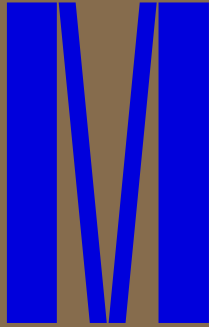


MASARYK
UNIVERSITY
DOCTOR
HONORIS
CAUSA



Marek Nekula
Germà M. Bel Queralt

DOCTOR
HONORIS
CAUSA
2026

15 OCTOBER 2026 | 10:00
KAREL ENGLIŠ GREAT HALL
FACULTY OF LAW

PROGRAMME OF THE CEREMONY

Accompanied by fanfares, academic dignitaries in academic robes will take their seats in the auditorium in the following order:

members of MU's scientific councils
deans of MU and their deputies
MU vice-rectors
rectors and other representatives of higher education institutions
Vice-Rector Jiří Hanuš, acting as master of ceremonies
Presiding Officer Irena Radová
Ceremonial Master Zdeněk Tomeš
Pavel Kosek on behalf of the Faculty of Arts, MU
Jiří Špalek on behalf of the Faculty of Economics and Finance, Masaryk University
Marek Nekula, Doctor honoris causa in spe
Germà Bel, Doctor honoris causa in spe
Rector Martin Bareš

The national anthems of the Czech Republic, the European Union, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Autonomous Community of Catalonia will be played.

Jiří Hanuš will open the ceremony.

Pavel Kosek will introduce Marek Nekula.

Jiří Špalek will introduce Germà Bel.

Jiří Hanuš will request the Rector's approval for the graduation ceremony.

A short address by Rector Bareš and his approval of the graduation.

Reading of the graduation oath.

Mark Nekula's graduation.

Speech by the new Masaryk University honorary doctor.

Germà Bel's graduation.

Speech by the new Masaryk University honorary doctor.

Musical performance by the vocal quintet Ensemble Frizzante.

Jiří Hanuš will bring the ceremony to a close.

Academic dignitaries in academic robes leave the auditorium to the sound of fanfares.



MAREK NEKULA

MAREK NEKULA

Born on 4 March 1965 in Brno
Czechoslovakia.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Language contact and multilingualism (including literary multilingualism); sociolinguistics and language management; nationalism and memory studies in relation to Central Europe; the linguistic and cultural contexts of Franz Kafka's work.

EDUCATION

1991–1994

Freie Universität Berlin (PhD)

1983–1988

Masaryk University (PhDr.)

ACADEMIC CAREER

2021–2023

Dean, Faculty of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies, University of Regensburg, Germany

2019–2021

Vice-Dean, Faculty of Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies, University of Regensburg, Germany

2006

Professor of the Czech Language, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

2005–2006

Vice-Dean, Faculty of Linguistics, Literature and Cultural Studies, University of Regensburg, Germany

since 1998

Professor of Czech Studies and West Slavic Studies, Head of the Bohemicum Centre for Czech Studies, University of Regensburg, Germany (until 2018 also holding a post at the University of Passau)

1997–1998

Associate Professor of the Czech Language, Institute of the Czech Language, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

1993–1997

Research Assistant, Department of the Czech Language, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

1993–1995

Research Fellow, Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic

1989–1993

PhD student, Assistant and Research Assistant, Department of German Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

1988–1989

Scholarship holder, Institute of the Czech Language, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic

SELECTED AWARDS

2024

Danubius Award, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Vienna, Austria

2021

Honorary Doctorate, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

2019

Visiting professor, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

2019

Bronze Medal, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

2018

Dictionary of the Year 2018, Association of Interpreters and Translators, Prague, Czech Republic

2012

Visiting Fellow, Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University, USA

2011

Art Prize for German-Czech Understanding in the Field of Science, Adalbert Stifter Association, Munich, Germany

2006

Senior Fellow, Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University, USA

2002

Award for the Translation of Austrian Literature, Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Vienna, Austria

1998

Josef Jungmann Prize, Translators' Association, Prague, Czech Republic

1996

Rector's Award, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

1994–1996

DAAD postdoctoral fellowship with stays at universities in Vienna (Austria), Passau, Berlin, and Frankfurt/Oder (Germany)

1991–1992

DAAD doctoral scholarship with a stay at Freie Universität
Berlin, Germany

1991

Jiří Levý Award, Translators' Association, Prague, Czech
Republic

1989

Jiří Levý Prize, Translators' Association, Prague, Czech
Republic

SELECTED INVITED LECTURES

2025

"Prague space in Kafka's texts? Kafka's texts in Prague
space?" Invited lecture. Modernitas Centre, Université
libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

2024

"The Third Space in Czech Literature: Kundera's **Ignorance**". Invited lecture. Department of Czech Language
and Literature, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University,
Brno, Czech Republic

2022

"The Production of Linguistic Data: On the 'Languages in
Migration' Corpus for the Czech National Corpus". Invited
lecture. Institute of the Czech National Corpus, Faculty of
Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

2019

"Franz Kafka in Central European Cultures of Memory".
Invited lecture. Weiser Centre for Europe & Eurasia, Uni-
versity of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

2019

“The impact of Jan Amos Komenský and his *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*”. Invited talk. Faculty of Modern Languages, University of Oxford, Great Britain

2018

“Language loyalty and language shift in Bohemia during the long 19th century”. Invited lecture. University of Sheffield, Great Britain

2016

“Franz Kafka and Yiddish: Yiddish traces in Kafka’s German and his reflections on ‘mauscheln.’” Invited lecture. Lecture at the Maison de la Recherche, Sorbonne University, Paris, France

2015

“Prague in fin-de-siècle Czech literature”. Invited lecture. Institute of Slavic Studies, LMU Munich, Germany
2014

“Language biographies and language management: Methods of historical sociolinguistics?” Invited lecture. Institute of Slavic Studies, University of Vienna, Austria

2012

“Illustrious Men: Collective Biography, Pantheons, and Literary Historiography”. Invited lecture. Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

