

# On the Way

## Inaugural Address

### by the Rector Tiziana Lippiello

Dear all,

**W**elcome to the opening ceremony for the 2021-2022 academic year of Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

I would first like to greet and thank our guests, that is, the President of Teatro Stabile del Veneto, Giampiero Beltotto, and the Director of the Goldoni Theatre, Giorgio Ferrara. It is thanks to them that we can hold this event in person.

Today, we are celebrating the 154th academic year of our university, which is a community of 23,000 students and 1,300 lecturers and technical-administrative staff.

The inauguration of the academic year is a solemn moment in the life of a university, as it is the time for its community to unite around its values and share a common path. In turn, the university belongs to a broader community. It takes part in the life of society, starting with the city in which it is located, thus becoming a constructive participant in its challenges.

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As such, it undertakes to make its own contribution to the main issues at the heart of the Italian and European political agenda by offering solutions and opportunities through research.

Today's event is therefore not only a moment of celebration in which we reflect on our actions and results - it is also an opportunity to recall the principles of our Charter, the responsibilities and the tasks to which we are called, and our objectives, as well as to think about the road we are taking and to focus on our next goals.

## **1 Our Commitment to New Challenges**

**T**oday's challenges are legion and urgent, and some of them affect us very closely.

First and foremost, witness the environmental issue. Indeed, today marks an important anniversary, namely the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement to combat climate change and in particular global warming that came into force exactly 17 years ago.

Another challenge is the need to rethink working arrangements for greater well-being and a better work-life balance: on the one hand, there is a growing interest to make telecommuting an everyday tool, while on the other there is an increasing demand for jobs that allow workers to cultivate meaningful relationships.

Among our young people there is a clear desire to have a job that is centred on respect for one's values, that promotes the quality of relationships, and that can satisfy individual and collective aspirations.

There is also the issue, which is closely linked to the previous one, of bridging the gender gap, which still needs working on. For instance, the data released a few weeks ago by the AlmaLaurea Inter-University Consortium shows that there is still great disparity between male and female graduates, to

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***We must recall our objectives, we must think about the road we are taking and focus on our next goals***







the detriment of the latter, in terms of employment rate and pay.

Among the global challenges of our time are international dialogue and cooperation, which underpin fair and meritocratic development.

In the face of the magnitude of these challenges, the value and role of education as a lever for growth, development, and the overcoming of barriers and borders must be restored to the forefront, in line with Goal 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda.

On this occasion, I would like to recall the words that the President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella pronounced right here, at Ca' Foscari, in 2018, during the opening ceremony of the academic year whereby we celebrated the 150th anniversary of our University. The President emphasised

***It is now time to resume the shared, long-term planning that once inspired the minds and hearts of our teachers, scholars and politicians***

***Among the global challenges of our time are international dialogue and cooperation, which underpin fair and meritocratic development***

the major role our universities play, as they all contribute, each with its own characteristics, to the shaping of reflections, directions, plans for the future and future prospects of the young people who will be in government in the coming decades.

In our 'Ca' Foscari 2026 - A Bridge towards the Future' Strategic Plan, we recall where we started from and indicate where we want to get to, putting our skills and our historical calling for internationalisation at the service

of the region, integrating research with the growth of the community and including the region in a logic of national and international cooperation for an integrated promotion of the Italian system.

The global vocation of our university corresponds to that of the multicultural and multilingual city of Venice. We are a community of global citizens. For us, being global citizens of knowledge means continually

***Where we started from, where we want to get to***

“ **The global vocation of our university corresponds to the one of the multicultural and multilingual city of Venice**

questioning ourselves, trying to observe even what seems familiar with ever-new approaches.

We firmly believe in the alliance among Italian, European and international universities. For this reason we have joined EUTOPIA, an alliance of ten European universities that aims to foster the relationship between cities, collaboration, and sharing with the general public (the so-called ‘civic engagement’).

