

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Mr. Bunjes,  
Dear colleagues,

The European university tradition is inherently open to the world. Its first universities in Bologna and Paris attracted students of all ages, languages and countries. Their lingua franca was Latin, but there is no doubt that they also exchanged ideas and worked together in many languages all at once, bringing the richness and diversity of their cultures and societies to a common project: the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence – and this through the combination of research and teaching brought together in one global community, the universitas.

The intervening centuries saw a strong consolidation of nation-states and universities, too, became national institutions with culturally and linguistically closed academic communities. But the 21<sup>st</sup> century is breaking down these barriers once more – led by a powerful mixture of social, economic and technical change that also poses challenges for all our universities. We have to learn again what it means to shape an international, diverse and open universitas and to make it a reality in the lives of all academics and students.

The M.A. European Youth Studies is a first-rate example of how to work towards this vision of high-quality degree courses and research-led excellence in teaching and learning. The University of Innsbruck is proud that the Erasmus chapter of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme has approved this project – and we know how difficult it is to get European funding. Austrian universities are currently participating in five Erasmus Mundus joint M.A. courses, with Innsbruck coordinating the M.A. in astrophysics (Astromundus). Now Innsbruck will be coordinating the M.A. European Youth Studies as well – the only LLP-Erasmus development project led by Austria, and one of only nine European M.A. development projects funded in the 2009 competition.

So we can safely say that Innsbruck is leading the field in Austria as far as research and internationalisation is concerned. In the last five years, our external funding has more than doubled to reach 29.5 million Euro in 2008. In terms of publications and patents we are Austria's top university performer and we do very well in European university ranking tables. We know that to sustain and further improve this quality of performance, active participation in international networks and projects is essential – and our new development plan makes this point very clear.

The M.A. European Youth Studies sits at the heart of the intersection between research and teaching in an international context, and it is a demonstration of the potential of our university research centres policy. This project is embedded in the successful

Research Centre Education, Generation and Life-course, which itself has a strong international profile – its extensive experience and longstanding specialist partnerships are just what we need to strengthen our university's internationalisation in an open knowledge society. When the M.A. European Youth Studies takes in its first group of 30 students in autumn 2011, it will bring Innsbruck's Institute of Educational Sciences to the forefront of innovative research-led teaching and learning in Austrian higher education. It will create a multi-lingual and intercultural community of future top specialists in interdisciplinary youth studies, whose professors and tutors are themselves the field's leading figures in Europe.

Today we welcome 23 guests from 15 different European countries – east, south, west and north. You represent 14 different universities, all of which are contributing to the MA European Youth Studies project. We already have Erasmus cooperation agreements for various disciplines with eight of your universities (Ghent, Lleida, Luxembourg, Malta, Oslo, Salerno, Thessaloniki and Warsaw), and so we are delighted to host members of our extended family of cooperation here in Innsbruck. We are equally pleased that this project gives us the chance to welcome six new university friends (Glamorgan, Ljubljana, Maynooth, Plovdiv, Tampere and Trnava) into the Tyrolean mountain clan.

Last but by no means least: the University of Innsbruck is honoured to welcome Mr. Ulrich Bunjes, Head of the Youth Department at the Council of Europe, who will formally launch the M.A. European Youth Studies project. We know that we owe much to the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sports. They have supported this initiative from the outset – including by making preparatory project meetings possible through the funds of the Council of Europe and European Commission Youth Partnership.

Once more, welcome to Innsbruck and we look forward to making the M.A. European Youth Studies a success for all of us.