

Udine, Italy, 29th and 30th June 2017



Institutional Greetings

FURIO HONSELL
Mayor, City of Udine

29th June 2017

Welcome to the Minister of Education and Research, Fedeli, the President of the Region, Serracchiani, the Rector of the University of Udine, Professor De Toni, and all the other guests and visitors present here.

It is a great honour for us to be able to host you all here during this event, and I would like to express my hope that your work in the coming days will be fruitful and productive. I look forward to the outcome, to what I expect to be the Udine Declaration, a truly memorable event for our city. I hope that this declaration will have a real impact because, as someone put it before, higher education is indeed 'equitable education' and the promotion of lifelong learning is one of the most important goals of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, the fourth goal. I sincerely believe that societies which have equitable, quality education are healthier societies, which is something that we all need.

Before serving as mayor (may I just explain that in Italy mayors are elected by the people, their term in office lasts for five years and luckily they can only be re-elected once - I am now in my tenth year), as I was saying, before becoming mayor, I served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Udine. One of the reasons why I ran for mayor was because at that time, at the beginning of the 21st Century, we had the third mission of universities, which was service to the community; in other words, as well as education and research, we also provided service to the community. I thought that the best way to do that was to actually take on some kind of administrative responsibility. And so, during the last ten years, I have been inspired by much of what I learned when I was the rector here.

In fact, the first commitment we signed during my administration was the Covenant of Mayors, which aims to reduce the CO₂ emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels by 20%; we have almost achieved this goal precisely because we put into practice the initiatives that the university

Udine, Italy, 29th and 30th June 2017



G7 UNIVERSITY

EDUCATION FOR ALL UDINE

was developing at the time. We had a huge cogeneration plant, a huge district system, and now we are building further district heating systems.

The second point was, of course, one of our main principles: not to leave anyone behind. For this reason, my administration and I have been greatly inspired by one of the programmes of the WHO, the Healthy Cities Programme. Currently (and I feel that this is also quite important in the context of what you will be doing here), there are several mega trends, I would say at least three: one is urbanization, one, of course, is climate change, and the third is our ageing society. Here in Udine, for instance, our old age index is 218, which is pretty high. We have really tried to put inclusion into practice, especially as far as the elderly are concerned; for this reason the issue of lifelong learning and of how to try and help our elderly people adjust to the evolution, including the economic evolution, of the system has been one of the main concerns we have tried to address.

And now we come to the third principle: after health, society - a sustainable society - our third principle was anti-fascism. Once again, this has always been one of the guidelines that has inspired us, to have a truly democratic society, an anti-fascist society, a society built on solidarity, a society built on inclusion.

Thus, for all these reasons, I believe that one of the pillars of democracy, and our only hope, is education, education for all. I think that the main message that you can deliver to the whole world from Udine, is a message on the importance of education, especially for our democratic future and for our sustainable future.

So let me wish you all a very, very fruitful meeting and thank you all for coming; please enjoy your stay here in Udine, the weather is not always this wet, although this is indeed one of the wettest parts of Italy!