
Václav Havel Multi-national MA Programme Launched at CU

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The Patriotic Hall at Carolinum welcomed the celebration of the rename the inter-university MA programme, appropriately named after the former president Václav Havel. The special ceremony introduced a programme organised by [EUROPÆUM](#), which intends to interconnect prestigious European universities on a single, multi-practice postgraduate scheme. Central to these plans are Charles University, Sorbonne-Pantheon and Leiden, with the support of scholars from Oxford University. Academic representatives from each of the participating universities were invited to discuss and elaborate on the aims of the programme, and to pay homage to its namesake, Václav Havel.

With five accepted students on the two-year long programme present in the crowd, the course was outlined; a multidisciplinary course, involving modules shared between two or more of the participating universities, with a strong focus on linking the Humanities. European Politics, Contemporary History, Law and Geography will be touched upon, in addition to European International Relations.

Professor Václav Hampl, Rector of Charles University, introduced guests through brief explanation and appreciation. Rector Hampl likened the international, multi-faceted course as relevant to the life of Václav Havel, a “popular European and statesman”, drawing on his aspiration to educate and integrate the youth of Europe into a modern community.

A more personal perspective followed from Professor Ivan Havel, Director of Center for Theoretical Study at Charles University and brother of the prestigious former president. He explained that Václav Havel, as the first democratic president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, contributed to the modern culture of Europe and would have strongly supported the international integration of institutions for the sake of young people. Smiling out of pride and approval, Ivan Havel made it clear that his late brother would have been fully supportive of this initiate, and would have certainly been proud to charter the name.

Prominent figures from EUROPÆUM, the association behind this event, were present. The Secretary-General of the association, Dr. Paul Flather, was able to concisely explain to the audience the ideas behind the programme, which echo their main aim: increased communication and integration between institutions. After giving a brief history of EUROPÆUM, founded in 1993, Dr. Flather explained that the idea was designed to give younger scholars a “better sense of Europe”, with this specific degree course formulated to further “integrate and collaborate” these universities by means of a single degree programme. He then shared an anecdote about a brief meeting with former President Havel, depicting his warm nature and insistent attitude for success.

Invited to speak next was Karel Schwarzenberg, a trustee of EUROPÆUM and the former chancellor of Havel’s Czechoslovak Government, a man who had close ties with the organisation and with Havel himself. As a nationally respected figure, Schwarzenberg was invited to be the first to officiate the programme, giving him an opportunity to promote the scheme and pay homage to his former superior and friend. Speaking from experience, as the most recent former secretary of foreign affairs, Schwarzenberg explained that during a time of “European uncertainty” emphasis on reintegration is vital. In particular, he highlighted how important this degree course is as an opportunity to rekindle links between European institutions and furthermore; outlined the relevance of the Havel name, explaining the former president’s dream for “young people to study freely”, and rounded off his sentiments with hope that Havel’s visions would resonate within this programme.

Representatives from Patheon-Sorbonne and Leiden University attended to launch the programme. Jean-Marc Bonnissseau, the Vice-President of Patheon-Sorbonne University, advocated future collaboration in order to achieve the “goal for the future of our students”: the increased unity throughout European institutions. Leiden University Professor Andre Gerrits was also present to express his view and promote the programme. He emphasised that the MA scheme will not only interest students but will also form an energetic academic connection between the universities. Stating that the European Union is at a risk of disintegration, Gerrits made it clear that the Havel programme will “bridge lines of division” and will be hugely beneficial to students, academics and their respective cultures.

The ceremony was summarised by Professor Lenka Rovná, an experienced fellow of Charles University. As a greatly experienced lecturer herself, she reminded the audience that Václav Havel used to regularly give lectures at Prague’s oldest university. He educated students in an array of subjects including International Relations, Diplomacy and Human Rights – each relevant and directly connected to the MA programme. She exclaimed that this programme would add a dimension to Charles University and other the institutions, and that it will be “enriching for all students and teachers alike”, typifying the unique benefits of the integration programme.

The centrepiece of the event was the EUROPAEUM Lecture held by Sir Adam Roberts, Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University, on the topic of *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: From the Prague Spring to the Arab Spring*. The lecture captivated the audience, drawing comparisons between the Prague spring of 1968 and the Arab spring and its aftermath, an especially potent and current issue in today's world. He emphasised the importance of civil resistance and compared the two, with the conclusion that in light of the Syrian situation, Havel himself would "not have lost hope" for diplomacy. The importance of integration and care between countries was the main theme of the ceremony, and it was fitting that such an event was concluded with an acknowledgement of the marvellous former leader and statesman, Václav Havel.

Sam Pepper is interested in meeting and discussing culture between people from other nationalities. This, he says is one of his favourite hobbies, which led him to great personal development during his Erasmus study period in Prague. He also offers simple English lessons to other European students to gain understanding of other cultures and help others improve with their language skills.

By initially learning meeting people of other European cultures at his home University at Essex, whilst living with French, Swedish and Norwegian people, he says that he has become fascinated in European attitudes, comparing similarities and differences in European politics, popular culture and ways of life. He has always taken a firm interest in current affairs and hot topics in world politics, therefore relished the opportunity to write about subjects such as disparity in East Asia, European Union immigration and a European multinational MA programme. These opportunities have not only developed his interest in international affairs, but also it has shown him the value of being a European student in the Czech Republic.