

**Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, at the opening of the NORDTEK conference on Thursday 9 June 2022, 9 am**

Dear president of NORDTEK, organisers, speakers and conference guests, I wish you all a warm welcome to the University of Iceland. It is my honour and pleasure to say a few words here at the start of this year's NORDTEK conference.

The NORDTEK network this year celebrates its 50th anniversary and it is certainly fitting that this year's conference takes place in Reykjavík where the network had its beginnings, half a century ago.

The theme of this conference is Engineering in a Hyper-Connected World, referring to the fact that engineering is increasingly influenced by information technology and integrated systems. This is evident in, e.g., structure health monitoring, performance optimization, hazard monitoring, home control systems, supply chain management, and engineering service and education. The main question the conference seeks to answer is: How should engineering education evolve to take advantage of these trends? This question concerns all areas of engineering, including my own discipline, electrical and computer engineering with focus on image analysis and remote sensing.

But developments in information technology are not the only things that bring new challenges for engineering education; these challenges are everywhere in our rapidly changing world. An obvious example is the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced universities around the world to close their doors and adopt new teaching methods almost overnight. Here at the University of Iceland, we were fortunate that we had spent the semesters before the pandemic putting significant effort into introducing digital teaching methods. When the pandemic hit, we were as well prepared as we could have been. The pandemic has certainly taught us some valuable lessons and expedited the development and implementation of digital teaching methods in all subjects. But now that the pandemic has subsided, perhaps it is time to ask ourselves whether we should continue down the same path or whether we should perhaps pause to think and reassess the value of on-site learning and campus life in a world where we are all constantly connected through remote technology. I am convinced that the NORDTEK network conference will generate helpful ideas and discussions about these and other questions concerning the future of higher education in general and engineering and technology education in particular.

Dear guests, international collaboration between universities has never been as important as it is now. In recent years, the University of Iceland has taken major steps forward in this area, for example through Aurora, a network of European universities and the Aurora Alliance, which will be a subject for discussion at the rector's meeting at the conference tomorrow. The NORDTEK network has also been a vital platform for the University of Iceland for international collaboration in the fields of engineering and technology. Our teaching staff have made excellent use of the network and our students have gained valuable experiences through the network's travel scholarships programme. The University of Iceland is fully committed to maintaining this partnership and strengthening it over the following years.

Dear guests, without further ado, I wish you all an enjoyable and productive conference.

Thank you.