



MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND
HIGHER EDUCATION
Wojciech Murdzek

Warsaw, 8 May 2020

His Magnificence
prof. dr hab. Pawel Czarnecki
Provost
Collegium Humanum – Warsaw Management University

“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit might rise to contemplate the truth” - John Paul II

Your Magnificence, Dear Professor,

It is with great satisfaction that I may write my first letter to the academic and scientific community in connection with my appointment for the post of the Minister of Science and Higher Education. It comes in the midst of very unusual conditions of the widespread pandemic that is very difficult for all of us. When the situation allows it, I would like to meet you in person, and I hope it will happen very soon.

Similar to the economy, the health care and education sector as well as many other areas of our lives, Polish universities and scientific institutions, too, are facing many inconveniences today and a peculiar sense of uncertainty. This situation requires from us to think carefully and effectively in order to be able to return to our normalcy and to the path of further development as soon as it may be possible. This very task will be an absolute priority for me in the near future and I will do my best to enable the Polish education sector to handle this situation as well as possible.

I would like to thank those of you who have the opportunity to get involved in projects to combat COVID-19. I am convinced that your ideas and scientific achievements across various fields will significantly contribute to overcoming this crisis. Concrete solutions and active cooperation with Polish companies can save many workplaces and revive our economy.

I am glad that Polish universities are relentlessly running the process of educating students. Despite many restrictions, often working remotely, we strive to maintain the functioning of our universities and institutes. We are also still implementing further elements of the reform of the science and higher education sector. We are aware that these changes must be adapted to the current situation. Therefore, a decision has been made to extend the scientific achievements evaluation period by one year. Alongside this welcome message, I would also

like to refer to the values that have always brought and, especially today, continue do bring much hope allowing us to overcome various difficulties. Because the 100th anniversary of the birth of John Paul II, our great compatriot, Pope and an outstanding academic lecturer, is approaching, I think that it is worth reaching out for his intellectual and spiritual achievements.

To commemorate this anniversary, a separate resolution by the Parliament of the Republic of Poland has named year 2020 the “Year of Saint John Paul II”. Apart from many remarkable achievements of the Holy Father for the sake of Poland, the Church and the World, we shall also ponder over His merits for the sciences. Many excellent encyclicals, letters as well as speeches by John Paul II touched upon various issues relating to the scientific community. We will always remember His calls to remain faithful to the academic ideals as well as numerous projects aimed at building mutual respect and creative cooperation of scientists representing different views.

In the words of John Paul II that “the university in itself is a great means to an end, the institution of the university being one of the masterpieces of the human culture” we can discover the elitism and at the same time the special mission of the university. The Holy Father developed this idea further by talking about the very important role of the academic autonomy: “The society expects its universities to strengthen their own subjectivity (...). The requirement of academic freedom is closely related to this aspect”. This indicates the extraordinary value as well as the demanding and responsible role of all scientists and universities in every society. I think that this reference to the words of John Paul II can be further emphasised by the following sentence: “Personally, after many years, I can see better and better how much I owe to the university: the passion for truth and for showing the ways of searching for it”.

As the Minister of Science and Higher Education, I treat these words as a task and I can assure you that my attitude and decisions will always be consistent with them while respecting the legitimate expectations of the academic community.

I remain at your disposal and I also declare my readiness to listen to your opinions. I am open to valuable initiatives, comments and suggestions. I will consistently strive to increase the significance of the Polish education on the international arena and I will also strive to further develop the synergy of education and the economy by implementing the idea of “development through science”.

Concluding, I would like to encourage you to consider honouring the centenary of the birth of John Paul II by your community, while taking into account, of course, the current epidemic situation.

Yours sincerely,
Wojciech Murdzek