

Venice and Europe

Inaugural Address

by the Rector

Tiziana Lippiello

Dear all,

Welcome to the inauguration of the 2022-23 academic year at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Some of our students and teachers are from Turkey and Syria, and I would like to express our sympathy and solidarity with them for the immense tragedy afflicting their countries due to the recent violent earthquakes. Our deepest sympathies go to them and their families, as well as to all the people affected.

1 Our Future Comes from Afar

Our University, which was founded in 1868, is 155 years old. Whenever I think back to the origins of Ca' Foscari, I am struck by how far-sighted, modern and groundbreaking the ideas of its founders – Luigi Luzzatti, Edoardo Deodati and Francesco Ferrara – were.

“ **All this is not only part of the history of our University, but of the DNA of Venice**

Today, our identity is still the same as it was two centuries ago, albeit with inevitable differences: our university is open to the world, and strongly oriented towards international relations and interdisciplinarity. From the very beginning, the science of diplomacy and the languages of Europe, the Near and Middle

East and Asia were studied here alongside economics and trade.

All this is not only part of the history of our University, but of the DNA of Venice, the extraordinary city that hosts us.

If we were to look for a figure symbolising this combination of openness to the world and knowledge in its millenary history, the name of Marco Polo would inevitably come up, especially here, given that the Teatro Malibran is so close to Polo's house in Corte del Million. The 700th anniversary of Marco Polo's death is coming up in 2024, and we are planning a series of initiatives aimed at relaunching in a modern key the role of Marco Polo and Venice in trade and cultural relations with the East.

In initiating the project of our Royal High School of Commerce the founding fathers invested in the future; at the same time, they bequeathed us with a thought and a vision that was encompassing the historical, political and cultural role of the Serenissima.

The Municipality and the Chamber of Commerce of Venice supported the school from the beginning, and the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce financed special scholarships for Ca' Foscari students “so that the best graduates could travel abroad to complete their commercial practice” (Bulletin 1, 1899, 11).

The future comes from afar: innovation is inscribed in our tradition. As the great French politician, intellectual and pacifist Jean Jaurès said, “Tradition does not mean to look after the ash, but to keep the flame alive”.

“ **The future comes from afar**

We want our University to have a European scope, together with other universities forming the Eutopia Alliance - located in Paris, Dresden, Brussels, Gothenburg, Barcelona, Lisbon, Cluj, Ljubljana and Warwick.

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The founding fathers invested in the future



Francesco Ferrara



View of trench BKG 16 with the apsidal temple. The north is below. Courtesy of ISMEO-Ca'Foscari

Knowing the cultures of the world and working for peace through dialogue, being open to exchange, collaborating to tackle the great global challenges and thus contributing to improving the living conditions of the less privileged are the values of the Ca' Foscari community.

We will outspokenly support these values wherever our wonderful profession takes place: in classrooms, laboratories or libraries, anywhere research is produced and taught here and around the world, in our archaeological missions, even in harsh settings. We must spread the culture of dialogue, and thus of peace. Animated by this spirit, we must continue to educate new generations of citizens, as well as scholars.

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2 Against Some Clichés: A Culture of Training

Today, the European Union offers us a unique opportunity through the Recovery and Resilience Plan, and that is to contribute with research and training to the development of the society we live in. Failing is not an option. We owe it to future generations, as well as to Italy. We must play our part, and make a decisive contribution. Without education and training, there is no real growth.

The University is called upon to play a fundamental social role: our first mission is to contribute to the growth of our society, starting from our host cities – Venice and Treviso – and then on to the regional, national and European levels. We must play a decisive role in a complex world rich in connections and opportunities.

From this point of view, Ca' Foscari is already offering a constructive and fundamental contribution, in constant dialogue with its surroundings. I will let the numbers speak for themselves.

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3 Interdisciplinarity and Internationalisation: Our Values, Our Successes

Today, we have a student community of almost 23,000 students. 7,016 students have enrolled this year, in line with the + 12% trend in the number of enrolled students every year over the last decade. We are particularly proud of our University's growing attractiveness abroad and among students from outside the region, the latter having increased by 69% over ten years.

