

## **LETTER OF RECTOR MARTIN BAREŠ TO EVERYONE AT MASARYK UNIVERSITY**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

Dear Students,

I am writing to you in this unusual situation again. Let me continue in the ideas expressed in my first letter of 12 March.

In that letter, I mentioned there were three main tasks for us in this unprecedented situation: to maximally reduce the possibility of contagion and spread of the new coronavirus, to help those in need and the broader community, showing solidarity and offering help wherever possible, and to ensure the operation and activities of the University.

It is my great pleasure to see the approach of the University to the current crisis in all the three areas. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all members of the Masaryk University Crisis Board who assisted in the preparation of measures to minimize the risk of the contagion in the University premises. I fully appreciate the extremely helpful approach of the Deans of our Faculties. I would like to give many thanks to all the teachers who quickly managed to adopt the online forms of instruction, and to students for their patience and understanding. I also thank everyone who has been involved in the testing of the new coronavirus at CEITEC MU. I also greatly appreciate the flexibility of the Senators who have switched into the online mode of the Senate sessions and allowed, thus, the uninterrupted functioning of our autonomous academic bodies. I am also grateful to all who have participated in the drafting of the new strategic plan, the content of which will reflect the current situation.

As far as the help of the University to the community is concerned, I have been overwhelmed by the massive wave of solidarity and amount of aid that rose at Masaryk University early in the beginnings of the coronavirus crisis. It was Masaryk University that set an example to the others and showed what the real social role and responsibility of a University can look like. Here, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has participated in the work of the MU

Emergency Operations Centre / Volunteer Centre ([www.munipomaha.cz](http://www.munipomaha.cz)), to all employees who have participated in its activities, to all students in coordination teams and of course to all field volunteers. It is thanks to the contribution of all these people that Masaryk University has been seen and heard in the past weeks, and its reputation and credibility in the society has risen.

Let me present several numbers to illustrate our contribution: there are 4,362 people participating in the volunteering initiative as of 7 April (2,250 from MU, 883 Medical students); 1,300 volunteers have worked in the field or have been involved in such work. The University has answered requests for help from 113 institutions and 1,634 individuals; more than 3,500 facemasks have been distributed as part of our initiative. The Masaryk University volunteering activities have been appreciated by the community, too. Our public collection has gathered over 2,200,000 Czech crowns in a relatively short period of time.

Regarding the operation of the University, please follow the University website ([www.muni.cz/koronavirus](http://www.muni.cz/koronavirus)) and the websites of faculties, where all the important information concerning measures, studies, exam period, admissions and accommodation in the dormitories is published.

As for the international students, the University management has been leading intense talks with the relevant Ministries about how to enable the students' return as early as possible. International students and staff are an integral part of the University and although the current situation does not seem to be in favour of international contacts and cooperation, we must restore the original state as soon as possible while maintaining the measures to control the virus spread.

I would also like to address students and call for thoughtfulness and prudence. Dear students, and in particular volunteers, I highly value your work and I know it is difficult for you, but please, try to balance your generous volunteering activities with your study duties. I would personally deeply regret if any of you had trouble with studies as a result of volunteering.

My other concern regarding thoughtfulness and prudence stems from the recent news about the hopeful statistical trends of the virus spread or the numbers of positively tested cases. Some individuals call for the immediate release of existing measures, or harshly criticise the steps of national authorities. In my view, such calls are irresponsible, and I strongly encourage moderate

and sober judgement. At the University, we have adopted the necessary measures with resolution but without unreasonable haste; the same principles should apply to the return to the standard mode of operation in the weeks to come. We have not gained control over the contagion yet and any hasty action could lead to worsening the situation. The society must proceed with caution in order to avoid the sad scenarios happening in some other countries.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

We are approaching the Easter time – the holiday of new beginnings, new life and hope, the victory of life over death. This year, the deep symbolic meaning of Easter will be realised with more urgency than in recent years. It is my sincere wish that this Easter implicates more than in the past the time for reflection, pause and contemplation, and maybe a certain transformation of our way of thinking and perception, which may lead us to realise what the true values are and who the real heroes and celebrities are.

In the recent days and weeks, I have been extremely proud. I have been proud of the way Masaryk University has faced the current state of emergency. I have been proud that we have been able to become united and stay together when the times call for it. I have been proud that we have proved we are one academic community, a community of thoughts and values. We are one University, a University that truly deserves to bear the name of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

Thank you with all my heart!

Martin Bareš

Rector

In Brno on 9 April 2020