

A New Cutting-Edge Research Centre for Area Studies Will Be Established at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Faculty of Arts, Charles University (CU FA), was awarded a grant for a prestigious ERA-AREAS project from the Horizon Europe programme (ERA Chair scheme). In collaboration with Prof Mariana Llanos from the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, the project team will carry out research of contemporary critical phenomena in non-European regions over the next five years. The project succeeded in a fierce international competition, being among 38 successful projects out of 158 submitted project proposals.



The project will allow CU FA to establish the Centre for Multidisciplinary Area Studies (CEMAS), which will focus on research activities that cover current political and social developments in non-European regions. The centre will support independent research primarily aimed at understanding the

context of current political and social crises in countries outside Europe. The Dean of CU FA, Dr Eva Lehečková, emphasises this aspect as well: *“The ERA-AREAS project fits into the long-term strategy of CU FA to establish functional cooperation on many levels with state administration. It focuses on the joint effort to strengthen the ability of Czech society to respond to crises. Experts dealing with non-European regions and the management of CU FA are ready to enter into a more detailed discussion with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other governmental agencies on developing a strategic approach to provide the Czech Republic with the necessary expertise in this area.”*

The project will also seek to consolidate the organisational structure of area studies at CU FA and ensure that they maintain their excellent quality in a global comparison. In this way, the project builds on the long-standing and unique tradition of studying and researching non-European languages and cultures at CU FA. The diversity and scope of area studies at CU FA, which covers Asia, Africa, and Latin America, is unique amongst comparable universities.

“The newly established centre will enable better coordination of research activities among the individual disciplines at CU FA and will significantly enhance the synergy of both social scientific and humanities approaches to the study of non-European regions,” says the coordinator of the project, doc. Karel Kouba of the Centre for Ibero-American Studies at CU FA. CEMAS will also transform the existing Institute for the Study of the Strategic Regions (ISSR). Dr Radek Buben, chairman of the ISSR board, who participated in the preparation of the project, adds: *“CEMAS is the future of the existing ISSR – it will enable its further development and, thus, strengthen the role of CU FA in Central and Eastern Europe in the field of international research on key global regions.”*

Prof. Mariana Llanos, who will hold the prestigious ERA Chair on behalf of CU FA, is a lead research fellow at the German

Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), a leading German research institute, and the Extraordinary Professor for Democratic Institutions in the Global South at the University of Erfurt. Prof. Llanos is a leading expert in comparative Latin American studies. After completing her PhD (University of Oxford), she researched the political institutions of Latin American countries and has extensive managerial experience. Among other things, she was the head of the Latin America Political Science Association (ALACIP). Her experience at the GIGA will be a valuable inspiration for the independent research development of area studies at CU FA. *"I am honoured to hold the ERA Chair at Charles University. I look forward to collaborating on the modernisation and promotion of area studies in the Czech Republic and to contribute to the exchange of knowledge between the two institutions and between our societies,"* concludes. Prof Mariana Llanos.