This year, we have enrolled 608 international students, an 80% increase compared to six years ago, when they were 337. To these we add 614 incoming students who have joined Ca' Foscari in the current academic year as part of various mobility programmes.

“ ***Our first mission is to contribute to the growth of our society, starting from our host cities - Venice and Treviso*** ”

Our English-language teaching programme continues to grow and develop: to date, there are 14 degree programmes taught entirely in English

and no less than 35 double degree programmes with foreign universities in English, Italian and other languages. Some new programmes are in store for next year, that will further develop our international network and standing. To keep up our attractiveness, however, we must offer adequate accommodation and services, and this is why collaboration with institutions such as the Municipality, the Veneto Region, the Regional Agency for Students' Financial Aid and Services, and private partners, is key.

I will give you a small but significant example, of which I am particularly proud. To speed up residence permits, we set up UNI-QUEST, a special desk operated by Ca' Foscari staff and State Police officers. This service is made possible by the collaboration with Venice Police and Poste Italiane, to whom I am grateful. UNI-QUEST welcomes students and researchers weekly and helps them through the permit application: a significant example of how important it is to join forces for a shared goal.

We want to attract young people from all over the world to study Italian culture and art, economics and science, language

” ***We must offer adequate accommodation and services*** ”





San Giobbe Economic Campus, Venice

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***Collaborations
with both public
institutions
and private
companies***

and culture as well as classical and modern civilisations, international relations. We want them to experience innovation and sustainability, and to offer them opportunities for professional growth. This is why collaborations with both public institutions and private companies is so important.

4 Investments and Development

Between 2023 and 2025 we will invest almost EUR 53 million in the development of our venues, plus:

- + EUR 300,000 per year for libraries;
- Approx. 720 new lecturers and researchers in 2025 (+ 48% in ten years);
- Resources for new technical and administrative staff and language experts;
- EUR 20.6 million in 2023 for student support.

I would like to thank the Italian Ministry of University and Research, represented here today by Director General Marcella Gargano, for giving us this opportunity.

In addition, Ca' Foscari will continue to support welfare policies in favour of technical and administrative staff, investing approximately EUR 627,000 per year.

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5 Research and Civic Engagement

In addition to the regular financing of our activities, we received over EUR 30 million in funding from the Ministry of University and Research for four Departments of Excellence (out of eight). Excellent news also in relationship to the ERC Consolidator Grants: four researches were awarded a total of EUR 7 million in funding: the best result ever for Ca' Foscari, that now ranks first in Italy in terms of successful applications for Consolidator Grants. Our University is also the first in Italy and in the top five in Europe for funded

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Marie Curie projects, which brought to Venice researchers from all over the world. I would like to thank them for choosing us, and all the lecturers and technical and administrative staff who have worked for this important result. All these young people bring to our University a bounty of knowledge and intellectual energy. These stories contain a great lesson, which I want to share with young men and women. The path of study and research is strewn with failures. There is no researcher who has not failed before obtaining a result. This also applies to the prestigious ERC funding, which is often obtained on the second or even the third or fourth attempt. Study and research need qualities such as tenacity or perseverance, but also the courage to accept failure. My own university career started with a disappointment. I therefore encourage of all you not to seek impossible models of perfection. Each of you pursue your own path whatever it may be; commit yourselves to what you love, have confidence in yourselves and your abilities. You do not have to fear the obstacles that come your way, because they are part of life and will help you to improve. Use them to increase your inner strength.

