

Semmelweis University Budapest
European Universities' Assembly: Opening Ceremony
Budapest, 13 October 2022, 10.00 a.m.

Opening Address

Prof. Dr. Beatrix Busse

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Vice Rector Teaching and Studies, University of Cologne
[Check against delivery.]

Dear Minister Czák,
Dear Rector Merkely,
Dear Deputy State Secretary Lengyel,
Dear Dr. Czibere,
Dear Dean Kellermayer, dear Miklós,
Dear students and colleagues from the European University for Well-Being
Dear colleagues and representatives from all the other European Universities present here,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Taking up the recreational spirit of well-being through music sent to us online during the beautiful concert performed by the Semmelweis University Medical Orchestra at Liszt Academy Concert Centre last Friday, I begin with art, too. To thank both the members of the Semmelweis University orchestra and those wonderful students who performed a very special version of John Lennon's 'Imagine' on Europe day, I could also sing 'Imagine all the people, living life in peace.'

But, no, I have chosen a different piece of art.

As some of you know, I am a real admirer of 24-year-old American poet Amanda Gorman. A few weeks ago, on invitation of the UN assembly on the SDGs, she presented her poem "An Ode We Owe". I quote:

Partner Universities:



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE



Universiteit
Leiden

Linnæus University 



 Nantes
Université

 SEMMELWEIS
UNIVERSITY 1769



“How can I ask you to do good
[...]
Unaware that the welfare of the public
And the planet share a name –
Equality
[...]
We must go the distance
Though this battle is hard and huge,
Though this fight we did not choose,
For preserving the earth isn't a battle too large
To win, but a blessing too large to lose.
This is the most pressing truth:
That Our people have only one planet to call home
And our planet has only one people to call its own.
We can either divide and be conquered by the few,
Or we can decide to conquer the future,
And say that today a new dawn we wrote
Say that as long we have humanity;
We will forever have hope.”¹

Here we are: the next generation – and we see that with our brilliant EUniWell students and junior researchers – urges us to take action against climate change now, to see that the well-being of people and the earth are on equal footing, to join forces and do good, implicitly to think about the language we use, and to believe in humanity.

Again, I am very moved by this poem because of the power of the next generation's voice and what we owe to us and them, and because I also take it as a declarative speech act to take on our responsibility as universities, to act in, for and with society.

Does not this poem also resonate with EUniWell's vision and mission?

EUniWell – the European University for Well-Being – almost prophetically began its work a few months before the pandemic. EUniWell's aim is “to help create a world in which individual, societal, and environmental well-being are in synergy, in which we flourish and prosper together.”² Well-being

¹ See <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/amanda-gorman-vor-den-vereinten-nationen-an-ode-we-owe-a-92106da1-628c-44f0-8773-1c6ffd57321c> [accessed 12 October 2022].

² See <https://www.euniwell.eu> [accessed 12 October 2022].

is multidimensional and holistic.

Since its beginnings, we have created so-called research arenas on (i) Health and well-being, (ii) Individual and social well-being, (iii) Environment and urbanity, and (iv) Teacher education. We have also written research concepts and grant proposals. We have also created these arenas as new ways of working together and as an attitude (Busse 2022). We have been in the process of creating Masters programs in Peace Studies and in Population Health.

We are currently creating a concept for micro-credentials. Four seed funding calls have brought about fantastic well-being projects with researchers, staff, educators and students – including the Mental Health Symposium taking place tomorrow. We have just launched the so-called 'Well-Being Incubator' to bring our community together. We have arranged for internships on well-being, for shadowing possibilities, and fellowships for our Ukraine colleagues and students. We have created the foundations of EUniWell as a European University – including our governance and how we work. We have created projects with cities. We have communicated and disseminated intensively – please check our website (www.euniwell.eu). We have participated in Stakeholder meetings of the European Commission on topics such as “the reform of research assessment” or “strategies for Universities”. We have also done lobbying nationally. We have just signed the EUniWell Open Education Declaration. We foster our students' engagement. And we welcome again our new partners.

All of this, we have achieved in times in which we have given code red for our climate; in times of multiple complexities which can no longer be broken down into binaries of 'either-or'; in times in which we still try to deal with the multi-dimensional effects of the pandemic, in times of Brexit, populism and racism, in times of an atrocious war on Ukraine with multiple effects on people, the environment, the economy, and society, to which the energy crisis is added. Let me stress, we stand in solidarity with our partners from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, again, and especially after Monday's bombing in which not only your buildings have been demolished further.

