

**Dear members of the University Board and Senate,**

Allow me to thank you for the confidence that you gave to me to be the Rector of this new and unique university in the Republic of Macedonia and beyond. There is no greater honour and privilege than to lead the South East European University. Today, in front of you, I present my dedication and leading potential for the university toward realizing our common academic and scientific cause.

In the beginning, I want to thank the previous leaders of the University: the first President of the Board, HE Max Van der Stoel; his successor and the former Rector of the University of St. Galen, Prof. Rolf Dubs and especially I want to thank the current President of the Board, Dr. Dennis Farrington.

Everyone has contributed and continues to contribute with a major commitment in order for the University to continue moving forward toward the most advanced standards of European higher education.

The South East European University would not be here at this stage without the special contribution of the previous Rector, the respectful academician Alajdin Abazi. Mr. Rector, all of us thank you for your investment and we are happy that you will continue to help the University with all your potential.

All of you have left a precious legacy at this university, and because of your leadership, this university is strong with all these potentials.

Thank You!

**Dear students, staff and colleagues, let me thank the guests that have honoured us with their presence in this ceremony:**

Deputy- Minister of Education and Science: Ms. Lindita Qazimi;  
The universities rectors:  
The Rector of the University St. Cyril and Methodius”, Prof. Stojkovski;  
The Rector of the State University of Tetova, Prof. Agron Reka;  
The Rector of the University St. Climent Ohridski, Prof. Zhoglev;  
The Rector of the University Goce Delçev, Prof. Mitrev,  
The Rector of the University FON, Prof. Nikolovski,  
The Rector of the European University in Macedonia, Prof. Ivanovski.

Particularly, I would like to thank the Rector of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, my dear professor Jorgaq Kaçani, that has honoured us today with his presence.

I want to thank our important partners, the mayors of the municipalities: the representative of the Municipality of Tetova – Mr. Iljaz Halimi, the Mayor of Gostivar– Mr. Rifi Osmani and the Mayor of Debar – Mr. Argëtim Fida for their presence.

As well I want to thank the founders of SEEU, through their representatives, their Excellencies: the representative of the Delegation of the European Commission, the representatives of the U.S. Embassy, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, HE Filipini.

**Dear guest and representatives of the media,**

Let me share with you the emotion and pleasure of this dignified presence of people and institutions, which without their cooperation is very difficult to achieve major aims, especially in the field of higher education.

Today, I want to share with you some thoughts related to the development of our University and to present the team with which I aim to realize our goals and ideas. The three Pro-Rectos: Prof. Paul Foster, Senior Pro-Rector for Academic Issues – Provost; Prof. Blerim Reka, Pro-Rector for Research and Promotion and Prof. Abdylmenaf Bexheti, Pro-Rector for Planning and Development of the University. The Secretary-General Mr. Xhevair Memedi, will be in charge for the whole University administration, and responsible person for Performance and Quality Management will be in charge, the Executive Advisor Mrs. Heather Henshaw.

From the day of my election as rector, about two months ago, according to the dispositions of the Law and Statute, I have worked on designing the directions of the development of the university, in aspects of the vision and adequate management. In the meantime, I have researched the contemporary dilemmas in this field. I have examined a dozen organizational structures of the universities of different profiles and systems. I have noted that all universities around the world are moving toward changing the paradigm of governance: from collective governance toward corporative management-which emphasizes individual responsibility. Difficulties of this transition create a continuous challenge in keeping the balance between corporative responsibilities and academic freedom. An eventual misbalance could undermine academic freedom on the one hand, which is a precondition for the accumulation of new knowledge and innovation, or on the other hand, precisely in the name of excessive autonomy the core mission of higher education may be compromised.

**Dear guests,**

I had the chance and honour, to be with this University from the idea of its establishment. This University has set the foundation, assisted by a special consortium in the region of Southeast Europe. With a perfect harmony of cooperation between the

local, national and the international community, the major project of this area, the South East European University was realized. That is presented not only through this magnificent campus, but also through the developed academic environment and through exchanging intensive experiences with professors from the international partner universities and participation in different programmes for trainings and professional development.

Thanks to this history, the study programmes, contain in themselves the American pragmatism and excellence, especially in the field of business and computer sciences, but we have as well the tradition of European civilization values in the field of study programmes of direct public interest. As a new University we had the chance to start by following the basic recommendations of reforming the spirit of higher education in Europe, expressed through the Bologna Process. All these tendencies we understand as a serious approach in order to prepare our students with knowledge, competencies and needed skills for the global market.

I strongly believe in these tendencies that have opened a broad debate for the role of the universities in the third millennium, because the traditional and collective approach looked like it had moved universities from the real needs of society and industry.

**Dear all,**

As participants in this challenging movement of the University, I had the privilege to cooperate with magnificent people, both from academia and management. I can say proudly that I know the soul of this university. The spirit of this university lies in the willingness of the academic staff to search and transfer the knowledge; in the thirst for knowledge and achieving a constellation of young scientists and teachers; or in the desire of students to be challenged with new knowledge, which you can witness in the classroom or in labs. This is the spirit of the South East European University, in which I trust and which gives me force to move forward together toward a Europe that is based on knowledge.

Surely, there will be questions on how and in what way I will cooperate with you in order to continue the progress of the university. Unfortunately, or fortunately, I do not hold a 'magic stick', but I promise you that I will work to provide an open environment for conversation, creating equal opportunities and fair competition; I will support strict debate, which is based on real analyses; and I will follow the conclusions that we will bring together.

In order to achieve these objectives, I have identified three core priorities:

- Together we should be committed to increasing the institutional autonomy and respect for the individual, but at the same time, by changing traditions towards accountability and performance evaluation based on a merit system;

- We will work on strengthening the identity of the institution, to motivate, support and cooperate;

- We will put learning, research, and innovation in disposition of community needs and in function of creating new ideas.

Our university is unique for its multicultural and multilingual character. Studies at our University are in Albanian, Macedonian and English. Beside this added value the university has not yet received the proper support by educational authorities, however, I will continue to be open, to support and promote this environment.

All of these aims and features have only one address – the student. All our potential and investment will be put at the service of creating new generations of students that would be valuable to society and will contribute to moving towards the ideals of progress, by transforming this region in a more competitive place in the global market. To achieve this, we will strongly support all the activities that will increase the learning experience of students; we will help students to be aware of their intellectual potential and to identify their career opportunities; we will bring to perfection the self evaluation methods and we will work diligently to turn the culture of quality to our daily activities.

In short, today, I have tried to make the spirit of vision and inspiration more accessible, by not forgetting reality, which is the greatest corrector and challenger of our efforts and desires for change.

I assure you that all of this is based on the scope of fundamental academic activities, especially those ones that are related to activities of staff involved in teaching; in exercises and clinical teaching; the management of faculties for continuous staff development; for the support and identification of research potential and applicative in function of market needs; support for quality initiatives and administration for improvement of student services; and others; which will be placed in a cycle of governance of merit ideals and not according to privilege and chance.

Without illusions that changes can occur overnight, however, I believe, that the new team that I will be leading will manage and administer the academic, teaching-scientific performance of our university and will know how to make a successful balance, by placing SEEU on the pedestal of values, producing a model for a success story in which both the alpha and omega are committed toward the student and the perfection of quality.