“ ***Our University is the first in Italy and in the top five in Europe for funded Marie Curie projects*** ”

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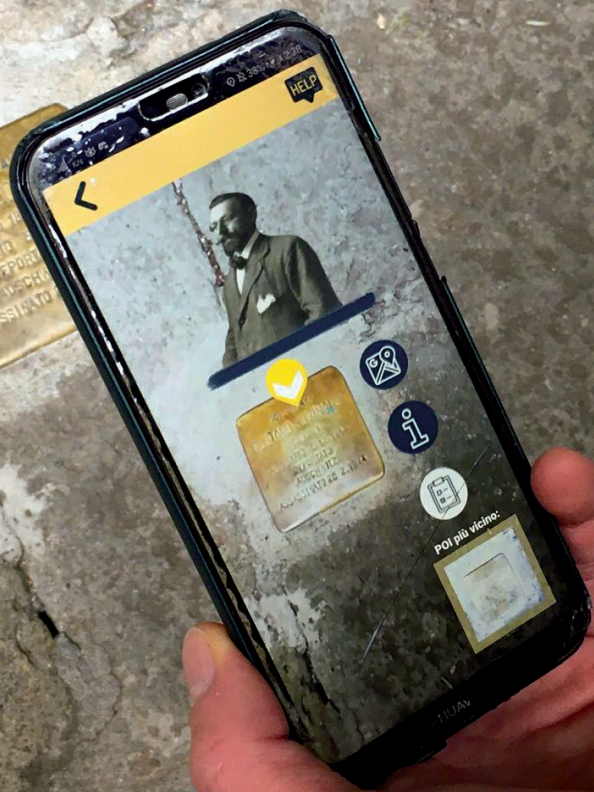
6 Europe

Ca' Foscari University strongly believes in networks connecting researchers, students and local communities. It is in this spirit that we have joined Eutopia, an alliance of ten universities supported by the European

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Gandharic figure from Barikot: bodhisattva. Courtesy of ISMEO-Ca'Foscari





Commission which I will have the honour to chair until December 2024.

“ Last year we also participated in ‘The New Bauhaus’ initiative, launched by the European Union, and were among the six winners of the call for proposals in Europe. Thanks to an interdisciplinary team, the project proposal interpreted the objectives of the New European Bauhaus from the perspective of European coastal areas and was selected and financed with EUR 5 million. The Venice section of the project focuses on the area of San Basilio and Santa Marta,

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with an urban regeneration proposal aiming to reconnect the city to the port, enhance the residential area, and attract new residents and new activities. This project will be carried out with the Venice City Council, IUAV, and the Port of Venice, as well as with other European cities.

The European dimension of Ca’ Foscari’s research is also demonstrated by our excellent performance in competitive calls for proposals issued by the European Commission, which brought us EUR 13.5 million in the year 2022 alone.

7 Italy

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) provided us with an unprecedented opportunity, and calls us to work at the best of our abilities. We must network and strengthen the cultural, productive and creative fabric known as ‘Made in Italy’. In the scope of NRRP funding, we have presented projects for over EUR 60 million, over EUR 46 million of which have already been financed. Using already allocated NRRP resources we will recruit around 50 researchers. Additional NRRP funds - over EUR 1.5 million - also allowed us to issue 33 new scholarships for Ca’ Foscari PhD programmes.

An urban regeneration proposal aiming to reconnect the city to the port, enhance the residential area, and attract new residents and new activities”



Conference *Bauhaus of the Sea*, 21st of September 2021, Venetian Arsenal

NRRP-related projects range from economic sustainability to ageing, from cybersecurity to Venice-based start-ups. As an example, I would like to mention here two research and civic engagement projects that will see us engaged over the next three years at both regional and national level.

iNEST - Interconnected North-East Innovation Ecosystem. This project involves all universities in the Italian North East. Ca' Foscari is part of Spoke 6: Tourism, Culture and Creative Industries, to which it contributes with know-how in management, economics, sciences, arts and the humanities. Culture clearly emerges in this context as a strategic driver for innovation.

CHANGES - Changes Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Next-Gen Sustainable Society. Ca' Foscari coordinates Spoke 9 of this extended partnership: CREST - Cultural Resources for Sustainable Tourism, which is dedicated to humanistic culture and cultural heritage. In order to address current challenges such as climate change, migration and technological innovations, we need active and inclusive participation. It is citizens who constantly redefine and assess what Cultural Heritage is, and how it can be used. CREST thus aims to overcome marginality (geographical/peripheral, social/minority-related and cultural) through inclusiveness. The aim is to allow tourism and cultural heritage to reflect as much as possible the complexity of the world.

