

Udine, Italy, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017



## **Institutional Greetings**

**VALERIA FEDELI**  
**Italian Minister of Education, University and Research**

29th June 2017

Good morning everyone.

I am delighted to be here with such distinguished guests from all over the world.

Allow me to thank the Mayor of Udine Furio Honsell, for welcoming us today in the beautiful city of Udine, known for its culture and its vocation for international dialogue.

I would like to thank Rector De Toni, for his sense of initiative and for welcoming us to this wonderful University.

I also wish to thank CRUI President Gaetano Manfredi, for ensuring a continued and profitable collaboration by academia to the international debate on education, through two G7 satellite events.

A collaboration which started in Bologna and continues here in Udine.

Many thanks to the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Friuli Foundation, and to all the organizers of this event.

Today, more than ever Universities must prove they are open in relation to a changing society. This is confirmed by this two-day event and its association to the Festival "Knowledge in Celebration" that involves the whole city: a positive mix promoting culture and knowledge.

During these two days, representatives from Universities from around the world will discuss key themes. I want to thank all the Italian and foreign Rectors who are here today to show that Universities are engaged in their social mission, as much as in the pedagogical one.

Such prestigious and heterogeneous participants will animate the debate around a fundamental theme: "Education for All." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 107 representatives from universities and national and international research institutes, 63 from public institutions and private organizations, representatives from 9 countries: the G7 countries - Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, United Kingdom, United States - Spain and Vatican City.

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The concept behind this conference - Education for All – follows up on the global commitment set by UNESCO for all countries to provide 'quality education for every child, youth and adult'.

I would like to recall on this occasion what I have said on other occasions:

Today we are called to investigate the role of our educational systems in delivering true synergy between education and sustainable development.

What can we do to turn education into a driver for Sustainable Development and fully implement the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda?

Educational systems are key to finding solutions for the future, as well as to the most pressing problems of our time.

This applies to the entire education chain, from pre-primary school to higher education.

It is a fascinating, ambitious and complex challenge that we can only address by looking at the international debate - with a deep sense of collaboration devoid of ideology - extending the agenda to all the players who work together with the institutions, towards making the world a place of freedom, respect, solidarity, collaboration, exchange and well-being.

The sustainable development goals at the heart of the UN 2030 Agenda urge us all to change the course of development and put an end to all forms of poverty, while preserving and protecting the planet from climate change, ensuring prosperity for all and combating inequality and discrimination. Some of the goals are transversal to the success of this agenda: I would like to mention in particular SDG4 on quality education, and SDG5 on overcoming inequalities between women and men.

SDGs call for us to act not on a national but on a global level. They remind us that, well before being citizens of Italy, France or Japan, we are citizens of the world.

The global world raises complex and common challenges: poverty, wars and geopolitical changes are generating new migratory flows; the human impact on the environment and climate change have great implications for increasingly extreme weather events which, in turn, trigger new conflicts and migrations; Well-being, health, and proper nutrition are still out of reach for too many people around the world; Girls and women are still too often on the margins of society, discriminated against, victims of violence, stereotypes, prejudices; terrorism and the violence of wars continue to plague the world.

We must all understand - and take on the ensuing responsibility - that only together can we overcome challenges, realize hopes, find well-being and happiness, by striking the right balance

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between the global dimension that currently affects many of our possibilities and the local dimension where our lives actually take place.

The changes brought about by modernity, globalization and innovations require institutions and policies capable of governing, providing direction and solving complexities so as to ensure well-being for everyone. We cannot stop modernity or the great changes that are transforming the world: going back to the past, creating barriers, blocking trade is not the right way forward. What we need is to understand these changes, in order to govern and regulate them, and - why not - anticipate them. Instead, too often, societies tend to implode, each seeking for answers within itself, thereby reopening ancient conflicts, raising walls, and becoming isolated. This is what is happening in many parts of the world, including Europe, where only a few years ago such an attitude seemed unthinkable.

The theme of today's and tomorrow's conference is therefore a central area of commitment for those who accept the educational challenge of future generations.

This afternoon, during the four parallel sessions of Magnificent Encounters, the working groups will discuss the key role that Universities can play in addressing the challenges that modernity presents us, starting with two considerations.

First, in the coming decades the need for higher education worldwide will grow as a direct consequence of increasing world population.

Secondly, the growth in world population, and the ensuing complexity of the challenges ahead, will strengthen the centrality of universities as hubs of knowledge and their role in building a sustainable development model.