2011

“The Canon of Monolingualism. The Canon of Multilingualism?” Invited lecture. Literary Studies Forum
“Multilingualism in Literature,” Institute of Czech Literature, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic

2010

“The Topography of Prague in the Work of Franz Kafka: Kafka and Prague?” Invited lecture. Institute of German

Studies, Masaryk University, Brno / Moravian Provincial
Library, Brno, Czech Republic

2009

“National Symbols in Public Space”. Invited lecture. Institute of Czech History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

2008

“National discourse in Prague’s public space”. Invited lecture. School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, Great Britain

2007

“Kafka’s Languages and Speechlessness”. Invited speaker. Conference “Kafka. Multilingualism – Transpositions – Transgressions.” Roma Tre, Italy

2006

“Divided City: Prague Public Space and Franz Kafka’s Readings of Prague”. Invited lecture. Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University, USA

2005

“The Semiotics of a Divided City: Bridges and National Discourse in Prague”. Invited lecture. Department of Slavic Studies, Brown University, USA

SELECTED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Since 2025

Member of the Research Council at UJEP (Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic)

2022–2026

Elected member of the Academic Assembly of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague, Czech Republic)

since 2019

Member of the International Council of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic)

2018–2026

Member of the Subject Area Board for the Doctoral Programme in Czech Language, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic)

2017–2018

Member of the selection committee for the Otokar Fischer Prize

2016–2021

Member of the Scientific Council of the Czech Literary Board at the Institute of Czech Literature, Czech Academy of Sciences (Prague, Czech Republic)

2016–2021

Member of the Committee for the Defence of Doctoral Theses in Literary Studies, Czech Academy of Sciences

since 2015

Member of the Scientific Council of the Kurt Krolop Research Centre for German-Language Literature in the Czech Lands (Prague, Czech Republic)

Since 2012

Member of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies (member of the management board until 2020) (Regensburg, Germany)

2011–2013

Member of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (Prague, Czech Republic)

2007–2012

Member of the Scientific Council of the Collegium Bohemicum (Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic)

2006–2008

Member of the Philology and Literary Studies Working Group, Accreditation Commission of the Czech Ministry of Education

2004–2011

Member of the Scientific Council of Masaryk University (Brno, Czech Republic)

since 2000

Elected member of the Collegium Carolinum scholarly society (Munich, Germany)

1998–2003

Member of the Czech Ministry of Education's committee for the award of the DrSc. degree in the field of the Czech language

Č L E N S T V Í V R E D A K Č N Í C H R A D Á C H

since 2013

Slovo a slovesnost, member of the editorial board

since 2012

Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch, member of the advisory board

since 2009

Naše řeč, member of the expert board

2004–2020

Dějiny a současnost, member of the editorial board

2000–2010

Brücken, co-editor

od 2011

Brücken, member of the editorial board

1992–1995

Světová literatura, editor

SELECTED PROJECTS

2025–2027

Change in Language. DAAD Eastern Partnership.

Co-investigator

2025–2026

Sprachbrücken Bayern-Czech Republic project. Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labour, and Social Affairs.

Co-investigator

2025

Globalisation and the development of Škoda Auto, a.s.'s language policy over the last 25 years: Language management in everyday practice. Internal grant from Škoda Auto University. Member of the research team

2018–2022

Research consortium '*Language across generations: contact-induced change in morpho-syntax in German-Slavic bilingual speech*'. Institute of Slavic Studies at the University of Regensburg in collaboration with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Co-investigator

2017–2020

Research Consortium '*Borders in National and Transnational Cultures of Remembrance between the Czech Republic and Bavaria*', in collaboration with the University of Passau, Charles University, the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem and the Adalbert Stifter Society. Bavarian-Czech University Agency. Principal Investigator

2016–2019

Regional Competences for the Bavarian-Czech Border Region, in collaboration with the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. INTERREG V: ETZ Objective Free State of Bavaria – Czech Republic. Principal Investigator

2012–2019

Graduate School for East and South-East European Studies (in collaboration with LMU Munich). German Research Foundation. Co-principal investigator

2011–2015

New Online Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Czech Language (Enc-Czech online). Czech Science Foundation. Member of the research team

2011–2014

Project: *Death and Resurrection of a Nation: The Dream of a Pantheon in Czech Literature and Culture*. German Research Foundation (DFG). Principal Investigator

2009–2014

Research Consortium *on Complexity Management through Humanities Expertise – Translation Constraints and Practices of Organisations in the Bavarian-Bohemian Border Region*. In collaboration with the Institute of Sociology and the Institute of Social Pedagogy, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Co-investigator

2004–2007

Project: *Language and Identity – Franz Kafka in the Central European Linguistic and Cultural Context*. Fritz Thyssen Foundation. Principal Investigator

2003–2005

Project: *'Eastern European Languages as a Factor in Economic Integration'*. Research Consortium for Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe – FOROST. Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts. Principal Investigator

1999–2004

Project: *Slavs in Northern Bavaria (Bavaria Slavica)*. German Research Foundation (DFG). Member of the research team

1998–2001

Project: *'Czech in Linguistic Terms'*. Czech Science Foundation. Member of the research team

1998–2000

Project: *'Germans and Czechs'*. Robert Bosch Stiftung. Co-investigator

1996–1998

Project: *'Intercultural Communication in the Field of Economics. Czech-German Relations after 1989'*. Czech Science Foundation. Principal Investigator

1995

Project: *A Concise Grammar of the Czech Language*. Czech Science Foundation. Member of the research team

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Buchenau, K., Lengyel, Z. K., **Nekula, M.** (eds.), *Exilanten aus Ungarn, Jugoslawien und der Tschechoslowakei 1945–1989*, Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg, 2025

Lollok, M., **Nekula, M.**, Šichová, K. (eds.), *Reálie ve výuce češtiny jako cílového jazyka*, Akropolis, Praha, 2025

Nekula, M. (ed.), *Třetí prostor české literatury*, Památník národního písemnictví / Muzeum literatury, Praha, 2024

