

## Secretary General's Welcome Speech

### 8th Geography of Innovation Conference (Corvinus University of Budapest – 28 January 2026)

#### Ladies and Gentlemen!

We are at a biannual conference series, that was created to examine the social and economic components of scientific and technological progress. This is an important task, since as scientists and researchers, we have a broad responsibility to ensure that our innovative solutions truly serve the interests of the people. To this end, two things are essential. One is mapping, which is familiar from geography but also essential in the “geography of innovation”. Mapping how scientific and technological progress interacts with other areas of life. The other is that we must remain ethical human beings, as participants in the scientific and technological progress.

I would therefore like to share with you a quote that speaks to all of us, regardless of our field of science, from economic geography and regional science, to economics and management science, sociology and network theory, and the political and planning sciences. A thought that touches the human in us and thus provides a clear starting point and a reliable ethical compass for our work in the field of innovation. That is why I chose Rudyard Kipling's poem *If*, which I was learnt from my mother, and which hang on the wall of my room, when I was a young researcher:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,  
And treat those two impostors just the same:  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

Let me emphasize only one thought of the poem: Triumph and Disaster, treat those two impostors just the same. Or with other words Success and Failure, either

one can easily distort the character of a researcher. Maturity, both in our personal and professional lives, means to balance between those impostors.

### **Ladies and gentlemen!**

The themes of the GeoInno conference are divided into more than forty different sections this year. The topics are not free of paradoxes and challenges; on the contrary, it is precisely these issues that invite us to think together. To think together not only across specialised scientific subfields, but also across major scientific fields.

The diversity of the GeoInno conferences, which have become one of Europe's most important scientific gatherings, also highlights that innovation policies can only be successful if they take into account the interdependence of fundamental and applied research. Many presentations also address the topic of innovation and inequalities, with particular attention to income and gender inequality. These themes draw our attention to our moral and social responsibilities.

### **Ladies and gentlemen!**

As Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, I would like to welcome you here today on behalf of our 200-year-old Academy. Last year, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of our Academy's founding, and this year we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Academy's library. To mark this double bicentennial, the National Assembly has declared 2025 and 2026 the Years of Hungarian Science in our country. The fact that the GeoInno conference is being held this year in Central and Eastern Europe, specifically in Hungary, after having been held in France, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Italy, and the United Kingdom, is also connected to this celebration for us.

István Széchenyi, founder of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was equally concerned with long-term goals, ambitious ideas, and their direct implementation. Much of what can be admired in Budapest today is associated with his name – one example is the Chain Bridge, the first permanent bridge over the Danube.

### **Ladies and gentlemen!**

István Széchenyi, founder of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, saw the foundation of a successful future in the cultivation of “scientific minds”. This idea also resonates with the GeoInno conference, whose themes are closely linked to knowledge creation at universities, the education of students, and the development of partnerships with industry.

The GeoInno conference will be hosted by Corvinus University of Budapest in 2026. Therefore, allow me to conclude with a few words about the name of the

university. The name “Corvinus” evokes one of the most prosperous periods in Hungarian history in the fifteenth century under the reign of King Matthias, also known as Matthias Corvinus. Our county was characterized by economic development, and Renaissance humanism. After the Pope of Rome, Matthias Corvinus had the largest library in Europe. The coat of arms of the Corvinus family, a raven holding a golden ring in its beak, could be seen on the covers of his collection of some 2,500 codices. The Latin word for raven is *corvus*. It was because of this raven coat of arms that King Matthias was called Matthias Corvinus, meaning Matthias the Raven, and his world-famous collection of codices – one surviving copy of which is kept in the library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – was called the Corvina. Corvinus University of Budapest preserves this word in its name, referring to the fact that the university chose the spirit of the age of King Matthias as its guiding standard. The raven is also the central motif of the university’s visual identity. The bird holding a golden ring in its beak symbolises that quality knowledge can “lift us up”, and that true values can help us achieve our goals: that the educated, active individual is capable of “turning knowledge into value, momentum into purpose, and the search into commitment”.

I hope that the GeoInno 2026 conference will help us in this endeavour: that we may serve the good of others with quality knowledge, cooperation, and ethical conduct.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish you a productive conference!