



Universität Regensburg



20th Anniversary Celebration of BAYHOST
Speech by the President, Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel
October 28, 2025

Dear guests,

as the President of the University of Regensburg and in my role as the speaker of the directors' board, it is a high honor and a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Bavarian Academic Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe – or short BAYHOST as we all came to know it.

We are all delighted that so many long-time partners and dear friends have followed BAYHOST's invitation. Please understand that I might not be able to greet everyone individually here today – the list is too long and the program is too full. But be assured that everyone is highly welcome and treasured.

My first welcome goes to the Director General of the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts, Stephanie Jacobs – I am delighted that you were able to join us. Your presence signals the Bavarian-wide importance of BAYHOST, especially as this is also your first official visit to the University of Regensburg in your new position today.

I would also like to welcome our dear and esteemed guests from the diplomatic corps – the Consul Generals of

- the Republic of North Macedonia,
- the Slovak Republic,
- the Republic of Albania,
- of Ukraine in Munich,
- of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- the Republic of Slovenia,
- the Republic of Croatia
- and the Republic of Kosovo;
- as well as Consuls of the Republic in Poland and of Hungary in Munich.

I welcome the Presidents and Vice Presidents and other representatives of the universities in Bavaria, especially the deputy speaker of the BAYHOST board of directors and president of the OTH Regensburg, Prof. Dr. Ralph Schneider and dear President of the University of Bamberg, Prof. Dr. Kai Fischbach.

A special greeting goes to Vice rectors and representatives of our partners in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Your presence today is an important sign of the successful and productive inter-university cooperation within the framework of BAYHOST.

And last, but not least, dear former and current members of the BAYHOST board of directors – especially dear Prof. Walter Koschmal – dear present and former scholarship holders, dear members of our alumni network: Welcome! It is your contribution that has decisively shaped and defined the center and its outreach und impact over the last 20 years.

20 years of BAYHOST stands for 20 years of academic cooperation and exchange between Bavaria and more than 20 countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. 20 years of BAYHOST means 20 years of scholarships and funding programs for students and emerging researchers, counseling, forums, conferences, workshops and delegation visits.

When BAYHOST was officially founded in the year 2005, we couldn't have imagined how it would develop and what it would look like now 20 years later – and how very successfully it has grown and expanded its services and initiatives.

One of the first initial tasks of BAYHOST was to set up scholarship programs for the exchange of students and emerging researchers.

Very soon new social and political challenges led to several additions to the BAYHOST agenda: internship services and cooperation of academia and business, supporting cooperation in the Danube region, initiating research cooperation, establishing an alumni network, forums for double degree programs, cooperative/dual study courses and developing cooperation with different focus countries and regions like Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, Slovenia, Poland and most recently Croatia with a Croatian-Bavarian Higher Education Day taking place right here in this very building just four months ago.

While BAYHOST started with four staff members in 2005, it now is a team of nine including the Bavarian-Czech Academic Agency (BTHA) and the Coordination Office for Ukraine, which were established in 2016 and 2022 respectively. It is especially important and significant that, since the war in Ukraine started, BAYHOST has played a seminal and visible role and shown great commitment in advising students and academia from Ukraine and in promoting university cooperation with Ukraine.

I may add on a personal note that just five weeks ago I attended a trilateral meeting in the German Embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish Academy of Sciences to support further cooperation with and for universities and science institutions in Ukraine – and how visible BAYHOST is and how respected its work is especially in this context was stressed many times.

This way, the center fulfills its important mission of making a real difference, even and especially in difficult times. That is also a reason why we have decided to connect this anniversary with a Ukrainian-Bavarian workshop on multilingualism as a cooperation between BAYHOST, the Forum Multilingualism and Regionality of the University of Regensburg and the DAAD-supported "Think Space Ukraine" at the University of Regensburg taking place today and tomorrow. And the Consul General of Ukraine and I had a personal meeting right before this event.

The University of Regensburg is very proud to host BAYHOST as a center for all Bavarian higher education institutions right here on its campus. Having been part of most of BAYHOST's history in my double role as president of the University and then later speaker of the board of directors– I can wholeheartedly say that this was and has been a match well made.

