

Rede von Oberbürgermeisterin Henriette Reker anlässlich des Empfangs zur EuroBasket 2022 am 2. September 2022 in Köln-Riehl

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

Dear Mister Secretary Milz,
dear Mister President Weiss,
dear guests,

I wish you a warm welcome to Cologne. We are very much looking forward to the joy-filled days of this excellent sport which are ahead of us. Seeing Europe's top notch teams in this good form surely is a highlight. Yesterday's starting match between Olympic silver medal champion France and Germany definitely has been a delight to watch and a good starter for this tournament. I am sure we will see many more exciting match-ups going forward.

In addition to that, honouring Dirk Nowitzki, who is such a brilliant role model in Germany, for his unmatched sporting career and his charitable commitment, was quite the charm also, I have to admit.

Thank you for following the invitation that was made by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the City of Cologne and the German Basketball Association tonight. Please do take the

chance to leave every room for networking and simply just enjoying the moment of this year's sporting highlight in Cologne.

In essence, this evening is the result of the 2019 FIBA-decision to award EuroBasket to Germany. We have been planning this event carefully ever since and I am glad as well as rather relieved that we have gotten through the COVID-period and its massive ramifications for organised sports. In, say, September 2020, I would not have predicted that we would be able to do it in this fashion. But finally, we are here. And it feels good.

I think Germany has proven itself with the two host towns of Cologne and Berlin to be the right host at a nevertheless challenging time. Germans love sports, no matter what. They enjoy big events. In Cologne we do take pride in having an ongoing legacy of hosting big events in a wide range of sports. We were able to use this experience for the advancement of the EuroBasket, I hope.

So I want to thank you again for putting your trust into Germany, into Berlin and Cologne. EuroBasket means a lot to us, we are very excited to see world class athletes.

We are thrilled to feel the special kinds of collective emotions that only sports can provide on this scale.

Please let me add that Cologne is looking for EuroBasket 2022 to have a lasting effect on basketball in our region. We would like to become Germany's home of basketball and are laying

the groundwork for this starting right now. This includes the financing and initiation of basketball youth projects in Cologne over the next years.

Colonians are a generally happy people that is keen to show feelings of joy. That is why we usually make it easy for guests to join in. I wish you a pleasant stay and unforgettable days ahead of you. Thank you!