
Report from Gaudeamus Prague 2020

Report from Gaudeamus Prague 2020 - Promoting university education and lifelong learning

The Prague inception of Gaudeamus – a hugely popular European exhibition fair promoting university education and lifelong learning - has just wrapped up in the Czech capital. Over three days this week, thousands of visitors – most often high school students in their final year before graduation – came to Prague's Letňany to learn about schools where they would like to study. Including Charles University.



The **Gaudeamus fair** takes its names from a traditional students' song with melodic roots dating all the way back to the 13th century. Most of the lyrics are a great deal younger but form an unofficial student anthem, urging students to live life to the fullest as time in this world is brief, and calling on them to make the most of their studies at university.

Most of those who attended the fair in Prague this week were presented with a wide array of possibilities: the Czech Technical University in Prague (ČVUT), Masaryk University and Charles University are just three top schools from a long list that took part.

Hall 4, where universities had stands, was so packed with young people getting information that navigating the crowds at times was reminiscent of swimming upstream.

Some of the students – **Veronika and Pavel** told me more about the schools that had caught their attention:

V: I am interested in studying at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague in connection with the environment.

P: I am interested in history and renewable resources so I am considering two schools – the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague and Charles University.

CU's stand this year was among the more prominent, placing third in a competition for best booth or exhibit. Students from all 17 faculties were on hand, providing information to potential applicants. CU is placing a renewed emphasis as a research university and on the importance of blue skies research, as well as on greater mobility and opportunities for students within the 4EU+ alliance.



Miroslav Čermák, one of the key organisers from the team of **CU Point** and the **Press and PR Office at the Rectorate**, describes the event as a “major undertaking” involving the creative input and talents of many. He told me more above the din in the hall, as wave after wave of young people walked by.

The aim is of course to attract motivated students and recent graduates and to offer information about all of our programmes and faculties. We want attendees to gain as much information as they need – and to communicate face-to-face with representatives who in this case are students from the faculties themselves. That is hugely important. As students, they are able to offer special insights based on their own experience, which is great. At our section, there are all kinds of presentations that people could see – in science and medicine and much more – and we even had space where visitors can take a break and relax.



The first two days of the three-day fair saw some 9,000 visitors. One of those to present her faculty was student **Tereza Adámková**:

I am studying at the Hussite Theological Faculty and this is my second time at Gaudeamus; I also took part at Brno just a few months ago. It is a great event and is an excellent opportunity for students to get information about our school. Of course, there is a lot to take in. I think attendees come away with a lot of information. They ultimately make their decision later, but they also come here with possibilities in mind. Not all plans come to fruition right away, but the important thing is that they know they want to study at university after graduation.

Meeting with future potential students, is something Tereza Adámková and fellow colleagues clearly enjoy. The overall mood is very positive and the hall hums with interest and conversation. For universities on site, being seen is crucial, and the most effective booths or sites are not only visually impressive but are easy to spot, rising vertically towards the ceiling, meaning they can be easily located even across the room.

Each university has its own way of attracting passers-by: the Czech Technical University in Prague, for example, boasts a 3D mock-up of an Olympic kayak course, offering visitors the chance to race a plastic kayaker or a bunch of rubber duckies to the finish line.

ČVUT student Karel Treu told me more:

This is a tiny version of the model we designed for the course for kayakers we designed for Rio 2016. It's a big attraction and we have a lot of technical information about the course for those who want to know more. And you can of course race while you are here.



Just across the way, Charles University exhibited large format photographs that included notable alumni and events and featured a large flat screen with a video presentation.

Those who had already visited the CU stand are always easy to spot as they wear paper Charles IV crowns (think Jughead Jones) with the slogan: #studylikeaking. **Miroslav Čermák** calls the hats a great addition, saying they are fun and always snapped up.

Visitors want them. They put them together and then wear them throughout the day.

Asked about the other schools, **Miroslav Čermák** admits there is a measure of competition but said it is mostly friendly – after three years involvement, many from different schools are now familiar faces.

I would describe it as a healthy rivalry. A lot of us know each other from past fairs. There is a level of competition, sure, but we know how much work goes into all of this. The main thing is to present our university in its many facets and to show what we have to offer.

The biggest plus or takeaway is that there is such an interest from young people in continuing with university education. At the end of the day, meeting that interest is really what it's all about.