Nekula, M., Sherman, T. Zawiszová, H. (eds.), *Interests and Power in Language Management*, Peter Lang, Berlin, 2022

Nekula, M., *Franz Kafka. Pour une lecture en contexte*, Classiques Garnier, Paris, 2021

Dorn, L., **Nekula, M.**, Smyčka, V. (eds.), *Zwischen nationalen und transnationalen Erinnerungsnarrativen in Zentraleuropa*, De Gruyter, Berlin, Boston, 2021

Nekula, M., Tieze, A. (eds.), *Grenzen in der Kunst. Tschechische Kunst in drei Generationen*, Hatje Cantz, Berlin, 2020

Nekula, M. (ed.), *Zeitschriften als Knotenpunkte der Moderne/n: Prag – Brünn – Wien*, Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg, 2019

Nekula, M., Šichová, K. (eds.), *Variety češtiny a čeština jako cizí jazyk*, Akropolis, Praha, 2017

Nekula, M., *Smrt a zmrtvýchvstání národa: Sen o Slavíně v české literatuře a kultuře*, Karolinum, Praha, 2017

Nekula, M., *Tod und Auferstehung einer Nation: Der Traum vom Pantheon in der tschechischen Literatur und Kultur*, Böhlau, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2017

Karlík, P., **Nekula, M.**, Pleskalová, J. (eds.), *Nový encyklopedický slovník češtiny*, 2 díly, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha, 2016

Nekula, M., *Franz Kafka and His Prague Contexts: Studies in Language and Literature*, Karolinum, Praha, 2016

Engel, N., Göhlich, M., Höhne, T., Klemm, M., Kraetsch, C., Marx, Ch., **Nekula, M.**, Renn, J., *Grenzen der Grenzüberschreitung: Zur, Übersetzungsleistung' deutsch-tschechischer Grenzorganisationen*, Transcript, Bielefeld, 2014

Ehlers, K.-H., **Nekula, M.**, Niedhammer, M., Scheuringer, H. (eds.), *Sprache, Gesellschaft und Nation in Ostmitteleuropa: Institutionalisierung und Alltagspraxis*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2014

Nekula, M., Šichová, K., Valdrová, J. (eds.), *Bilingualer Sprachvergleich und Typologie: Deutsch – Tschechisch*, Julius Groos, Tübingen, 2013

Becher, P., Höhne, S., **Nekula, M.** (eds.), *Kafka und Prag: Literatur-, kultur-, sozial- und sprachhistorische Kontexte*, Böhlau, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2012

Nekula, M., Bauer, V., Greule, A. (eds.), *Deutsch in multilingualen Stadtzentren Mittel- und Osteuropas. Um die Jahrhundertwende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Praesens Verlag, Wien, 2008

Maidlová, J., **Nekula, M.**, *Tschechisch kommunikativ I + II*, Schmetterling Verlag, Stuttgart, 2007

Nekula, M., Fleischmann, I., Greule, A. (eds.), *Franz Kafka im sprachnationalen Kontext seiner Zeit. Sprache und nationale Identität in öffentlichen Institutionen der böhmischen Länder*, Böhlau, Weimar, Köln, 2007

Nekula, M., Koschmal, W. (eds.), *Juden zwischen Deutschen und Tschechen. Sprachliche und kulturelle Identitäten 1800–1945*, Oldenbourg, München, 2006

Nekula, M., Nekvapil, J., Šichová, K., *Sprachen in multinationalen Unternehmen auf dem Gebiet der Tschechischen Republik*, FOROST-Arbeitspapier, München, 2005

Nekula, M., *Franz Kafkas Sprachen: „...in einem Stockwerk des innern babylonischen Turmes...“*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 2003

Nekula, M., „...v jednom poschodí vnitřní babylonské věže...“ *Jazyky Franze Kafky*, Nakladatelství Franze Kafky, Praha, 2003

Karlík, P., **Nekula, M.**, Pleskalová, J. (eds.), *Encyklopedický slovník češtiny*, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha, 2002, 2008

Möller, J., **Nekula, M.** (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Kommunikation. Beiträge zu den deutsch-tschechischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen*, Iudicium, München, 2002

Koschmal, W., **Nekula, M.**, Rogall, J. (eds.), *Češi a Němci. Dějiny – kultura – politika*, Paseka, Praha, Litomyšl, 2001, 2002

Koschmal, W., **Nekula, M.**, Rogall, J. (eds.), *Deutsche und Tschechen. Geschichte – Kultur – Politik*, Beck, München, 2001, 2002, 2003

Greule, A., **Nekula, M.** (eds.), *Deutsche und tschechische Dialekte im Kontakt*, Praesens, Wien, 2003

Ehlers, K.-H., Höhne, S., Maidl, V., **Nekula, M.** (eds.), *Brücken nach Prag. Deutschsprachige Literatur im kulturellen Kontext der Habsburgermonarchie und der Tschechoslowakei*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a. M., 2000, 2001

Nekula, M., *System der Partikeln im Deutschen und Tschechischen. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Abtönungspartikeln*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1996

Karlík, P., **Nekula, M.**, Rusínová, Z. (eds.), *Příruční mluvnice češtiny*, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, Praha, 1995, 1996, 1997... 2007, 2008, 2012

LAUDATIO

Pavel Kosek

Your Magnificence, Rector, Honourable Members, Distinguished Guests, esteemed members of the academic councils, esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen,

There are scholars who have a significant impact on their own field. And then there are scholars who can bridge disciplines, institutions, countries and even generations of researchers. Professor Marek Nekula belongs precisely to this second group. His academic career is a story of crossing boundaries – between languages, cultures, disciplines and academic institutions. For more than three decades, he has been creating a space for dialogue between the Czech and German academic communities, between linguistics, literary studies and cultural history, and between domestic and international Czech studies.