## **2 Building to Grow: Construction**

**A** good university needs good spaces, allowing for innovative teaching, an appropriate student-faculty ratio, and efficient administrative services. By acknowledging our community’s changing needs and ways of conceiving university life, we will provide new facilities and spaces, starting with the renovation of the San Tomà campus, which will house new offices whose first design phase has just been completed.

In cooperation with the City of Venice, the Veneto Region, the Superintendency, the State Property Office and the Venice Development Agency, we are working on a project to foster student residency and attract an increasing number of students from abroad. This project, which in the coming months will be submitted to the ministerial commission for Italian Law 338 on university buildings, concerns the construction of a new student residence in the premises of the former Pepe Barracks in Lido di Venezia. In addition to creating rooms to accommodate 220 residents, we also envisage providing spaces for cultural and educational services, study rooms, meeting rooms, a library, internet facilities, a laundry, a gymnasium, and service offices.

In July 2022, renovation work will begin on Tesa 4 in San Basilio, in Venice’s city centre. It will be a modern space equipped with 12 lecture halls of various sizes, study rooms, and premises ideal for stu-

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“ **Many projects  
are on their way**

dent and corporate research activities (such as Active Learning Labs), interdisciplinary activities, and the dissemination of the results of scientific research. It will be a meeting place for art, the humanities, social sciences, and science.

Together with IUAV University of Venice, thanks to the close cooperation with the City of Venice and the help of Mayor Luigi Brugnaro and the Assessor of the City of Venice Paola Mar, we are examining a new project for the joint use of part of the Terese complex in Dorsoduro.

In a few months, the student residence on the Mestre Scientific Campus in Via Torino will be completed, offering 142 lodgings for male and female students. We are also laying the groundwork for the construction of another multifunctional building, mainly for study rooms and canteen spaces, as well as offices and spaces for sports activities.

Our campus in the city of Treviso also remains firmly at the centre of our plans, with the aim of consolidating our presence in the city, thus improving spaces and services for students and staff. Indeed, together with the City of Treviso and Ipab-Appiani-Turazza, we have defined the timetable that will lead our university to move its activities to new premises in the city centre. By the end of this year, work will begin on refurbishing and upgrading the building, with the aim of moving there in 2024.

Finally, we are working with local authorities to acquire more space in the city, which is necessary to carry out our teaching activities and to promote our numerous internationalisation activities.

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space in the city**

### 3 Leaving No One Behind: Student Support

**S**paces have meaning because they host a community. Our focus on student services and student support translates into targeted actions aimed at overcoming social, economic, gender and ability differences.

I will now mention two of these actions which I attach particular importance to:

“*Spaces have meaning because they host a community*”

- the raising of the income limit for tuition fee exemption above the threshold set by the MUR, in order to better support families who have been tried by these last two, difficult years;
- the financial integration of Erasmus grants.

### 4 Inclusiveness at the Core of Our Values: The Gender Equality Plan

**C**a' Foscari University has adopted a Gender Equality Plan, in line with the strategies developed by the European Commission to promote gender equality in research and innovation. The Plan was recently approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors of the University and is the result of the joint and cross-sectional work of a group made up of professors and technical-administrative staff, who have been able to work harmoniously and whom I would like to warmly thank for their great commitment and for the results achieved.

”*The Gender Equality Plan stems from a joint and cross-sectional work*”

### 5 'Education First': Teaching

**S**tudents are our absolute priority. We are continuing our efforts to propose an educational offer that is innovative, interdisciplinary, international, and environmentally aware. We are preparing to launch two new









“ **Students are our absolute priority**

Master’s Degree Programmes entirely in English starting next September, i.e., as of the 2022-2023 academic year, which are currently

in the accreditation phase: the Master’s Degrees in ‘Economics, Finance and Sustainability’ and ‘Engineering Physics’.

Our international curriculum thus continues to expand and strengthen, attracting growing interest among students from abroad, as evidenced by the latest enrolment figures, which show a 22% increase in the number of international students.