The underlying message is a call for: Education for All and Universities for All.

Today's parallel sessions focus on four key points.

First: the role that Universities play in developing global citizens, fostering common values and promoting meetings, contamination and exchange.

Second, the importance of setting up a Sustainability Education that goes beyond the disciplinary dimension and the environmental lens with which the theme has been addressed so far.

Third: the need to deepen the role of Universities in promoting democratic participation and social mobility.

Fourth: the factors that influence the demand for university education and determine the socio-economic impact globally.

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The university system is already promoting training activities that meet the challenges of sustainable development, especially in relation to environmental challenges, climate change, energy and renewable resources.

We commend these initiatives which will bring - we are sure - great advances in knowledge.

The same dynamism is required on themes of sustainable development which extend to the social and economic sphere - activities that these work tables are advancing and for which I express my deepest gratitude.

The work carried out during this conference will be useful in an increasingly knowledge-based world, which is key not only to keep up with the times but also, somewhat ambitiously, to interpret and govern events. We need to understand what lies ahead in order to face it.

We must make this vision pervasive in all the choices and actions that affect the knowledge chain, including those that combine professional training and the activities of universities and research centres, focusing on strategic goals for the country and strengthening technological transfer and links with Businesses.

For example, I refer to the National Industry Plan 4.0 on which we are working together with the Ministry of Economic Development: the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research has dealt with the development of enabling technologies, Competence Centres and the upgrading of Higher Technical Institutes.

We do this, as already mentioned, all along the education system chain: and once again schools must become increasingly open to the world and a place where modern citizenship can develop.

Schools are the place where new generations learn to respect the rights of others, respect the laws and commit to the principles of acceptance, inclusion and equal opportunities. It is the place where future citizens are educated. Thanks to our education system, to the commendable work of teachers and school leaders, to the commitment of society and of the whole education community, girls and boys learn how to become good citizens. They are provided with the tools required to understand change and with knowledge and skills to develop critical thinking, become proactive, develop the ability to understand, explore and always strive to do their best.

In the first part of this year, we launched an investment of 120 million Euros to bring Education to global citizenship and sustainable development in every school in Italy.

It was one of the actions of an overall plan in 10 actions that we have launched drawing on the objectives of the United Nations 2030 agenda, paying particular attention to the many dimensions of global citizenship, working on training objectives related to: food, wellbeing, healthy lifestyles,

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sports and motor education; knowledge and accessibility to cultural heritage; active, environmental, digital and economic citizenship; European citizenship; integration and social coexistence, with special focus on the issue of migrants.

This is an important investment to promote global citizenship, starting with the recognition of society as a complex network of connections and interdependencies, stories and values, problems and opportunities, with local, national and global implications.

Finding solutions to address the challenges of our time requires the finest minds, and diversity is proved to be the best guarantee for creativity and human enterprise.

For this reason, we have set up a working group within the Ministry, coordinated by Professor Enrico Giovannini, who is working to build a shared and pluralistic idea of sustainable development education along the whole chain of knowledge. We will do this by setting up a "National Education Plan for Sustainability", with an international vocation and widely shared by the education community.

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Today, we will listen to experiences and proposals for joint policies and actions on Education for All.

Thanks to the contributions from the four working tables, a Manifesto will be presented tomorrow addressed to universities and ministers around the world with valuable information on how universities can contribute to the cultural, social and economic development of their countries in a perspective of sustainability and global citizenship.

We are called to work together in order to win the most important challenge of all, to ensure quality education for the greatest possible number of people around the world.

Quality education - in schools, universities and in the research community - requires excellence and strength, but also equal access to training for girls and boys, regardless of their background, geographical origin or gender.

Quality education supports foreign students in their school career by helping them to bridge the language and cultural gap when studying in a country other than their home country.

Quality education supports girls in pursuing their dreams, in the same way as boys, even when someone tells them that certain things, professional careers and passions do not concern them.

Because ambitions and attitudes have no colour or gender, they must all be supported and protected. They are deserved to be accomplished.

Because a successful society is a society where every citizen has the opportunity to use their talent to the benefit of the community, without obstacles arising from bias, stereotypes or frustration.

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By investing on girls and boys we can build together paths of sustainability, equality, and widespread well-being. We must help contemporary societies with their inward-looking attitude, fears and marginalization, to embrace young generations whose lungs, heads, hearts are full of hope.

We owe it to our young generations and to their future. Because - as I often say – the future belongs to us all but we have to share it and it is our duty to act together in order help make the world a better place than the one we found.