

UNICA Rectors Seminar

Rome, March 24, 2017

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Rectors, Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here, today, to participate in the UNICA Rectors Seminar 2017 hosted by Sapienza University in Rome. Thank you for coming and for taking part in this event in which we are celebrating an important date in the history of our continent, the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, reflecting on its impact on European higher education and on the relevance of our efforts as European citizens and scholars committed to the development of European education and through it, to the building of the European identity and citizenship.

Today, here, all together we represent the Europe of Universities and education. That Europe which, in the spirit of its founder-fathers is committed to actively raising and enhancing the quality of life for every European citizen. We want all European citizens, regardless of race, creed or circumstance to achieve their full potential both as citizens and human beings through education. As scholars and members of a large academic community, we embody here the true spirit of Europe. That is to say, the spirit of the European university, an institution which, since its beginning, promoted, through science, tolerance, friendship and ideals of community values.

As a rector of the fourth university of Rome Foro Italico, one of the few European universities entirely devoted to the study of sport and physical activity, I want to stress the commitment of the institution I represent to the promotion of sport as a means to active European citizenship. The European Union has highlighted several times, starting from the Treaty of Rome, how Europe is home to the oldest and most robust human-rights system and to democracy which was born in our continent.

After Rome's Treaty and in the last two decades, the Union has also stressed the importance of sport as a right of people and a means to democracy and citizenship. We could say, looking at the different types of human rights, that sport represents the fourth generation of human rights. Within this fourth typology of human rights, those ones tied to leisure, inclusion, health and well-being have a crucial importance and relevance.

According to the topics of our seminar, Europe is facing complex challenges which affect its unity and identity and jeopardize its future. European values, as universal human values tied to rights based on acceptance of diversity, inclusion, solidarity and mutual understanding among people have been compromised by the rise of nationalisms, xenophobia and egoistic feelings of groups and factions.

Sport, as a human capital and a tool capable of solving conflicts and promoting social inclusion and peace, can be a remedy to the poison of misunderstanding and xenophobia. The mission and task of the Institution I represent here today – the University of Rome Foro Italico – is to make it possible through science and education.

The challenges the European Union is currently facing are complex and require commitment and huge efforts to be won. We, inspired by the spirit of our founder-fathers, are ready to face and overcome the challenge. We are not afraid of the challenge because we are strengthened by the same ideals and values of peace and friendship which, 60 years ago, inspired the pioneers of our Union.

Dear friends, what we have to do today in this seminar is just to bring here their passion... the passion, knowledge, and commitment to a better world of our fathers, and be ready and prepared to be challenged, excited and inspired!

In conclusion, I wish all participants in this seminar a fruitful work. To the organizing committee and to the invited speakers, go my personal good wishes for the success of this important event aimed to promote European values and to keep on doing the excellent work done so far.

Thank you.