

Dear Senators,
Members of the University Council,
Chairpersons of Scientific Discipline Councils,
Deans of Colleges and Directors of Institutes,
Distinguished Professors,
Esteemed Guests,
Dear Current and Former Employees,
Dear Graduates, Doctoral Students and Students
Of the Cracow University of Economics,

The inauguration of the new academic year is a very important, beautiful and even moving ceremony for our entire community. Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions, we could not invite you all in person today, as was the case years ago, to fill this hall to the brim with eminent guests. For this reason, I would like to extend an equally warm welcome to all of you who are participating in this event via the Internet. I am delighted with your virtual presence and I offer my heartfelt greetings to you all.

As the long-standing custom dictates, let me welcome the distinguished guests of the University of Economics. **May I ask for a thunderous round of applause for all of them after the welcoming remarks.**

Thank you for being with us today. I warmly welcome you to the premises of the Cracow University of Economics. We are deeply honoured by your presence. Once again, let me welcome all those who have joined us via the Internet. I sincerely hope that next year we will be able to meet in person.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we inaugurate the 97th academic year at the Cracow University of Economics. We are thus fast approaching the 100th anniversary of our University, which was established in 1925 as the Higher School of Commerce in Cracow. It was the third higher school of commerce (then private) in the Second Polish Republic. Its founder and first rector, Arnold Bolland, chose as its motto the phrase that still applies today: *Rerum cognoscere causas et valorem* – To discover the causes and values of things. After the wartime turmoil, in 1952 the then Higher School of Economics moved to a beautiful building, formerly the property of Prince Alexander Lubomirski Foundation, which is still the pride and joy of our University. In 1974, it was renamed to the Cracow Academy of Economics, and in 2007, it became the Cracow University of Economics.

I have provided this summary for a reason. I want to underscore the fact that despite various historical vicissitudes, our institution has survived and continues to educate successive generations of specialists. Since its foundation, our University has had nearly 160 thousand graduates! This is a source of pride and joy, but also a great responsibility.

Our new students will soon join this select group. This academic year, 5181 students will start their education at the Cracow University of Economics: 3290 of them will be attending full-time courses, whereas 1891 part-time ones, including about 300 from abroad. I would like to welcome you all very warmly! I hope that the courses you have chosen will open up new perspectives for you and you will acquire not only useful theoretical but also practical knowledge. I believe that you will use your time wisely not only to launch your research or business careers, but also to become wise, conscious, responsible, and good people.

Dear Students,

You have chosen the largest university of economics in Poland, with a rich history and tradition. *Whoever does not explore the impossible makes no discovery*, as the great scientist Albert Einstein once remarked. As students of the Cracow University of Economics you have the opportunity to explore and learn about the world around you from a variety of vantage points. You have at your disposal not only classrooms and laboratories but also a large, green campus in the city centre and relaxation areas. You have to strike the right balance between learning and knowledge, relaxation and developing your passions. However, I guarantee you that if you use your years here wisely, you will

be rewarded very broad development prospects. If you follow in our graduates' footsteps, you will notice that they achieve a lot and find their first gainful job when they are still students.

I wish you luck in finding your own way, developing your passions, and making new friends. I wish you to make the most of your time at university. But please do not lose sight of the fact that you are the future of our country and our planet, and that it is up to you to decide what life here will be like in 10, 20 or 30 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The role of a thorough, comprehensive education is particularly vital today – of that I have no doubt. In this process, I am confident to say, universities of economics play a special and very important role. They explain and teach the understanding of many phenomena and processes. Numerous studies show that the economic and mathematical knowledge of Poles, although clearly improving in recent years, still remains insufficient. And this knowledge is key not only for running a household or a business but most of all for the functioning of societies and economies, both national and international ones. Without economic knowledge, it is impossible to efficiently manage, distribute goods, trade and produce, or even run companies and enterprises.

