



Welcome Speech at the

# **Honorary Doctorate Ceremony of Romano Prodi**

25. October 2021

**Prof. Dr. Thomas F. Hofmann**

Präsident der Technischen Universität München

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Dear Guests of honor from science, business, politics, and society.

Dear colleagues, students, and friends.

Welcome you all - on this joyful day for our university!

It gives us the honor and privilege to warmly welcome you, Dr. Romano Prodi, as a new member of our TUM family: a purpose-driven community which goes from strength to strength: transdisciplinary - transnational - transformative.

Today, our TUM School of Management is awarding a *doctor honoris causa* to you - in recognition of your tireless contributions as former Prime Minister of Italy and President of the European Commission to the unity and success of the European Union.

We all pay tribute to you as one of the most distinguished Europeans, one of the most convincing political leaders and most exceptional statesmen.

And you are an effective educator in the true sense of the word, seeking to spread knowledge & understanding for the benefit of Europe and the world.

Romano Prodi, from now on, you illuminate our TUM community through the range & diversity of your talents, through your dedication to excellence, and commitment to a united Europe.

I want to extend my special welcome to another outstanding political leader: Dr. Edmund Stoiber, former Prime Minister of Bavaria. Thanks for delivering the laudatio on the achievements of Romano Prodi.

Since the Middle Ages, universities have had the privilege to grant the doctorate '*honoris causa*' to honour exceptional personalities like you, Dr. Prodi. That reminds us of the primary purpose of universities: nurturing great talent – enhancing the public good by educating the thinkers, doers, and reformers that improve our way of being in the world - change agents with the capacity and tackle the mind-blowing challenges we are facing today in Europe:

- in transforming our economy to become more resource-efficient, bio-based and digitally enabled and to achieve economic growth *and* climate neutrality by 2050;
- in addressing the societal paradigm shifts that slow down new technology adoption and diffusion into society
- in empowering our future work force in times of rapidly changing labor markets;
- in managing the historic geopolitical shifts, further re-inforced by the leave of the UK from the European Union and the terror and wars in various countries that force people to flee and seek refuge in Europe.

At the same time, we live in a country where prosperity has become self-evident, social protection and free access to basic support have become a given.

As a result, some people no longer notice that the lack of prosperity is the main factor underlying most conflicts.

The most important factor of Europe and of world piece is human knowledge, guided by wisdom. And that is where the aspirations of a united Europe meet the potential of responsibly acting universities.

It is both, our duty and our privilege to actively participate in cultural debates, contribute to social cohesion and promote economic development through nurturing smart & critical citizens. Citizens who are not only properly educated, but also see themselves in relation to the bigger picture *and* who can rise to the challenges of the 21st century.

We understand university as a true Tomorrowland. And that's why we have started to tear down walls within the university and to society. We are transforming our internal structure into an „open learning & innovation system“ and by integrating our new TUM School of Social Sciences and Technology, we align our processes in research, education and innovation to the values, needs and expectations of society.

The prosperity of Europe will not be maintained by operating in silos or boxes, but through a culture of respect, a collaborative approach, and entrepreneurial action - rather than bureaucratic re-action - on challenges as they evolve. This makes the international and pan-European orientation of universities more important than ever.

And this is why we enable about 1000 TUM students per year to spread out within the Erasmus Programme – truly one of the EU's success stories. These talents build relationships with our >350 Erasmus partners all over Europe.

Within our EuroTech Universities Alliance, we join forces in a strategic partnership of leading European Universities of Science & Technology. Together we want to shape a sustainable, sovereign & resilient Europe – offering high quality of living, equal opportunities, and economic growths.

Funded under the Erasmus+ scheme, our “EuroTeQ Engineering University” is designed to shape a European engineering education: to meet the demands in understanding social processes, implementing innovations for the benefit of people, and designing sustainable value creation processes.

This is complemented by our “European Flagship Partnership” with Imperial College London. Here, we consciously counteract “Brexit” with the development of powerful interaction potentials with the British science & business metropolis London. A European knowledge bridge for research, education and entrepreneurship aligned with the idea of European Unity.

And through our TUM.Africa strategy, we want to boost the awareness within our academic community for the people development needs in Africa through eye-level research, innovation and education of young Africans on their home continent.

With your strategic agenda, we want to become an engine of change, but people are the change agents - like you Dr. Prodi. For many years to come, Europeans will benefit from your idealism, dedication, commitment and your accomplishments.

It is for all these reasons that TUM honours you by awarding an Honorary Doctorate of the TUM School of Management. Thanks for accepting this distinction of honor and for accepting our invitation to come to TUM.

You have to know that people who have visited TUM once tend to come back – therefore let me extend by invitation: *Le-i-ee sempre ben-venuto da noi alla TUM.*