The University of Regensburg cooperates closely and intensively with numerous universities in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe since its very beginnings and our special research interest in Central, eastern, and Southeastern European Studies has been developed very successfully over the decades along several line and in various formats and all the way to the establishment of the Leibniz-Institute IOS in 2017.

In the year 2000, the EUROPÆUM, the East-West-Center of the University of Regensburg was established as a platform to offer more opportunities also for cultural exchange and knowledge transfer. In just three weeks we will celebrate 25 Years Europæum with Manfred Weber as the special guest of honor and speaker.

Establishing BAYHOST right here at the University of Regensburg in 2005 came thus quite naturally with very good and promising perspectives and results for all of Bavaria.

Academic centers like BAYHOST support cooperation with specific countries or regions and offer their services not just to one, but to all universities in Bavaria – they are a specific concept of the State of Bavaria that does not exist in this fashion and with similar state support in any other federal state of Germany. So our gratitude goes to our Ministry of Science and the Arts – and also to all the other supporting ministries and agencies in the Bavarian government and of course in the Bavarian Parliament (that after all hold the power of the purse and the budget).

While proudly reviewing the past development of BAYHOST and our existing and flourishing cooperations and projects, of course we also need to look ahead and see where BAYHOST might be headed in the future: The BAYHOST board of directors has discussed several new approaches and, apart from bilateral events, it is convinced that – just like the workshop today and tomorrow – multilateral forums and networking will become even more important, for example with regard to free research cooperations and unhindered mobility of scholars and scientists.

In addition to developing cooperation with focus countries, BAYHOST will also support co-operation on focus topics and bring together academics from different countries throughout the region. And of course, we are always grateful for ideas and advice from within network and from our dear partners who continuously help us to identify topics and approaches of mutual interest and complementary competences.

In addition to the academic and immediate scientific value of international cooperation, it is of great importance to BAYHOST and all universities within its framework to strengthen cooperation between European countries. In view of growing threats by anti-democratic movements, populism, ethnocentrism, disinformation, increasing political polarization and even war, we are convinced that free and unhindered academic cooperation in all its dimensions is absolutely necessary to counter these developments with a clear sense of our responsibility, the will to support innovations and the promise for a better future. Universities and science – and all of us as scientists and scholars – have the potential and responsibility to stand for and assure unhindered free transnational exchange, the generation and circulation of evidence-based knowledge as well as and especially the values of democracy, diversity, and humanity. Higher education and science must contribute to successfully facing and overcoming the grand challenges of our times. So, thank you all for joining us here today, for sharing the goal of standing up for these ideals and for showing your support and connection with BAYHOST.

All of this work of course would not have been possible without the people who have made extraordinary efforts for the benefit of BAYHOST and its mission or a very long time.

On behalf of BAYHOST directors' board, let me therefore first express our sincere gratitude to Professor Walter Koschmal: As the founder of BAYHOST, and long-time member of the board of directors he has shaped the work of BAYHOST for more than 15 years. It is to a great extent his merit that BAYHOST has played such a major role in international academic cooperation and enjoys such a high reputation.

Further, I'd like to give my special thanks and appreciation to:

- Professor Wolfgang Mastnak, representative of the universities of arts in the board of directors for almost 20 years
- Professor Horst Brezinski, Chair of the advisory board since the beginning in 2005
- Dr. Tanja Wagensohn, Executive Director until 2012, who has built up BAYHOST (four people from her team still work in the BAYHOST office today).

Very important and more than well-deserved words of gratitude go to Mr. Nikolas Djukic, Ms. Radka Bonackova and the past and current BAYHOST-teams. Thanks to your unrelenting dedication, your untiring motivation, and your repeatedly demonstrated ability and competence to develop new formats and ideas in bringing scientists and students together, BAYHOST stands out as an exemplary institution of international academic exchange and as the player, when it comes to expertise and knowledge with regards to collaboration between Bavaria and countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe!

We are of course – and allow me to repeat this – extremely grateful to the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts that finances BAYHOST and most of its scholarship and funding programs as well as to the Bavarian State Chancellery for continuously providing

scholarships for summer courses and for studying and doing research in Bavaria every year as well as for financing many other programs and activities of BAYHOST and the Bavarian-Czech Academic Agency in the last 20 years.

That's why it is now my pleasure to hand over to our honorary guest, Director General of the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts, Stephanie Jacobs.

Thank you very much.