Professor Nekula's scholarly work is as wide-ranging as it is inspiring. It encompasses sociolinguistics and language management, research into multilingualism and language contact, issues of national identity and cultural memory in Central Europe, and original interpretations of the life and work of Franz Kafka set within their linguistic and cultural context. In all these areas, he has not only contributed original insights but has also succeeded in formulating new questions and opening up space for the convergence of various scholarly traditions, methodologies and national academic cultures.

His academic career is intricately linked to Masaryk University, where he studied Czech and German studies. Upon his return from doctoral studies abroad, he worked there as a research assistant and associate professor, and in 2006 he was appointed professor of the Czech language. However, as early as 1998, he accepted a professorship in Czech Studies and West Slavic Studies at the University of Regensburg, where he also took over the leadership of the Bohemicum Centre for Czech Studies. It

was here that he developed an exceptionally prolific academic, teaching and organisational career, which made a significant contribution to the development of Czech Studies and Czech-German Studies on a European scale. At the University of Regensburg, he later also held the posts of Vice-Dean and Dean of the Faculty of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies.

Although his professional career has been linked to Germany for many years, he remains firmly rooted in the Czech academic community. This is evidenced by his long-standing collaboration with Czech universities and research institutions, his membership of expert councils and committees, and his unwavering commitment to the development of Czech-German academic cooperation. The strategic partnership between the University of Regensburg and Masaryk University, which in 2024 deepened the existing partnership between the two universities, has also become a symbol of these efforts.

Professor Nekula is the author and editor of several works that have become important reference points in their respective fields. His published doctoral thesis on the system of German and Czech particles ranks among the foundational works of Czech-German contrastive linguistics. His works on Franz Kafka have also gained international acclaim; in them, he has convincingly demonstrated that Kafka's oeuvre forms part of the multi-layered linguistic and cultural landscape of Central Europe. Equally significant are his works addressing issues of national identity and cultural memory. The book **The Death and Resurrection of a Nation: The Dream of Slavín in Czech Literature and Culture** presents an original perspective on the ways in which society creates its own cultural memory and constructs symbolic spaces of national representation. Among the enduring contributions to Czech linguistics are his contributions as both author and editor to the Concise Grammar of the Czech Language and the New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the

Czech Language, works which have fundamentally shaped the field of modern Czech linguistics.

Alongside his academic work, Professor Nekula has also long been involved in translation and editing. He has made a significant contribution to making Czech culture accessible in German-speaking circles and German culture accessible to Czech audiences. His work thus represents not only a contribution to academic knowledge, but also a concrete and lasting contribution to Czech-German understanding.

The exceptional significance of his work has been repeatedly recognised both at home and abroad. He is the recipient of several prestigious awards, including an honorary doctorate from Charles University, the international Danubius Award and a bronze medal from Masaryk University. His academic reputation is further confirmed by his long-term stays at leading universities around the world, including Harvard University and the University of Michigan.

In his academic work, Professor Marek Nekula has demonstrated that every society needs places of remembrance in which to honour the figures who have helped shape its cultural and spiritual identity. He has focused his attention on the Czech Slavín and the German Walhalla, two symbolic spaces where the stories of those who transcended the boundaries of their time and left a lasting mark on culture and scholarship are preserved. Today we are neither at Slavín nor at Walhalla – we are at Masaryk University. Nevertheless, the significance of this moment is similar. We are paying tribute to a figure who significantly enriched our understanding of the Czech language, literature and culture, who forged links between academic circles across Europe, and who, for decades, built bridges between the Czech and German worlds.

Dear Professor, dear Marek, allow me, on behalf of t , and on behalf of t , your colleagues, students and friends, to thank you for everything you have done for Czech scholarship, for Masaryk University and for Czech-German understanding. It is an honour for us to welcome t today as a recipient of an honorary doctorate from Masaryk University.

S P E E C H

Marek Nekula

Your Magnificence, Mr Rector, Honourable Members, Distinguished Guests, esteemed members of the academic councils, esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank Masaryk University for recognising my work, and all those present for taking the time and making the journey to attend this gathering.

My esteemed colleague, Professor Kosek, mentioned my academic posts in his speech and kindly assessed the results of my journey to date, both within my discipline and across disciplines. I appreciate this; in fact, it said everything that needed to be said. But it was, after all, an outside perspective. So, I would like to shift the perspective and look back – not at my research topics, to show how everything is interconnected and how logical my disciplinary and interdisciplinary journey has been – but, here at Masaryk University, at Masaryk University itself.

My first flashback is to my student days. I studied at what was then the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in communist Czechoslovakia. At that time, there were still no portraits of the professors in my department hanging in the corridors of the Faculty of Arts. There were certainly no portraits of Stanislav Souček, whose name I knew from home and who, in 1920, was appointed full professor of Czech language and literature and played a part in founding and developing the discipline, the faculty and the university, nor were there any of Roman Jakobson, who, partly due to external circumstances, made his way via Scandinavia and New York all the way to Harvard University. Nevertheless, neither my fellow students nor I lacked inspiring figures during our studies. Outside the university, at the seminars or in the person of unforgettable Ivo Osol-sobě, a world-class semiotician. At the university, there were Arnošt Lamprecht, Adolf Erhart, Radoslav Večerka and Dušan Šlosar. Thanks to their guidance, I had plenty to draw on or build upon when I later studied particles or lan-

guage contact, or taught Old Czech. I also remember with gratitude Mirek Čejka, who sparked my passion for the subject and introduced me to the philosophy of language and linguistic pragmatics. Shortly after completing my studies, this enabled me to establish some correspondence with Jacques Derrida and the American philosopher John R. Searle and the German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat, who was then working at the Freie Universität Berlin; and after 1989, to publish my master's thesis in an edited version, in instalments, in the journal **Slovo a slovesnost**. I believe that without Mirek Čejka, my path would have taken a different direction.