Ca’ Foscari University of Venice has also adhered to the joint initiative of the Italian Ministry of Public Administration and the Italian Ministry of University and Research to facilitate the access of public body employees to our educational programme.

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**Our international curriculum attracts growing interest among international students**

## **6 Our International and Global Vocation**

I have already mentioned our membership of EUTOPIA. New international agreements have been added to the large number of those already in place.

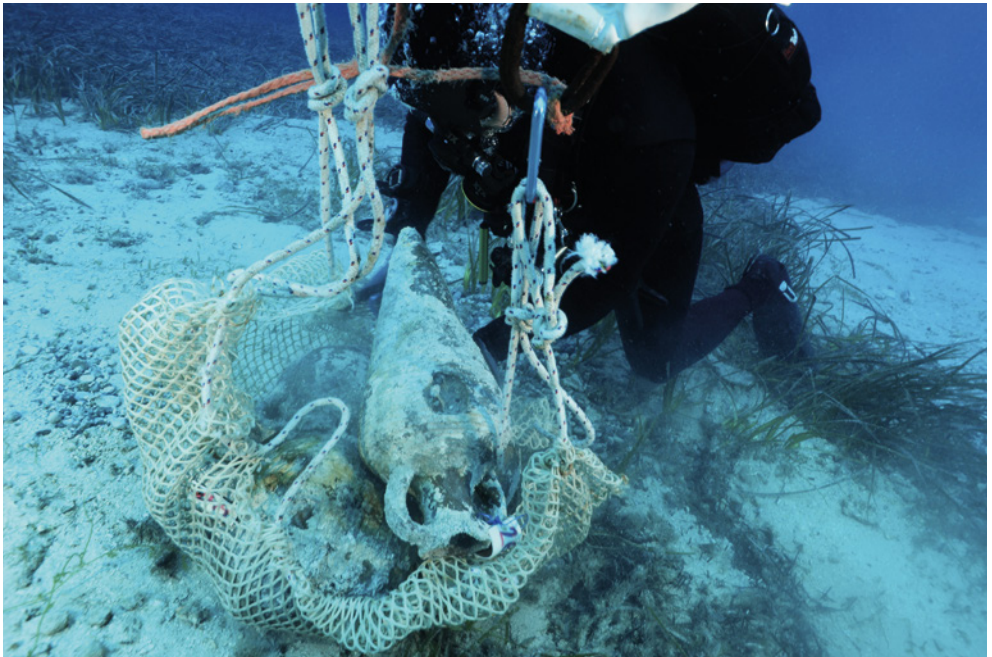
“ **Ca’ Foscari’s international agreements have now reached a total of 456**

A few days ago, in Dubai, we signed two agreements with the Canadian University of Dubai and the American University in Dubai, which will offer new opportunities for exchange and collaboration. With these two new initiatives, Ca’ Foscari’s international agreements have now reached a total of 456.

The international outreach of our university is also expressed through the results of our research, which can reach all corners of the world.

In this regard, I would like to mention the archaeological research carried out within the framework of the CESAV Venice Archaeology Study Centre, in the Department of Humanities. In addition to the extraordinary research conducted in North-East Italy from Altino to Torcello, as well as in the rest of the country and in the eastern Mediterranean, I would also









like to mention the expansion of Ca' Foscari's research from Georgia to Sudan, Iraq and Pakistan. In the latter, the mission in the Swat valley, co-managed by the Department of Asian and North African Studies with ISMEO, has brought to light an important Buddhist temple founded at the time of the Indo-Greek kingdoms, i.e., in the 2nd century B.C., if not earlier. In addition to the research activities in Swat, we would like to add a Summer School soon.

