

## **Realising international cooperation by Life Science Universities**

### **Matthias Tips – Acceptance of the ICA Excellence Award 2023**

Dear rectors and deans, Dear colleagues

I am very much aware it is me standing in between the Forum and the Dinner, so I will keep it not too long.

It is of course and honour to receive this ICA award. When I received the good news from Rasa, I was and I still am super happy, and proud. Those who know me can probably agree, that I truly can be enthusiastic, so they can imagine my joy. I was asked to give an acceptance speech, and then I started thinking of what message I would like to share with you. I admit, initially my mind went the direction of humour and light-heartedness. Many funny things went through my head. I was thinking of this award as being the Oscars of Life Science Universities. But then these funny ideas faded. Not because I realised that I am actually not that funny. Nor because an audience of rectors and deans may not appreciate my humour.

None of that, it was the reality that made me sad and pensive, and turned my thoughts to more serious matters.

Before coming to my serious lines, I sincerely want to thank some people.

First of all the people who nominated me (who they are, I admit, is still partly a mystery). The Selection Committee who selected me. And ICA who is so kind to award me this honour. I thank president Arthur Mol, the different ICA Boards, for the support to IROICA and myself, during the time I was in the Board meetings, where my input by the rectors and deans was always welcomed.

I also want to thank my first dean at KU Leuven, Pol Coppin, and first director, Karine Op de Beeck, who motivated me to join IROICA, and supported me to become IROICA's president, at that time at a very young age. I also want to thank Kristel Rock, my most close colleague at the faculty over the last decade and member of IROICA. The different faculty management teams, of which former dean Jos Van Orshoven is present, for their continuous support to ICA.

I also want to thank Simon Heath, who in his role as secretary general of ICA was always a friend of IROICA, and, on a personal level, thank you for sharing your concrete and wise advice. I am now lucky to call you a good friend, too.

This prize was not at all possible without our standing committee, IROICA. I am grateful to Irene Muller that she founded our network in the mid-nineties. And former president Margarita Calderon-Peter, my IROICA godmother, for encouraging me to join the Executive

Committee and then stimulating me to become president, while continuing to advise me during my term. I am also so grateful to all of the different Executive Committee members for making this possible, some of them are in the room; the current president Florence Malaise, Cecile Dubas, Lukas Pospisil: Merci, thank you. For all the work we did together for the good of our network, the individual members, the universities – always in a warm, inclusive atmosphere. IROICA, and I always gently call it the IROICA family, thank you for all the positive and warm energy of making our work – which is never a 9 to 5 job – happen!

Lastly, not present, but of course my family, friends and colleagues back home – who were always proud of my work in my beloved IROICA family.

The reason I mentioned I am pensive, sad and, yes, angry – is the reality of yet another war, one of so many already, the violent and deadly attacks, the hatred in the world, the destructive results of climate change, the injustice, polarization, the ignorance toward science,...

All this makes me sad, and angry.

I want to ask - in my dedicated time- a moment of silence for those who suffer

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My driving forces, from the beginning of my job, at the faculty, is internationalization, and life sciences. Which comes together so beautifully in ICA and IROICA.

I sincerely believe the work we do in internationalization, day after day, in working together across borders, with different cultures, helps to enable a better understanding of each other, helps to achieve peace.

Studying, and now working at a life sciences faculty, I am also convinced that our students, alumni, researchers and professors do contribute to finding solutions in combating climate disasters and biodiversity loss.

My energy was phrased so beautifully in a song at the closing plenary of EAIE in Rotterdam “Als wij niets doen”. “If we do nothing, then who will?”

Our universities, ICA, IROICA-...we need to play our role, we need to take up our responsibility, in both international cooperation, sustainability, and doing research and offering education in life sciences. We need impact. We need real change. We need to be part of the solution. “If we do nothing, then who will?” These words of the EAIE president I referred to earlier, keep echoing in my mind: “If we do nothing, then who will?”

Our work is about facilitating mobility, projects, collaborations, innovation. We need to make sure that whenever we bring people together it is for a good purpose. For co-creating solutions. For working together on community service learning. For real conversations. For learning together and doing research together that will bring us one step closer to a sustainable and just future based on respect, empathy, solidarity and dignity for all.”

This prize mentioned “networking, and life sciences”, and it is not about me. I want to dedicate this award, to all individuals working every day in international cooperation in life sciences, to achieve international peace and achieving the SDGs together.

Let's make our work more impactful, for the greater good.

Thank you!

Matt Tips

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