My second reflection looks back on the time of my return from Prague and Berlin to Brno, where Professor Šlosar created the space for me to have the time to complete the dissertation I had begun at the Freie Universität Berlin under Professor Harald Weydt, and when, as a budding linguist, he took me on to the team that wrote *the *Handbook of Czech Grammar**. I was thirty years old when it was published. It was an immensely inspiring time for me, spent in a truly collegial environment. The scope was so broad and the support so strong that I ultimately did not take up the opportunity to complete my habilitation under Wolfgang U. Dressler at the University of Vienna, with whom I had been in contact since the early 1990s and to whom I had the opportunity to travel for longer-term study visits whilst I was based in Brno. Yet Vienna made sense to me. Not only because of the direction Professor Dressler was taking in linguistics, and the direction I was heading at the time. For a native of Brno, Vienna is by no means an unnatural choice.

My third reflection concerns the contributions made to the establishment of the Centre for Czech Studies at the University of Regensburg by the aforementioned Mirek Čejka and Zbyněk Fišer, whom I have not yet mentioned, who until recently headed the Department of Czech Literature at the Faculty of Arts. Whilst I was working on my doctoral thesis at and collaborating on *the *Handbook of Czech*

*Grammar**, these colleagues developed teaching materials which enabled Czech language tuition to begin in 1996 as part of the *Bohemicum* programme; this was later followed – on a different level – by the establishment of the professorship which I still hold today. This detail is not only evidence of how much I owe to Brno, but also, and of how strong the links between Brno's Czech studies programme and the wider world – and specifically Regensburg – have been and continue to be. I believe that this link between Brno and Regensburg, which received a new impetus in 2024 through the strategic partnership between the two universities, is not only a commitment but also a promise of continued strong support for Czech studies at the University of Regensburg, which, in Regensburg, on the border with the Czech Republic, in Bavaria, within the Danube and Central European regions, makes sense not only pragmatically but also academically, in collaboration with Masaryk University in Brno and the University of Vienna.

This brings me to my fourth reflection. When *the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Czech Language* was published in 2002, it drew, in terms of both its concept and contributors, amongst other things, on the regular meetings entitled 'Czech – Universals and Specifics', organised by Petr Karlík and Zdena Hladká. These meetings continued even after the publication of *the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Czech Language*, which was followed ten years later by the project for *the New Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Czech Language*. Thanks in part to Petr Karlík's contacts and tireless work, one hundred and ninety-one Czech and international authors collaborated on this project, and it is partly for this reason that it has become a fundamental reference work in Czech linguistics, and not just in Czech studies. I owe my invitation to join this project to Petr Karlík, whom I was unable to appreciate fully whilst I was a student, as I had a different lecturer for syntax. This collaboration took me a great deal further; for him, I was neither the first nor the last person he supported significantly on his journey. This is something I value in him and in the

Brno department from which – as is evident – I emerged academically and on which I have repeatedly relied.

I would also like to look back at the recent exchanges between Regensburg and Brno, some of which have already taken place under the umbrella of the strategic partnership. In the field of Czech studies, this has so far taken the form of joint teaching and the presentation of the results of research conducted by PhD students and lecturers alike. I would like to express my sincere thanks to and, my dear Pavel, for this revival, and I trust that a way will be found to further deepen this collaboration at the project level, thereby capitalising on the experience gained from our cooperation to date and the intellectual potential that both universities, in collaboration with others, have to offer.

The aim of this repetition – which, from this personal perspective from the other side, could not be entirely avoided – was to emphasise the significance that the Department of Czech Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno, has had and continues to have, not only for me but also for Czech and international academia. I therefore appreciate even more that my ‘old’ alma mater is bestowing such an honour upon me.



GERMÀ M.
BEL QUERALT

GERMÀ M. BEL QUERALT

Born on 15 March 1963 in Les Cases
d'Alcanar, Terres de l'Ebre, Catalonia, Spain

KEY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Public sector reform, privatization & regulation, infra-
structure and transportation, local public services,
environmental policy

EDUCATION

1989–1993

University of Barcelona (PhD in Economics with honours)

1987–1988

The University of Chicago (M.A. in Economics)

1981–1986

University of Barcelona (B.A. in Economics)

WORK EXPERIENCE

since 2003

Professor, School of Economics, University of Barcelona,
Barcelona, Spain

since 2022

Director of the Research Institute of Applied Economics
(IREA-UB), University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2017-2022

Director of the Observatory for the Analysis and Evalua-
tion of Public Policies, University of Barcelona, Barcelona,
Spain

2011-2017

Director of the Pasqual Maragall Chair of Economy and Territory, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2013-2015

Visiting Professor, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, USA

2009-2017

Governance and Markets (GiM) Research Group Leader, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

2007-2011

Guest Professor, Barcelona Graduate School of Economics, Barcelona, Spain

2004-2005

Visiting Professor, Cornell Institute for Public Affairs, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

1995-2003

Associate Professor, School of Economics, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

1992-1995

Assistant Professor, School of Economics, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

S E L E C T E D A W A R D S

since 2017

Fellow of the Cornell Program in Infrastructure Policy (CPIP), Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

2018-2026

Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University College London, London, UK

2011-2015

ICREA Acadèmia Award, Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA), Barcelona, Spain

2011

XIII Prize Catalunya d'Economia to the best research in Economics in 2011, Societat Catalana d'Economia-Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, Spain

2010

William E. and Frederick C. Mosher Award for the best 2009 academic article, American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), Washington, DC, USA

2006

Joan Sardà Dexeus Prize of the *Revista Econòmica de Catalunya* 2006 to the best book in Economics, Economists' Association of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain

2005-2006

Fellow at Real Colegio Complutense, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

1995

Extraordinary Prize for the best 1993-94 Ph.D. Dissertation (Econ.), University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

SELECTED REQUESTED LECTURES

2024

Keynote Speech 2024 edition of the Doctoral School of the Italian Association of Management Engineering, Siena, Italy

2024

UM Distinguished Visiting Scholar Program Lectures, Universidade de Macau, Macau SAR