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## **7 Ca' Foscari is Research**

**T**he quality of our research is attested, among other things, by the numerous grants we have received. Ca' Foscari University of Venice has been a point of reference in Italy and Europe for ten years: as a matter of fact, we rank among the top nine universities in Italy for the number of approved and funded projects. We are steadily above EUR 11 million per year in terms of funding for European and international projects: in 2021, our University was awarded EUR 11.8 million in funding, winning 51 projects and confirming the Italian (first place) and European (fourth place) record for Marie-Skłodowska Curie fellowships, with thirty-two projects won. We also won three ERC grant projects (two as Host Institution).

***Ca' Foscari ranks among the top nine universities in Italy for the number of approved and funded projects***

Behind these figures is the work of a close-knit team of professionals, of the technical-administrative staff of the Departments and the university, and of researchers who compete successfully in Europe and believe in collaboration between disciplines.

At this point, I would like to provide some examples of interdisciplinary and international research at our university.

Let me start with WaterLANDS, one of the first projects funded under the European New Green Deal, thanks to which a portion of a 55,000-plus-hectare sandbank will be restored.

The WARMCOASTS project, which won a prestigious ERC Starting Grant for the Department of Environmental Sciences, Informatics and Statistics, aims at studying the rise in sea levels during the last interglacial period.

Moving on to the humanities, I would like to mention “Poliphonic Philosophy”, another ERC Starting Grant at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, which studies the new way of doing philosophy during the fascinating time period from which the university later emerged.

Archival research undertaken by a research team from the Department of Humanities led to the very recent discovery of a document, preserved in the State Archives of Venice, which attests to the existence of a hitherto unknown daughter of Marco Polo, Agnese.

To get an idea of how far the frontiers of our research extend in time and space, there is no better example than to look at the research of our archaeologists, who employ innovative techniques and methods of investigation such as remote sensing, underwater archaeology, digitisation, and artefact analysis.

A new frontier of our research and teaching is the Digital and Public Humanities, featuring an international research centre and a master’s degree programme.

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***Our research is  
interdisciplinary  
and international***

Our research also stems from important collaborations.

I would particularly like to recall the 30-plus-year partnership with the most prestigious Italian public research body, namely the National Research Council of Italy (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, CNR), whose President, Prof. Maria Chiara Carrozza, did us the honour of extending her greetings.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan calls for renewed collaboration among universities, research bodies and companies. Our joint goal is to be more internationally competitive in research areas of priority for the city of Venice, the Veneto region, and Italy. Environmental research on the Venice lagoon has always been a positive example of such collaboration, which should be extended and strengthened in light of the urgent need for sustainable development capable of effectively combating climate change.

Collaboration with the CNR has culminated in the establishment of the Institute of Polar Sciences, located at the Scientific Campus in via Torino (a formidable example of a Mixed



Research Unit), and the consequent establishment of the PhD programme in Polar Sciences.

Examples of collaboration between the Institute of Polar Science and Ca' Foscari (also through the Ca' Foscari Foundation) include two international research projects:

“ ***Our research stems from important collaborations*** ”

- Ice Memory (INSERT IMAGE): a UNESCO-recognised project that aims at collecting and preserving ice samples from glaciers around the world which may disappear or shrink dramatically due to global warming. The CNR and Ca' Foscari University of Venice are co-founders of the International Ice Memory Foundation
- Beyond EPICA Oldest Ice, which aims at recovering a one-and-a-half-million-year-old climate 'memory' in Antarctica
- Venywhere, an urban sustainability project that aims at transforming Venice into a contemporary working city, while also creating a new residential balance.
- In the field of spatial development and promotion, we are engaged - together with the other universities in the North-East - in promoting culture and territorial heritage for sustainable development, as well as a creative and international narrative on landscapes, economies and societies. I would like to mention two examples:
- RePAIR, which is carried out together with the Archaeological Park of Pompeii (which our special guest Professor Osanna directed for a long time), and IIT - Italian Institute of Technology: for the first time, cutting-edge technology will be used for the physical reconstruction of archaeological artefacts, which are largely fragmented and difficult to reconstruct. It will be used for the frescoes of Pompeii and many other cultural heritage sites
- SLIDES aims at providing support for the management of tourist flows in Venice and other cultural tourism destinations. The NRRP is a unique and unmissable opportunity to consolidate collaboration between the business world and universities through technology transfer, industrial PhDs and internship and apprenticeship opportunities.



