

# **Prof. Maurizio Fermeglia**

## *Rector of the University of Trieste*

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the second edition of the DIAnet International School in Gorizia.

The topic we are going to develop this year is a very hot one – if I may say so – that is the role of natural heritage in the sustainable development of the Danube Region.

When we talk about sustainable development, we touch a crucial issue, which is related to several very important topics in today's world. Today is the international water day – a UN initiative – and water is indeed one of the emergencies we are going to face here: actually, it is an emergency that we have faced, we are facing and we will still face for many years in the future.

I am really glad to be here and welcome you to this School because, just like last year, the DIAnet International School is characterised by multi- and inter-disciplinarity, which are the pre-eminent ways we can try to solve the biggest world's problems. I mentioned water before, but there are other topics that the UN considers real emergencies, e.g. food, energy, and environment.

All these subjects have something in common: multidisciplinary. The fact that in this School biologists work together with social scientists, physicists and chemists is extremely positive. This is actually the main spirit of collaboration in this area.

I think that for too many years, in Europe, we have developed our universities by focusing on single disciplines. As I have already mentioned, the big world's emergencies cannot be tackled by single disciplines and should be tackled instead by interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary.

I recently discussed this matter with some other Rectors at the European University Association (EUA) and we all agreed that the right place to tackle multidisciplinary is what the Bologna process calls the third level in univer-

sity careers, i.e. the PhD level. Multidisciplinarity would then be able to permeate from the PhD level into the Master and Bachelor levels.

Another positive aspect of the DIAnet International School is that it involves a lot of interaction among students and participants. I know from last year's experience that you will be clustered into small groups and will work on specific projects, an aspect that I find extremely interesting and very challenging.

All this work is strongly related with the new EU programme Horizon 2020 and we may say that this edition – just like the last one and the one we will organise here next year – is paving the way to our participation to Horizon 2020 by enhancing collaborations between the universities involved in this project. As soon as you get back to your countries and to your universities, you will further the connections you'll have established here, enhance our collaboration and prepare solid projects to be sent to the European Commission.

I am particularly glad to be here on behalf of the University of Trieste because I really want to share with you our willingness to become more and more international, as we have already stated several times in different occasions. My collaborators and I have personally worked in setting up some good relationships with all the universities of our neighbour countries: Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, and many others. We have made a series of official visits and I am sure that – at the end – all this work will produce results in terms of concrete projects that we will be able to submit to the European Union.

Thank you very much and keep up the good work.

## **Prof. Martin H. Gerzabek**

*Rector of the University of Natural Resources  
and Life Sciences, Vienna*

It is my greatest pleasure to contribute to the introduction of the proceedings of the DIANET International School, which was held in Gorizia in March 2014. I congratulate the organizers both as representative of one of the partner organizations of Danube:Future, the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna and as Vice-President of the Danube Rectors' Conference and active participant in the EU strategy of the Danube Region. The DRC actively supported the Danube:Future project, specifically to be accepted as flagship project of PA 7 of the EUSDR.

The DRC is a network of almost 70 universities in the Danube Region. We try to contribute to improving higher education in teaching and research in this region, and in particular to the advancement of our member universities, by establishing and facilitating bilateral and multilateral contacts between the universities. In order to perform these tasks, DRC maintains links with national and international organizations, the activities of which are of interest or relate to universities and, in particular, with the national Rectors' Conferences, EUA, UNESCO, EU, Council of Europe, etc. An important activity is the yearly DRC summer school. Its general aim is the establishment of a network of young scientists who deal with the issue of regional co-operation as Central European perspective.

The DIANET international school fits perfectly well into the DRC strategy. Bringing together young researchers from all DRC and AARC universities interested in the sustainable development of the Danube River Basin, the focus on the roles of natural and cultural heritage and the training to apply for funding in competitive programs are extremely important issues, which contribute to a potentially long-lasting and active network of young scientists, which hold the future of the region in their hands!

