

Dear Ambassadors, Rectors, Professors, Dear Guests,

Today, I would like to begin with welcoming the former Presidents and the founding rectors' of the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, since 30 years ago, on the 31st of May, 1988, they were the ones who held the Hungarian Rectors' Conference's first official meeting. They came together with the intention to establish the foundations of the association of universities, and of the representation's institutional basis. These 19 original signing rectors took it upon themselves to establish an association for the universities, and they agreed upon the following five key responsibilities:

- 1) hold important meetings with the leading figures of the universities about issues related to these institutions.
- 2) increase the efficiency of universities' cooperation with external partner institutions.
- 3) provide information about the universities' situation and public interest.
- 4) preparing statements and proposals towards the universities, or the government.
- 5) arranging and coordinating the responsibilities related to the representation of the universities' best interest.

This proves that 30 years ago, the order of business at that meeting documented that the Hungarian Rectors' Conference is an organization that can propose, question, and form an opinion regarding the issues of Higher Education. Furthermore, similarly to the current statute, our organization is also a consultative forum for rectors, which has a significant mandate of representation. Neither the previous nor the current statute provides mandate for HRC to from any direct political activity, and I firmly believe that this statute is one of the most important sources of our current autonomy and independence.

Not long after the foundation of the university rectors' association, colleges and art universities also established their own conferences. Then in 2006, after uniting the three conferences, the current structure of HRC was formed. This unified organization has 64 members, uniting every institution of higher education under the same branch—from science universities to colleges, art universities and universities of applied sciences. Government funded, private and religious universities are arranged in separate sections, as an essential part of the association. In addition, there are special committees covering every field of study, and similarly, we have other committees based on other education-related principles, such as the international relations committee, or the committee of librarians.

The Hungarian Rectors' Conference's everyday activities are managed by a small but efficient secretariat, which is located in a privately owned property. Our finances are managed from the income generated from projects, and the annual member fees the universities provide to HRC, giving us independence from government funding.

Dear Guests,

I would like to thank you for celebrating the 30th anniversary of Hungarian Rectors' Conference with us on this very special day. We invited our best friends to this jubilee, those whose mentality, higher educational structure and operation is similar to ours, and those of course whom with we think alike. This connection also comes from our shared history, yet it seems like the political transition at the end of the 20th century put some distance between us. Therefore, we intend to shorten the aforementioned distance with this event, and we also hope cooperation between our rectors' conferences will strengthen, by supporting and learning from each other in the future.

In the framework of Central-European cooperation, we have launched a process on the level of HRC. Thus, the events of today and the V4 conference were a larger element of this initiative. Not long ago, the Slovenian and the Hungarian Rectors' Conferences had a congress in Koper, Slovenia, and the Serbian and Hungarian rectors met in Novi Sad. It is a special honour for HRC that our Serbian friends held their plenary session in the Tökölyanum, established in 1838, where the first Serbian university students enrolled in Hungary. I myself took great pleasure in participating in the special event organized to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Czech Rectors' Conference in Prague, and during the next academic year we plan to organize a joint session with the Slovak Rectors' Conference. We, Hungarian rectors would appreciate if these collaborations—may they be bilateral, or multilateral—could continue and be brought to fruition.

Perhaps the perfect opportunity to further cooperation could come as soon as this September, and here I would like to take the opportunity to invite all of our dear guests to our upcoming global conference. On the last week of September, Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities will organize the international conference titled „*Universities of the 21st century*,” in which we expect 100 Brazilian and 200 more rectors from other countries to visit us in Budapest.

In conclusion, I hope today will pass in good spirits, bring about meaningful discussions and great ideas, but most importantly, I hope each and every one of our guests will enjoy the celebration! We will keep today short, as the meetings only last until early afternoon, and we invite everyone to a friendly discussion over a wine tasting from the special selection provided by our universities.

Thank you for your attention, and enjoy the Jubilee!