

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear guests,

It's truly an honor for me to stand in front of you today as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Joint PhD Crossborder International Economic Relations and Management program. This occasion is not only a milestone in our academic journey, but a testament to the power of cooperation and shared vision.

From the University of Economics in Bratislava I am truly thankful that I was at the birth of this special initiative sometime in 2012 together with my great colleagues: Irena Zavrl – heart of the project, Csaba Székely – from the University of Sopron and Walter Boljunčić – from the University of Pula.

Looking back, I see, that it was the dedication and full commitment—especially of Professor Zavrl, whose passion and vision for higher education created the idea we celebrate today, that brought us here.

Allow me to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Irena Zavrl, a **driving force** behind this program's creation. It was Professor Zavrl who introduced to us the ambitious idea of establishing a PhD program in Eisenstadt in Burgenland, a place **without any doctoral-level** opportunities at the time.

Her vision was not only to expand academic programs but to build a lasting framework for sharing knowledge and fostering intellectual growth, **bringing our institutions together** across borders and cultures.

Dear Professor Zavrl, you have recognized the potential for Eisenstadt to become a hub of academic excellence. Through your dedication, you have guided the academic journeys of dozens of doctoral students and graduates.

Today, we celebrate not only your original vision, but also your 10 years of strong leadership as Head of the Consortium. You have always led and continues to lead this program with inspiring energy, showing the same passion and dedication over the years.

Professor Zavrl's role has been **irreplaceable**, and I believe I speak for everyone here when I say, that her contributions have enriched all of us.

As we gather here, we have much to be proud of. Over the past decade, what started as a unique partnership has devolved into a **respected academic network**. This program has become a foundation for the kind of intellectual engagement, that is essential for progress in our field of international economic relations and management.

The reach of this program has grown far beyond the original horizon. It now includes distinguished universities and offers candidates a unique academic environment, that is both interdisciplinary and international. **This is a remarkable achievement!**

Each student, faculty member, and graduate has added their part to this rich structure. Together, they contribute to a legacy, that reflects our collective commitment to academic excellence.

This Joint PhD program has become more than an educational program; **it's a community**. It is a community of scholars who share ideas, challenge perspectives, and inspire each other to innovate. I am proud of what this community has achieved and of the new connections and partnerships it has fostered. And, I like to **add friendships** as well.

On a personal note, this celebration reminds me of the **extraordinary journey** we have taken together. It's remarkable to think of the early days, when we navigated the challenges of building this program, laying down the framework, and watching its progress. I have seen firsthand, how it has opened doors for students, provided invaluable research opportunities, and fostered a unique academic culture rooted in cooperation and common respect.

This anniversary is a **reminder of the gratitude** I feel for everyone, who has contributed to the program. Our professors, associate professors, doctoral students, and graduates — you have each brought a unique energy and passion, that has enriched our program.

I am also grateful to our many supporters, including those from Eisenstadt, as their enthusiasm and commitment have helped sustain and promote our work. Your support has been an essential part of our success, and it's deeply appreciated.

This 10th anniversary is a **tribute to each of you** and a testament to what we can achieve together. We can be proud, of how far we have come and look to the future with optimism, knowing the best is still ahead.

Together, we will keep building a path of excellence, inspire
future scholars, and uphold the values, that united us 10 years ago.

Thank you.

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