2018

CRP & Institute for European Studies, Cornell University,
Ithaca, NY, USA

2018

Maxwell School Seminar, Syracuse University, Syracuse,
NY, USA

2017

Annual Invited Keynote Speech, State University of Saint
Petersburg, Saint Petersburg, Russia

SELECTED SCIENTIFIC / EXPERT ACTIVITIES

since 2006

Member of the Catalan Economy Society-Institut d'Estudis
Catalans

2015-2017

Representative in the Catalan Parliament, Barcelona, Spain

2013-2015

Advisory Council for the National Transition-Government
of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain

2011-2014

Member of the Council of Economic Advisors, Govern-
ment of Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain

2000-2004

Congressman in the Spanish Parliament, Madrid, Spain

1991-1993

Economic Advisor to the Spanish Minister of Public Works
& Transport, Madrid, Spain

1990-1991

Economic Advisor to the Spanish Minister for Public Administration, Madrid, Spain

1989-1990

Economic Advisor to the Provincial Government in Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

MEMBERSHIP IN EDITORIAL BOARDS

since 2015

Local Government Studies, Editor

since 2019

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Editorial Board

since 2015

Revue d'Economie Industrielle, Editorial Board

since 2012

Journal of Economic Policy Reform, Associate Editor

since 2011

Journal of Regulatory Economics, Editorial Board

2018-2023

Journal of Strategic Contracting and Negotiation, Editorial Board

2016-2018

Perspectives on Public Management and Governance, Editorial Board

2015-2019

Urban Affairs Review, Editorial Board

2011-2014

Public Administration Review, Editorial Board

2009-2014

Revista de Economía Aplicada Associate editor

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Books

Albalade, D. & **Bel, G.** (eds.) (2017). *Evaluating High-Speed Rail: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. Milton Park: Routledge

Bel, G. (2012). *Infrastruktura a politická ekonomie budování národa ve Španělsku, 1720–2010*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.

Albalade, D. & **Bel, G.** (2012). *Ekonomika a politika vysokorychlostní železnice: poučení ze zahraničních zkušeností*. Lanham (MD): Lexington Books.

Bel, G. (1994). *Poptávka po dopravě ve Španělsku: Intermodální konkurence v meziměstské železniční dopravě*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios del Transporte y las Comunicaciones.

Journal articles

Bel, G., & Bühler, J. (2026). Privatizace a opětovná municipalizace městského vodárenství v Katalánsku: Mezi monopolizací, státem a veřejným majetkem. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, rsaf048. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsaf048>

Bel, G., Espaillet, P. a Esteve, M. (2026). Účinnost smluv založených na výkonu v rámci veřejného outsourcingu: metaregresní analýza. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 36(2), 250–266. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/maaf037>

Elston, T., **Bel, G.** & Wang, H. (2025). Vliv meziobecní spolupráce na programy sociální pomoci: Důkazy z oblasti příspěvků na bydlení v Anglii. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 44(3), 1060–1088. doi.org/10.1002/pam.22664

Albalade, D., **Bel, G.**, Mazaira-Font, F. A., & Ros-Oton, X. (2024). Platba za ochranu: Bilaterální obchod s vůdcem aliance a výdaje na obranu menších partnerů. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 223, 234–247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2024.05.012>

Albalade, D., **Bel, G.**, González-Gómez, F., Hernández-Gutiérrez, J.C. & Picazo-Tadeo, A. (2024). Změny cen po reformě místních veřejných služeb: privatizace versus remunicipalizace. *Journal of Regulatory Economics*. 65(1-3), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11149-024-09472-7>

Albalade, D., **Bel, G.** & Teixidó, J. (2023). Vliv stárnutí populace na globální klimatickou politiku. *Population and Environment* 45(3), 13. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11111-023-00425-4>

Hansen, G.E., **Bel, G.** & Petersen, O.H. (2023). Nerovnoměrné rozložení důsledků outsourcingu: Nejvyšší cenu platí ženy, nízkokvalifikovaní a mladí pracovníci. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 33(3), 434–452. doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muac041

Albalade, D., **Bel, G.** & Mazaira-Font, F.A. (2022). Geografie a regionální ekonomický růst: Vysoká cena odchýlení se od přírody. *Journal of Regional Science* 62(2), 360–388. doi.org/10.1111/jors.12568

Albalade, D., **Bel, G.**, & Geddes, R. R. (2020). Zvyšují zákony umožňující partnerství veřejného a soukromého sektoru soukromé investice do dopravní infrastruktury? *Journal of Law & Economics*, 63(1), 43–70. <https://doi.org/10.1086/706247>

Bel, G., & Holst, M. (2018). Hodnocení dopadu systému rychlé autobusové dopravy (BRT) na znečištění ovzduší v Mexico City. *Transport Policy*, 63, 209–220. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2018.01.001>

Beria, P., Grimaldi, R., Albalade, D., & **Bel, G.** (2018). Iluze úspěchu: Náklady a poptávka po vysokorychlostní železnici v Itálii a Španělsku. *Transport Policy*, 68, 63–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2018.03.011>

Rouhani, O. M., Geddes, R. R., Gao, H. O., & **Bel, G.** (2016). Analýza sociálního blahobytu u přístupů k investicím v rámci partnerství veřejného a soukromého sektoru u dopravních projektů. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 88, 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2015.11.003>

Bel, G., & Warner, M. E. (2015). Meziobecní spolupráce a náklady: Očekávání a důkazy. *Public Administration*, 93(1), 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12104>

Albalade, D., **Bel, G., & Fageda, X.** (2015). Konkurence a spolupráce mezi vysokorychlostní železniční a leteckou dopravou v Evropě. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 42, 166–174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2014.07.003>

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Bel, G., & Rosell, J. (2013). Vliv omezení rychlosti na 80 km/h a variabilních rychlostních limitů na znečištění ovzduší v metropolitní oblasti Barcelony. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 23, 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2013.04.005>

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Bel, G. (2011). První privatizace: Prodej státních podniků a privatizace veřejných monopolů ve fašistické Itálii (1922–1925). *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 35(3), 937–956. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/beq051>