The world is topsy turvy – Shakespeare would have said.

In EUniWell, we have made mistakes – of course. And we know that we are behind with some deliverables. The reasons are manifold. Sometimes because our aims could have been articulated or realized better, because physical mobility could not be realized, because diversity can also be a challenge, for example, when we need to understand our individual structures. Certainly, point taken. In fact, we are very critical of ourselves and our performance. We allow for vulnerability. This is a well-being mindset that is also our strength. As a start-up, pioneering endeavour – this is also just right. We keep it real and authentic. Even more so, we courageously and fearlessly take the chance,

against all odds, despite all crises and challenges the world and we have faced: We unite and show what science can do, what universities must do. Universities must take on responsibility for each individual, society, and the planet, to build bridges of a new kind. We are science diplomats of a special kind. Like all European Universities we are united in the aim to create a totally new dimension of scientific cooperation in all performance areas, on the basis of European values, and with, what I like to call, a local-global perspective.

We shall foster and leverage the uniqueness of EUniWell, which is well-being as a theme, an attitude, an SDG, a European value, also highlighted by the OECD; which is our students' enthusiasm, the diverse strengths in research, education, transfer and in SDGs; which is our academic integrity, our culture of working together, our joy in creating EUniWell and our trust – to name but a few.

Perhaps now is a good moment:

- To thank the teams – central and decentral – and colleagues, staff and students of all partners for their engagement in EUniWell. Just realize this again: we have created EUniWell on paper and two years later it is material and real – how wonderful is that?
- To thank all EUniWell partners for their trust in and support for Cologne leadership.
- To thank the European Commission and federal governments for this opportunity and momentum – despite all the challenges we are faced with. Minister Czák, thank you for your European spirit, for attending this meeting and for listening to us.
- To thank rector Merkely from Semmelweis University, Dean Miklós Kellermayer and dear colleague Marcel Pop and their team for hosting our EUniWell Rectors' Assembly, for organizing this event and the Mental Health Symposium; to thank the Semmelweis University for taking such good care of human beings' health through their research and education and for living EUniWell's values: democratic, inclusive, diverse, research- and challenge-based, inter- und transdisciplinary, entrepreneurial, co-creational and European. Köszönöm!

EUniWell courageously and fearlessly takes the chance against all odds, despite all crises and challenges the world and we have faced. We practice excellence *and* inclusion, diversity and equity as part of well-being. We shall discuss critically what and who will be our basis of comparison. We shall continue to bring people together for and through well-being research, education and transfer, because we love what we do, because we are curious, because we are people who fight for and are united in the belief of freedom of science, democracy, rationalism, humanity and love for the other; all of which – I'm convinced – will help to restore a peaceful, democratic and sustainable society, and our planet of well-being.

In other words, let us not underestimate that “connection is profit”, and EUniWell is and will continue to be high-performing because through this connection it aims to make others and the planet shine.

And on this basis, our past performance, our values, our trust and on what I would describe to be this magical and energizing EUniWell spirit and co-creative enthusiasm, I'm convinced that realizing our deliverables, solving other challenges and writing the next proposal in three months will be a piece of cake. EUniWell is the cause worth fighting for. We have high and ambitious aims – for example, becoming the scientific reference point for well-being. We shall move on to realize our mission, impact on it and make it actionable.

As a version of my view of the good and beautiful (European) University of the futures in general and EUniWell, in particular, I would like to quote Amanda Gorman one more time:

“That we are one human kin,
Grounded not just by the griefs
We bear, but by the good we begin.
To anyone out there:
I only ask that you care before it's too late,
That you live aware and awake,
That you lead with love in hours of hate.
I challenge you to heed this call,
I dare you to shape your fate.
Above all, I dare you to do good
So that the world might be great.”³

Thank you!

References

Busse, Beatrix (2022). Willkommen in der Arena. Formate und Haltung für die strategische Fitness und zur resonanten Ko-Kreation in Universitäten. *Zeitschrift für Organisationsentwicklung* 22, 1: 17-22.

³ See <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/amanda-gorman-vor-den-vereinten-nationen-an-ode-we-owe-a-92106da1-628c-44f0-8773-1c6ffd57321c> [accessed 12 October 2022].