## 8 Ca' Foscari University is Venice

Our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan includes sustainability among its strategic enabling factors.

On this matter, we have joined our efforts with the Veneto Region and the cities that host us - namely Venice and Treviso - so that they can become a reference point for the World in the field of sustainability, especially for the new European generations. With this in mind, we have joined the Venice World Capital of Sustainability project, striving to improve student and employee housing, as well as carrying out applied research in various subjects, and implementing the VeniSIA project to facilitate the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

“ **Sustainability is a strategic enabling factors** ”

Our commitment to Venice is also reflected in education.

The educational project, which involves the Italian Ministry of Infrastructures and Sustainable Mobility, IUAV University, the Extraordinary Commissioner for the MoSE and the Commissioner of the Venezia Nuova Consortium, aims at raising awareness on environmental protection and the fragile lagoon ecosystems, with a special focus on the following macro-areas of interest: the environment, marine biology, underwater archaeology, chemistry, physics, statistics, mathematics, economics, meteorology, and so on.

Last year, on this exact occasion, we took up European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel's solicitation to submit Venice for the New European Bauhaus initiative. We thus became part of the first thematic network of the Bauhaus of the Seas, which sets out the general objectives of the initiative applied to coastal areas, a very important geographical context.

In order to investigate the social and cultural implications of the climate crisis, we have set up a new international centre, the Centre for Environmental Humanities, in cooperation with the New Institute in Hamburg. The Centre was established on the basis of an educational project consisting in a master's degree in Environmental Humanities that brought together the expertise of most of our University, from the sciences to the humanities.

” **Our commitment to Venice: education** ”



“ ***We became part of the first thematic network of the New European Bauhaus***

Finally, let us address the importance of collaboration with the city’s cultural and scientific institutions. For instance, I would like to mention the Memorandum of Understanding with the Biennale, whereby we offer the opportunity to carry out research at the

Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts.

## 9 Conclusion

As I draw to a close, I would like to thank the entire community of lecturers, technical-administrative staff, technologists, librarians, research grant holders, and PhD students, as well as the whole student body: without them, the results and projects I have told you about today would not have been possible.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the Director General, the Deputy Vice-Rector, all the Vice Rectors and the Delegates, who work alongside me on a daily basis along this path, and to the representatives in the Bodies for the passion they put into our university every day.

I would also like to thank the Ca’ Foscari Venice Foundation for its ability to act not only as an instrumental body, but also as a driving force for the university’s initiatives, particularly in the development of relations with the local area.

My thanks also go to the Alumni Association, a network of 85,000 graduates who spread the values of our university all over the world.

Thank you also to the following institutions for the solid collaboration that has been established over these years: the Veneto Region, the City of Venice, the City of Treviso, the Chamber of Commerce system, the trade associations and Confindustria; the Venice Foundation and the Venetian cultural institutions, which have always supported our cultural activities and our scientific and civic engagement projects, and are now accompanying us in the new challenge of the NRRP.

Lastly, I would like to thank all our donors, in particular the Coin Foundation and Crédit Agricole FriulAdria, and all those whom I am unable to mention here individually, but whose actions constitute an important engine of growth.

***Education is the only solution. Education first***”

I would like to end by recalling a passage from a speech made in 2013, in front of the United Nations, by a very young Pakistani activist, Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. These are simple and direct words, which encapsulate a great message of hope and confidence:

One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education first.

We have reached the conclusion of this ceremony. I want to thank all of you who have participated in it, and I declare the 2021-2022 academic year of Ca' Foscari University of Venice officially open.