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We must network and strengthen the cultural, productive and creative fabric known as 'Made in Italy'

8 Venice: At the Forefront for Sustainability

Our University is located in a marvellous, delicate and fragile place. Venice is a thousands year old melting pot where water and land are admirably combined, a natural laboratory for experimenting with scientific and technological innovation, in constant dialogue with art and humanistic studies.

As all these projects show, our beloved Venice is a great challenge. The predicaments of this unique place are well known. Venice balances fragility and international attractiveness. As a university, we believe it is our duty to contribute to the search for viable solutions. We are confident that Venice can be at the center of an organic, shared project, ready to make room for young people and to become a unique, privileged place for experimentation and innovation. Such a project would call all the city's universities and higher education institutions to become a source of creativity and development: we are talking first and foremost about Ca' Foscari, IUAV, Accademia di Belle Arti, and the Conservatory, in collaboration with the partners from Eutopia and other international universities. Our network should be open, proactive, dedicated and above all committed.

*Venice
is a great
challenge* ”

We have been working in this direction for many years. We opened three university residences in San Giobbe, Santa Marta, and (soon) in Mestre, and we will hopefully add one more on the Lido, if the project involving the former Pepe barracks is funded. We collaborate with the Venice City Council and with the State Property Agency, and we are investing in the development of new spaces in Rio Novo, San Tomà, and San Basilio.

In addition to our collaboration with the Municipality of Venice, I would also like to mention the one with the administration of Treviso, where Ca' Foscari has been successfully present for almost 30 years. Almost 1,500 Ca' Foscari students are enrolled there. In collaboration with the local Municipality, we are investing in further growth around the 'Turazza' complex. Among the strategic collaborations for the development of residency, I would like to mention the one with the Venice Agency for Students' Financial Aid and Services with which we are developing projects in favour of students.



The University Residences of San Giobbe (Venice) and Via Torino (Mestre)

In connection to building developments and urban regeneration, I am pleased to mention our commitment to sustainability. We are one of the founding members of the Venice World Sustainability Capital Foundation and we are working concretely to address the climate crisis, which is one of the most urgent global challenges of our time. We have a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan, the first in Italy promoted by a university; and we have activated the Lesson 0 on Sustainability, that can be included in the curriculum of Ca' Foscari's Bachelor's Degree Programmes.

9 Conclusions

Today, we are celebrating a new academic year before citizens and representatives of other universities, institutions, companies, and trade associations. I would like to emphasise the importance of working together, of engaging in a shared project. The place where we live and work is a source of inspiration for us, it is part of who we are. Local institutions are our partners in many projects, as are companies, associations,

and schools. Let us think, for example, of our Active Learning Labs (one of which recently included a Contamination Lab in collaboration with Bulgari), or of our industrial PhDs, our career service, and then Start Ups, Spin Offs, and numerous cultural initiatives with the active participation of students. Today I am happy to share with you at least one of our projects, which is called "Remembering the City. Stolperstein, Com-

memoration Places and Augmented Reality". It is a public history project that aims at exploring the urban memory of the city of Venice through an App, with which you can discover the history of 29 Stolperstein six public places of commemoration. This project was carried out by Ca' Foscari, directed by Prof. Fabio Pittarello with the Master's Degree Programme in Digital Humanities and the collaboration of the Jewish Community

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of Venice, the professors and students of the Benedetti Tommaseo Higher Education Institute and the contribution of the Veneto Region.

Before closing, I would like to thank all the staff of Ca' Foscari and Fondazione Ca' Foscari for their hard work during the recent and difficult years, which is evidence of their attachment to our University. I am sincerely grateful to the Director General, the Deputy-Rector, the Vice-Rectors, the Directors of all the Departments, and to delegates, managers, members of the Academic Senate and of the Board of Governors, to the Director General of Ca' Foscari University Foundation, to faculty members and to the technical and administrative, library, and linguistic expert staff.

I would like to thank all the students because they give meaning to our daily work.

Let me close this year's inaugural address by thanking all of you who are gathered here today.

I declare the 155th Academic Year 2022-23 of Ca' Foscari University of Venice officially open.

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