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Bel, G., & Fageda, X. (2005). Je smíšený model financování dálniční sítě udržitelný v dlouhodobém horizontu? Příklad Španělska. *Research in Transportation Economics*, 15, 187–203. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0739-8859\(05\)15015-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0739-8859(05)15015-X)

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LAUDATIO

Jiří Špalek

Your Magnificence, Mr Rector, Honorabiles, Spectabiles, distinguished members of the scientific councils, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me today to deliver a laudatio to an outstanding scholar whose work has fundamentally shaped our understanding of public policy, infrastructure, and the role of government in modern society. It is my great honour to introduce Professor Germà Bel, who today receives the degree of Doctor honoris causa of Masaryk University. Professor Germà Bel is internationally recognized as one of Europe's leading scholars in public economics, political economy and public administration. Throughout his distinguished career, he has combined the analytical precision of an economist with the broader perspective of a political scientist, creating a unique body of research that has profoundly influenced both academic thinking and public policymaking.

His scientific achievements are reflected not only in an exceptional publication record and worldwide recognition, but also in the remarkable breadth of his career. He is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Barcelona and Director of the Research Institute of Applied Economics. He has held prestigious appointments at institutions including Princeton University, Harvard University, Cornell University, University College London and the European University Institute. Beyond academia, he has also served as adviser to the Spanish government and as a member of both the Spanish and Catalan parliaments, bringing together rigorous scholarship with first-hand experience of public decision-making.

Throughout his career, Professor Bel has fundamentally influenced several major areas of research. Allow me to mention at least three of them.

The first is the economics of privatization and public sector reform. Professor Bel became one of the leading scholars examining the conditions under which privatization improves efficiency and when it does not. His research demonstrated that ownership alone is rarely decisive, institutions, regulation and governance matter far more. The second area concerns the governance of infrastructure and public services. Professor Bel has made major contributions to understanding how transport infrastructure, public services and utilities should be organised, financed and regulated, influencing both academic debate and public policy. A third field is transport economics. His research has advanced our understanding of infrastructure investment, regulation and competition in transport, particularly the role of institutional design in shaping the performance of railway systems and other transport networks.

Professor Bel's work has achieved exceptional international impact. He has authored several hundred scientific publications in many of the world's leading journals and has been included in Stanford University's list of the world's most cited scientists in Economics, Logistics and Transportation, and Political Science and Public Administration. His research has influenced not only academic debate but also the design of public policies and infrastructure reforms in many countries.

For Masaryk University, however, Professor Bel represents much more than an internationally distinguished scholar. For many years, he has maintained a close and exceptionally fruitful collaboration with the Faculty of Economics and Administration. Through joint research projects, academic exchanges, international conferences and the mentoring of young researchers, he has played a crucial role in strengthening the international profile of our faculty. His scientific reputation, intellectual generosity and extensive international network have opened numerous opportunities for collaboration and have helped establish

lasting links between Masaryk University and the University of Barcelona.

Those of us who have had the privilege of collaborating with Professor Bel know that his greatest qualities extend beyond his scientific achievements. He combines intellectual excellence with remarkable modesty, openness and kindness. He has always been willing to share his knowledge, support younger colleagues and contribute to the development of international scientific cooperation. His friendship with our academic community has enriched our faculty both professionally and personally.

Professor Germà Bel has devoted his career to understanding how public institutions can better serve society. His pioneering research, his international scientific leadership, his contributions to public policy and his long-standing commitment to cooperation with Masaryk University make him an exceptionally worthy recipient of the degree of Doctor honoris causa of Masaryk University. Professor Bel, on behalf of the entire academic community of Masaryk University, allow me to express our deepest respect and heartfelt congratulations. We are truly honoured to welcome you among the honorary doctors of our university.

S P E E C H

Germà Bel

Rector Magnificus, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administration, members of the university community and civil society, dear friends,

I am sincerely honored by the great distinction Masaryk University confers on me. In no way could I have imagined, when I was kindly invited by prof. Zdeněk Tomeš to participate in a workshop on High-Speed Rail in Prague in May 2022, jointly organized by Masaryk University and Charles University, that I would one day be standing here as a Doctor Honoris Causa of this very university. It is a particular joy to receive it in Brno, where Masaryk University has become a powerful hub in my own fields of work, among scholars whose rigor and generosity I deeply admire.

The thematic connection -on transportation studies- with Masaryk University is rooted in my doctoral studies. My 1993 PhD dissertation, supervised by my long-time mentor, Dr. Antón Costas, announced a theme that would occupy me for decades: intermodal competition on interurban trail. Those years, spent asking how travellers actually choose between train, road, and air, taught me an early lesson that has never left me: given the freedom to choose, citizens do what they want to do, not what policy-makers or planners would like them to do.

From conventional railways it was a natural step to motorways, airports, and later to high-speed rail; in both cases the same lesson returned: infrastructure decisions are rarely just engineering decisions. Infrastructure ownership, regulation, and pricing shape competition and connectivity as much through politics as through traffic forecasts; and comparing high-speed lines across several countries convinced me that a project's apparent success depends on what it is compared with. I came to see transport infrastructure less as a triumph of engineering than as a mirror of a country's institutions - of who bears the

cost when demand disappoints, and how hard it is to say no to a popular project once political momentum builds behind it.

That political economy of infrastructure led me, in turn, to a second great theme of my working life: where the boundary between the public and the private sector should lie, and why societies keep redrawing it, as Albert O. Hirschman so brilliantly taught us. I began by studying privatization in Spain, and my questions about current economic policies led me, unexpectedly, backward in time -to Puerto Rico in the late 1940s, to Mussolini's Italy of 1922–1925, and to a discovery that startled both me and the profession: the word “privatization” was popularized not by free-market reformers but by the first Germany's National Socialist government in the 1930s, which sold state-owned firms back into private hands for reasons that had little to do with economic efficiency and much to do with political control and financial motivations. That finding confirmed an impression I had already formed while studying the political economy of infrastructure in Spain: the history of an idea is often different from the history its later users prefer to tell, and origins matter.