But that is not all. There is no university – no academic quality – without humanism and without concern for others. It would seem that the pandemic reminded us of this and taught us about solidarity. Unfortunately, it was true only for a moment. Today, we are once again shutting ourselves away in our own world, disregarding the rights and dignity of individuals and even fundamental human rights. We must not remain silent or turn our heads away from contempt and injustice which, before our very eyes, are being shown today towards poor people escaping death. The duty of the university thus is not only to educate its graduates but also to prepare them for life in society so that the situations we have witnessed in recent weeks never happen again. It is our responsibility to pass on to young people values such as compassion, responsibility, honesty, and tolerance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thankfully, the long months of the sometimes extremely difficult pandemic reality are behind us. The loss of loved ones and friends, the constant fear and uncertainty, restricted interpersonal contacts, and the lack of opportunities to participate in many cultural events have all taken their toll on us. The economy and businesses have suffered, but ordinary people have suffered the most, including our staff and students.

I have the impression, however, that as a community of the Cracow University of Economics we have done well in this pandemic exam. I am not talking about the rapid and very efficient implementation of distance learning and the transition to remote and hybrid work. Above all, I am talking about the support we have given each other, the enormous solidarity we have shown, and the selfless help we have given to those in need.

There are still many challenges ahead of us. We do not know whether or not the pandemic will end any time soon – the current medical forecasts and data suggest otherwise. But we are certainly trying to return to normality. We have a challenging and demanding task ahead of us to find the best solutions and to explore new options. I know that I can rely on your responsibility, as the past months have clearly shown.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

The inauguration of a new academic year is a good moment to look back at the previous year, which was full of important decisions and events. First of all, the Senate drew up and approved an extremely important document, the Development Strategy for 2021–2024, which will help us develop and modernise the University by implementing innovative schemes and projects.

We also managed to develop a new, coherent research policy for the Cracow University of Economics as well as to establish the Scientific Excellence Fund, which resulted in a marked increase in valuable publications – high-impact monographs and scientific articles. In the academic year 2020/2021, we had as many as 209 publications scoring above 100 points, including 188 research articles, 12 chapters in monographs, and 9 monographs.

The growth of our University's scientific and research potential is also evidenced by the HR Excellence in Research distinction received by the Cracow University of Economics from the

European Commission. Thanks to it, we have joined the prestigious group of institutions that have the right to use this label as part of promoting a stimulating and favourable working environment for scientists.

Despite the difficulties and constraints associated with the pandemic, last year also proved to be extremely rich in relations. We signed numerous agreements and started cooperation with scientific, business and social institutions, local authorities, and the diplomatic corps. I am also pleased with the very good relations with the University Council, Patronage Council, Students' Parliament, Doctoral Students' Council and other student organisations as well as trade unions, which are conducive to the development of our University. The solutions and compromises worked out during numerous meetings will contribute to closer cooperation and further development of its potential.

Nurturing these relations is also fostered by the unique CUE Responsible project launched in 2021, which includes: Art at the CUE, CUE Helps, and Social Development and Ecology. Thanks to them, it was possible to organise numerous pro-social initiatives, a commemorative concert on the University Day, and the first "CUE Community" plebiscite, the aim of which is to honour the members of our community involved in social and charitable activities. Our University also joined in the implementation of the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of our cooperation with local authorities and business, we have organised a series of debates entitled "Rethinking Krakow and Malopolska. Perspective 2030."

The 2020/2021 academic year was also marked by changes and modernisation of the University's campus. The thermal retrofit of the Main Library building was completed, the ZaUEK Student Club was expanded, the modern CUE Forum was opened, and a number of teaching halls and rooms were renovated. All this was crowned by the purchase of new equipment and computer hardware needed for work and distance learning.

The purchase and implementation of the Office 365 system was also extremely helpful, as it accelerated the flow of information and enabled more comfortable working and learning. Our upgraded homepage with its new English-language version and a new mode of operation of the university's information channels contributed to increased interest in and greater transparency of the contents published there.

