Jean-Claude Juncker: A university
like this still gives me hope

Charles University hosts not only lectures of Czech and international scientists and researchers but also other important officials. This time, a lecture was given by the Chairman of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. On Thursday, June 8, he spoke of “The Future of Europe” in the Great Hall of the Carolinum. He was also awarded with Charles University golden medal for his efforts in European integration, and in the development of cooperation and understanding between nations, by Charles University rector, Professor Tomáš Zima.

Charles University was the starting place of Mr. Juncker’s visit of the Czech Republic. He’s going to stay for two days, and the main point will be his attendance at the Defense and Security Conference Prague on Friday. Here, the European leaders will discuss possible ways of the future European army.

Jean-Claude Juncker, accompanied by the Deputy Chairman of the European Commission, Jyrki Katainen, started his speech by stating that he felt honored to receive the same medal that had been given to, for example, former U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, or the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He also pointed out that he valued the award even more because he received it from Charles University, whose founder, Charles IV, was closely tied to Juncker’s homeland Luxembourg.

In the premises of Charles University, the Chairman of the European Commission was greeted by the rector, Professor Tomáš Zima. “The integration in the European Union is differentiated; not all countries are part of the Schengen zone, and not everyone is using the euro. However, all member countries want Europe to be democratic, safe, and prosperous. And that’s where I see the role of universities and their communities. Next year, the democratic Czechoslovakia will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The first presidents of the independent republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, were both Charles University professors; both assumed the responsibility for the further development of the country, to make it part of united and democratic Europe. The universities and the European Union need words, thoughts, but primarily actions. Brave, audacious actions, similar to those taken by Masaryk and Beneš a hundred years ago, in order to support democracy, humanism and general development of European values. The open democratic society and united Europe aren’t guaranteed. To avoid losing them, we all have to do a lot more, you and us alike,” said the rector. The Chairman of the European Commission then spoke in a similar tone, strongly encouraging all population to support united Europe. “We have to fight those who are trying to divide us. Today, it’s more important than ever before, due to the demographic development we are facing. We have to solve the situation if we are to last,” said he.

He then called the people born after the iron curtain downfall “the happy generation”. All the same, he urged them to develop Europe further, instead of only using what their parents have achieved. Regarding the migration crisis, Jean-Claude Juncker encouraged the Czech Republic to show more solidarity with the refugees, and also with other European countries, especially Italy and Greece who are facing the biggest migration wave. “The Czechs are big Europeans, but they should also show it facing the migration crisis,” said he, pointing out that the Czech Republic has no problem cooperating in other European issues.

In the end of his speech, Jean-Claude Juncker said it was important to proclaim and spread the European values: “A university like this still gives me hope.”

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Image: René Volffik
Published: 8 June 2017