Beyond this historical research, I have devoted a large share of my work in recent decades to the reform of local government, and of local public services. From privatization, it was a short step to asking about the alternatives available to local governments for delivering urban water, waste management, local transportation, and social services - whether alone, through private contractors, or through cooperation with other municipalities. Masaryk University has excelled in research on these very same topics within this region of Europe, with Jana Soukopová's work being the clearest illustration of this. The most important thing that I have learned from a quarter century of work on these questions is that good empirical research on public services is never a solitary endeavour. It requires people who understand the often-contested and incomplete theoretical approaches, know the insti-

tutional details, can manage the econometrics, and – also- are stubborn enough to push a paper through its next revise-and-resubmit. I have been fortunate, repeatedly, to collaborate with such people, in Barcelona and well beyond it.

Some say that research in the social sciences ideally entails engaging with relevant collective problems and offering knowledge that helps improve policymaking. I fully agree. At several points in my career, I have had the opportunity to step outside the university and into institutional politics itself -first as an economic advisor to different levels of central government, and later as a member of parliament, both in Spain (2000–2004) and in Catalonia (2015–2017). Those years exposed me, at close range, to a tension running through the very core of the design and implementation of public policies: between an intention-alism stance, which judges a policy by the nobility of the goal that inspired it, and a consequentialist one, which judges it by what actually happens. The first is, in spirit, Plato's idealism: it trusts that the good intention behind a policy is what truly matters, an idea later certified by Immanuel Kant. The second is Aristotle's: it trusts observation, evidence, and outcomes over intentions, because -as John Stuart Mill might have put it -what citizens receive from public policy is its consequences, not its intentions.

I have grown steadily more persuaded that public policy needs far more Aristotle and less Plato. A water reform, a privatization, a high-speed rail line, a universal basic income -all can be launched with the best of intentions and still leave citizens worse off. Citizens do not live on intentions, particularly those without the wealth or power to afford that luxury. They live on consequences. That conviction -that a policy should ultimately be judged by what it delivers, not by what it promised- is, I believe, the closest thing I have to a single guiding principle across everything I have studied, from railways to water to the reform of local government.

None of this work would have counted for much without the institutions that gave it a home and an audience: the journals that tested my arguments as author, referee, and editor, the doctoral students whose questions sharpened my own thinking and whose research has expanded beyond what I could have accomplished by myself -among whom it is only fair to single out Daniel Albalade and Xavier Fageda - and the universities on several continents that opened their doors to a visiting professor eager both to work with local scholars and to learn from different cultures and traditions.

I am honored that this distinction comes from Masaryk University, an institution that has built a genuinely international community of scholars working on transport, economics, public administration, and local government -the very same questions of infrastructure, governance, and institutional design that have occupied most of my academic life.

I want to close by thanking my collaborators, my students, and my colleagues across the many universities that have been my home, for the arguments, the corrections, and the friendship that have made this work worth doing. And I thank Masaryk University for this great honour, and for the invitation implicit in it: to keep asking, together, not only what our policies intend to do, but what they deliver to the people who must live with them.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE AUDITORIUM MAXIMUM

THE KAREL ENGLIŠ GRAND AUDITORIUM

Today, Masaryk University's ceremonial events are inextricably linked with the Auditorium Maximum of the Faculty of Law, which serves as the university's main auditorium.

In its early days, in the 1930s, it hosted most of the university's ceremonial events, including the inauguration of lecturers and the grand conferment of honorary doctorates. However, the space was regarded as a temporary solution for such ceremonies and was intended to serve only until the construction of an extensive university campus was completed. For this reason, the Auditorium Maximum originally had an austere character, devoid of artistic decoration. The sole exception was the ceiling featuring stained-glass windows by František Kysela.

The idea of building an extensive Academic Quarter with a new, monumental auditorium was gradually abandoned, and of the original plan, only the Faculty of Law building was realised. It was therefore decided to create a more dignified setting for the ceremonies by decorating the original large empty wall on the façade of the Auditorium Maximus.

The large-scale composition depicting Prometheus bringing fire to mankind, measuring 7.5 by 13 metres, is divided by the artist Antonín Procházka into three horizontal bands. In the upper band, the god Helios, accompanied by the goddess of time, Hora, heralds a new day to mankind. The middle band depicts allegorical figures representing all the disciplines taught at the uni-

versity – from left to right: law, medicine, philosophy, the arts, education and the natural sciences. The centre of the painting is dominated by the figure of Prometheus holding a burning torch. In the lower panel, the work depicts humanity engaged in its daily activities – construction, seafaring and agriculture. A group of figures yearning for the fire of knowledge is symbolically linked to the figure of Prometheus. The ceremonial unveiling of Procházka's monumental work took place in the atmosphere of post-war Munich Czechoslovakia on 16 December 1938. The composition suffered a turbulent fate during the war. It was callously cut out of its frame by order of the Brno Gestapo, but thanks to the courage of Czech workers, it was managed to be hidden in the building's cellars. Three years after the war, the restoration of the work was completed by the painter's partner, Linka Procházková.

As part of the celebrations marking the 104th anniversary of the university's foundation in January 2023, the auditorium was named after the university's first rector and one of the most prominent figures of his time, Karel Engliš.

Karel Engliš was not only the co-author and co-sponsor of the bill establishing the 'second Czech university', but later also its first rector, who, in collaboration with the then President T. G. Masaryk, succeeded in securing the foundation of the university's insignia – the rector's chain.

"It is important to remember the past, for without it the present would not exist. We can rightly be proud of our past, because it was shaped by extraordinary figures whose legacy should be regularly commemorated so that it never fades from our memory," said Martin Bareš, Rector of Masaryk University, during the ceremonial unveiling of the name of the Karel Engliš Grand Auditorium.

Masaryk University
Doctor Honoris Causa

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