The Danube region is amongst the regions of the world with the highest potential for economic development. Why? The Danube region offers excellent conditions for biomass production – biomass being amongst the most precious goods of the future – considering the increasing shortage of fossil resources. This fact is both a chance and a possible threat. Only an ecologically and socially sound use of the natural resources in the region will ensure a long-term sustainable development. Academic networks like this one are a prerequisite to foster and develop the region.

It was my greatest delight having been present at the historic occasion of the start of a project – hopefully – running for eight years, which is central to the development of the Danube region. I wish the Danube:Future project all possible success.

## Prof. Oliver Vitouch

### *Rector of the Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt*

A colleague of mine, Andreas Lehmann – who is now in Würzburg, Germany – had worked for quite some time in the United States, and is also married to an American. Andreas used to say: “At German universities, everyone usually aims to give someone else a smack [*Jeder versucht, dem anderen eins auf den Hut zu geben*]. At US universities, professors rather aim to cooperate, in order to give the *other* universities a smack.” And now we here have a wonderful example of several universities, in the *DIAnet* and the *Danube:Future* context, cooperating across borders, in order to achieve something bigger than what they could achieve alone, and bigger than just the sum of its constituent parts.

From the Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt’s view, these universities within the core team of *Danube:Future* are, in a way, next neighbours. The Università di Trieste in geographical terms: Klagenfurt is currently planning to achieve something like a hexagon or polygon network of neighbouring partner universities including Trieste, Udine, Graz, Ljubljana, Maribor, and potentially others. The Universität für Bodenkultur, Vienna, in terms of scientific specializations, with a strong focus on sustainability research. And the Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, as an intriguing new partner in this European region.

What cannot be stressed enough is the leading role of the hosts here in Trieste, who invested several kinds of effort – time, thoughts, labor, and money – into the development of the *Danube:Future* cooperation, and into its becoming a flagship project at the EU level. Thank you very much indeed for this scientific, political and organizational wizardry.

And as if all this hadn't been enough, we can also see a remarkable joint venture here of two major European Rectors' Conferences, namely the *Danube Rectors' Conference* and the *Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference* (the Universität Klagenfurt even bears this affiliation in its name), working together to achieve something even bigger. Thank you for this veritable summit conference. I wish, and I know, that this DIAnet event will be a huge success, and that this cooperation is here to stay. Or to say it in Latin: *Vivat, crescat, floreat!*

# **Prof. Miroslav Veskočić**

*Rector of the University of Novi Sad*

Being the only EUSDR PA7 Flagship project dealing with the issues of cultural heritage, the Danube:Future project with the Dianet international schools has been recognized as an innovative and important contribution to the realization of the PA7 activities.

The true success of the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is underpinned by one simple, but fundamental notion: *It is about working together*. If a multitude of stakeholders manage to strike the right balance between cooperation and competition and establish ownership of the processes, activities and outcomes of EUSDR, the benefits will be as widespread and profound as we intend and claim them to be.

Building prosperity in the Danube Region emphasizes the significance of both innovation and knowledge transfer. It is, however, essential to bear in mind that both of these concepts need to be understood and applied in a much broader sense. We must realize their social, and not only technological character, and we must see how they play out in national and institutional policies that aim at putting knowledge into practice at different levels and in various fields. This goes hand in hand with the dominant and recurring theme of seeing EUSDR as a holistic strategy where there is a clear synergy of what is happening on the whole at the highest policy levels, what is being done in each of its parts and localities, and the interdependences between them.

The local dynamics and effects of innovation are issues that EUSDR needs to embrace fully as a means to address the actual disparities that exist among its 14 member states. All future investments driving the Danube Region forward, whether they are realized through the existing EU funding mechanisms

or the future Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund (DRRIF) being developed in the Priority Area 7, need to be seen from the perspective of their impact relative to the amount of resources invested. In the Region that encompasses the extremes of the EU in both the economic and social terms, this approach will enable us to measure our progress in a more realistic and tangible way.

By advancing the notions of excellence, complementarity and smart specialisation, we believe that everyone has an active role in the EUSDR, both in the current state of affairs and in the common vision we all share for a prosperous and globally competitive Danube Region.