valued very much by the government and all society. We have a lot of educational researchers. For example Germany has five times more people than The Netherlands, but looking at the number of educational researchers the difference is smaller. That is why we decided to divide Europe into seven regions and the seven main officials of EARLI are recruited from these seven regions.

MONIQUE BOEKAERTS

What will be the future aims of EARLI?

Well, I'm not the president yet, you know, I'm a member of the Executive Committee. But what I would like to do is to build a kind of mobility system for young people, either undergraduates or graduate students, and see to it that they can come. Lots of people, say one or two persons from Hungary, one or two persons from Spain, from Greece, and so on, for example, to The Netherlands, and all the experts in The Netherlands on learning and instruction could then organise several meetings where the students can come together and get a lecture or a discussion. And they can discuss things during the week and maybe write a paper or discuss something. Then they can go on to another kind of person, and these people would be carefully selected, so that they would be experts in a sense like the old Greeks, you know, like students with Pythagoras and so on, learning on the spot, going from one place to the other. That's what I would like to organise. In the universities, when young people have been working there for a while, they can go to a conference and things like that. It's really being in the centre where people know a lot about motivation, or about technology or I don't know what. I think, we should really organise in a systematic way. And I would like to do that. That's one of the plans.

Another thing that I would like to promote is that the discussions in EARLI after the symposia or a paper session would be organised in a different way. Now, many times, there are paper presentations and there is time for just a quick question and not really for discussing. People can't really share information. Look at each other's instruments, for example, or discuss in depth what the next move should be. What I would like to do is to give the discussants instructions that, say, there would be four papers that they compare or contrast, that it's a strong point in this one and that's a weaker point in that one. And maybe they can borrow from each other. And leave plenty of time afterwards for all the people who have been writing the papers and the audience to discuss. And also that we evaluate the sessions. After the session of an invited speaker or an invited symposium or whatever, the members of the audience can give a rating. So that we know later on whether people like the SIG organised symposium more than invited speakers or than the paper presentations. What is the thing that people say was so interesting, I learned a lot, please

organise more. Things like that I would like to get on the way. So that new ways of sharing knowledge become available to young people, to established people.

What do you think about the position of the new European democratic countries in EARLI?

Well, for a while they will still have to find their way, since the others have got the established positions. It's always like that. When new people come in, there are no seats available, you have to push a little bit. I think we should, all of us, consider the fact that it's more and more difficult to come. But we should try to make it easier for them to participate, otherwise it's going to take too long a time for them to get into the right positions. I think there are a lot of things happening already. And we might even meet in Budapest in the near future, so we said. Yes, why not.

What is your message to the Hungarian young researchers?

I would say, keep up the good work. And get into contact with people, don't be too shy, just write to people, saying I'm doing this, what do you think of my work? Or I've got an article and I've got difficulty in publishing it, for example. People can help you. And maybe for example I myself can't help personally, but I say, well, I know someone else who is working on that area, maybe you can have a co-authorship together, you know, so you can do it together. In the beginning, I think, if you can't do something by yourself, or you can't do it because it takes too much time, or you can't get it in a journal, then it's very important to team up with somebody who can. I always tell my students, if you really want to make it in life, you have to look for a good locomotive that is really pushing and doing things. You put your wagon behind the locomotive and you go with it. But there are people who think, well, I'm very good, I don't need a locomotive, I can do it by myself. Maybe they can, but it takes longer. So it's always best to look for a good locomotive somewhere and say, can I join in? And then that person will, you know, discuss it or do various things together. Don't be too shy, look for a good locomotive, that's what I would say.

What's the reason for The Netherlands playing a major role in European research life?

There's a lot of money for researches in The Netherlands. I'm not Dutch. I'm Belgian. So I can say things like that, I'm not chauvinistic. I'm Belgian, but now I'm working in The Netherlands. There I like my work very much. I like very much living in Belgium, but I don't think I could work there. I would always like to work in The Netherlands, because the climate for doing scientific researches is fantastic there. If you have a good idea, or if you want to try out something, there are possibilities for your research being funded. And there's a great spirit among researchers to work together. That's what I like very much. I think, if researchers don't fight with each other but team up with each other, the result is what you see in The Netherlands. I felt that right from the beginning, I'm not saying that the Belgians don't support each other, but I feel a very strong support, when I'm at a conference, or wherever, from my Dutch colleagues. That's really very valuable.