Last year we also launched a Business Consultancy Centre for students from abroad. We are one of only five places in Europe where international students interested in starting their own business or who already run their own business receive expert support and professional assistance.

I could not fail to mention the achievements of our students. As many as 20 of them represent our University at the World Expo 2020 in Dubai. It is an extraordinary opportunity and certainly a great adventure for them.

Last year also brought success in sports. In the Polish Academic Futsal Championships, the CUE football team won 2 silver medals and then went on to win the Polish Vice-Championship in the women's futsal league. Four of our students also qualified to the Polish national futsal team.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our plans for the academic year just beginning are no less ambitious. First of all, we will be consistently implementing the Development Strategy of the Cracow University of Economics for the years 2021–2024. We want to put special emphasis on strengthening our research and publication potential, improve the quality of teaching, and further upgrade the way the university is managed. We also plan to introduce a new employee evaluation system, which will include salary raises.

Further investments include first and foremost the Student Services Centre at the cost of ca. PLN 45 million, which is expected to make life significantly easier for our staff and students. We also plan to continue modernising the Main Library (ca. PLN 30 million), create a Professors' Room and Garden intended mainly for retired staff (ca. PLN 2 million), and to modernise Pavilion G for the needs of the Krakow Business School (ca. PLN 3 million). Next year we will also present the design of a new lecture and congress building (ca. 170 million).

We will continue the computerisation process, which served us very well during the pandemic. In the near future, we intend to introduce a fully functional electronic document flow system, which will significantly streamline our work. We are also equipped with all the tools necessary to return to remote teaching, although I sincerely hope that this will not happen.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Faculty and Staff Members,

I would like to emphasise that the successes I have just described would have been impossible without your hard work, commitment, creativity, and dedication. I am deeply grateful to you for your everyday efforts in teaching and research, in administration and for everything that you have done to ensure the efficient operation of our University. Thank you for your willingness to develop personally and professionally, to work in spite of the difficult, pandemic conditions and to adapt quickly to the new reality.

At this point, I would like to express my special thanks to 24 people who terminated their professional careers at our University in the past academic year due to retirement. On behalf of myself, the Rectorate, students and graduates, and the entire academic community of the Cracow University of Economics, I would like to thank you for everything. I hope that you will keep your fond memories of our University and continue to be involved in its life, for instance as members of the Alumni Association or the Mentors' Council, or as students at the University of the Third Age.

Let me now mention those who departed from our Community forever during the last academic year.

1. Professor Jerzy Mikułowski Pomorski, Rector of the Cracow University of Economics in 1990–1996
2. Professor Antoni Fajferek, Rector of the Cracow University of Economics in 1972–1981
3. Dr Jolanta Teneta-Plotkowiak
4. Ms Alicja Babral
5. Mr Stanisław Dorak
6. Mr Józef Drabina
7. Mr Janusz Dylewski
8. Ms Barbara Franczak
9. Ms Anna Iskra
10. Mr Marek Janicki
11. Ms Mariola Juszczak
12. Ms Krystyna Kitowa
13. Ms Bronisława Kolarska
14. Mr Wojciech Krzywda
15. Ms Teresa Kwaśniewska
16. Ms Bogumiła Łysk
17. Ms Marianna Mitka
18. Ms Grażyna Okręglicka
19. Ms Lidia Salawa
20. Ms Lucyna Szromnik
21. Ms Barbara Stolarska
22. Ms Aniela Szydło
23. Ms Maria Szydłowska
24. Ms Joanna Tarnawska
25. Mr Bogdan Warszawski

Please rise and let us observe a minute's silence in their honour.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that *even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched*. So I wish us all that the beginning of the 97th academic year 2021/2022 will help us develop not only as scientists but also as people and society.

Quod bonum, felix, faustum fortunatumque sit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now declare the 97th academic year at the Cracow University of Economics officially open!

