

# Prague Declaration

Published on the occasion of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth  
of King of Bohemia and Roman Emperor, Charles IV,  
founder of Charles University in Prague

**B**uilding upon the inspirational legacy of notable medieval universities, as well as upon the legacy of King of Bohemia and Roman Emperor, Charles IV, who gave consent to the establishment of eleven of them, and feeling a shared responsibility for the state of the world today, we publish this declaration in Prague, on the occasion of our meeting.

**S**ince their very beginning, universities have always played an important role in European national states. Scientific, artistic and educational activities of universities in Italy, England, France, Spain and in central Europe were extremely important not just for the nurturing of science, art and education itself, but universities also cooperated closely with prominent scholars and members of political elites – such as Charles IV – who had established them and often turned to them for advice, consultation or much appreciated support for his ideas and plans.

**U**niversities were already then aware of their unique position, as well as of the fact that knowledge and education represent inalienable values of immense importance. Universities were also places for gatherings, free discussions and exchange of opinions, which led not just to new scientific discoveries, but also to better understanding of “the other”, and thus to tolerance and cultivation of society as a whole.

**U**niversity teachers prepare young people for their future involvement in society, which will in many aspects be different than it is today, particularly taking into account that their students will reach their professional height twenty or maybe even more years after they leave university. Thus, they should be able to adapt to changing social conditions – and should be willing to accept the ever-changing world without any prejudice. Top science and research – which push knowledge beyond the seeming limits of human abilities – are not the only obligations of modern universities. They must also analyse the state of the world today and interpret processes and phenomena that might seem unclear at first sight. An educated “citizen of the world” is less likely to accept simple solutions. And it is the education of such people that universities should strive for.

In today's globalised world, the role of universities has lost none of its past significance. Our world has changed dramatically since the era of Charles IV, but the critical mind of free men and women and the free exchange of opinions were, are and will be the most powerful tools and the most precious values in our civilisation. We cannot solve any of today's global problems without science and education. The importance of basic and applied research also grows as we are flooded with information of all kinds and the world of today becomes more and more difficult to understand. Quite often, people act as if the universal values upon which our modern society was built over the centuries and upon which it still stands, values such as humanism, tolerance and openness – all essential parts of democracy – exist no more, and as if it were possible to relativize almost anything. Universities are here to remind them that it is not so – that such values still exist and are worth fighting for.

*Prague, 13 May 2016*

Prof. Dorothy Kelly  
*Chair of the Executive Board  
of the Coimbra Group*

Dr. Andrew Graham  
*Chair of the Europaeum  
Academic Council*

Prof. Luciano Saso  
*President of UNICA*

Prof. Tomáš Zima  
*Rector of Charles University*

on behalf of Universities that expressed support of this Declaration:

Austria	University of Vienna
Belgium	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Université catholique de Louvain Université Libre Bruxelles Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Bulgaria	Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
Croatia	University of Zagreb
Czech Republic	Academy of Fine Arts in Prague Academy of Performing Arts in Prague Brno University of Technology Charles University in Prague College of Polytechnics Jihlava Czech Technical University in Prague Czech University of Life Sciences Prague Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem Masaryk University Palacký University Olomouc Police Academy of the Czech Republic in Prague University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice Silesian University in Opava Technical University of Liberec University of Economics, Prague University of Ostrava University of Pardubice University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno University of West Bohemia VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava
Denmark	Aarhus University
Estonia	Tallinn University University of Tartu
Finland	University of Helsinki
France	Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne University University of Strasbourg University of Poitiers
Germany	Free University of Berlin Heidelberg University Leipzig University
Hungary	Budapest University of Technology and Economics Eötvös Loránd University Semmelweis University University of Pécs
Ireland	Trinity College Dublin

Italy	Roma III University University of Padova University of Pavia
Japan	Kobe University
Lithuania	Vilnius University
Luxembourg	University of Luxembourg
The Netherlands	Leiden University University of Groningen
Poland	Jagellonian University in Kraków
Portugal	Catholic University of Portugal New University of Lisbon University of Coimbra
Romania	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași
Slovakia	Comenius University in Bratislava University of Presov
Slovenia	University of Ljubljana
Serbia	University of Belgrade
Spain	Complutense University of Madrid Pompeu Fabra University University of Granada University of Salamanca
Switzerland	University of Lausanne University of Geneva
United Kingdom	University of Oxford
United States of America	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill