

Czech Rectors Conference History in Brief

The Czech Rectors Conference (CRC) origin roots from the Czech and Slovak University Rectors Club (RC) officially founded in Žilina, Slovakia, at the Transport and Communication University on 26 April 1990, following a meeting of five Czech rectors held at the Czech Technical University in Prague on 14 March 1990. It was established by seven members – four Czech university rectors (Tomáš Čermák, Ostrava Mining University; Stanislav Hanzl, Czech Technical University in Prague; Arnošt Hönig, Brno University of Technology; Věněk Šilhán, Prague University of Economics and Business) and three Slovak university rectors (Norbert Frištacký, Slovak Technical University in Bratislava; Pavol Kluvánek, Transport and Communication University in Žilina; Miroslav Kusý, Comenius University in Bratislava). The first RC President was Professor Milan Jelínek, the first rector of Masaryk University in Brno in the post-communist era. In the planning period of building the administration pool for the RC in Brno, which is on half way between Prague and Bratislava, he managed to find an active collaborator in the person of Professor Martin Černožský – the Silesian University in Opava rector – who agreed to take responsibility for that and whose effort resulted in the RC Secretariat open in Brno Masaryk University premises on 1 March 1992. Professor Černožský was officially in charge of the RC Secretariat operation becoming thus a member of RC leaders (Vice-President) bearing the title of Chancellor.

In the next development phase two sections – RC Czech Section and RC Slovak Section – formed (26 September 1992) within the RC while the RC remained a unit. The two RC sections evolved into two Rectors Conferences – Czech Rectors Conference (CRC) and Slovak Rectors Conference (SRC). The RC Slovak Section made the decision of reforming into SRC at its first ever assembly on 25 November 1992. The RC Czech Section needed three sessions until it reformed.

At the first meeting held on 22 October 1992, the RC Czech Section elected Professor Zdeněk Kovář, Technical University of Liberec rector, for its President. Professor Černožský kept being responsible for RC Secretariat operation. Having discussed the matter beforehand with rector Kovář, he presented the second assembly held on 12 January 1993 a proposal of the Czech Rectors Conference establishment. It provoked a lengthy discussion with the prevailing opinion of maintaining the word of “club” in its name (Czech Rectors Club). Nevertheless, draft statutes that had been made could be modified to comply with discussion results and made available to all participants of the third session of the RC Czech Section held on 28 January 1993 in the premises of Czech Technical University in Prague. On behalf of President Kovář who could only arrive one hour late for his serious duty reasons, Professor Černožský opened the session recommending discussion on draft statutes of the Czech Rectors Conference as the first point of agenda and, if approved, the third RC Czech Section assembly would change into the first Czech Rectors Conference meeting immediately. The proposal turned true as 24 present rectors (26 of 27 were present) voted for the Czech Rectors Conference while the Czech Rectors Club received 2 votes and the Czech Rectors Conference Statutes were approved unanimously. Steered by Professor Stanislav Hanzl, Czech Technical University in Prague rector, as meeting host, rector Kovář was elected the first CRC President and rector Černožský the first CRC Chancellor.

The approval of the Statutes and the elections of the President and the Chancellor meant the official establishment of the Czech Rectors Conference as of 28 January 1993.

Czech Rectors Conference had grown into a position that it was less difficult to push through the idea of it being mentioned in the Higher Education Act as a part of the Czech higher education institutions leading bodies along with the Council of Higher Education Institutions of the Czech Republic. Similar success the Czech Rectors Conference recorded in its international activities. Most negotiations resulting in establishing international contacts were held by the CRC President, Chancellor or Secretary General. They managed to resume both working and friendly contacts between the CRC and the HRK (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz – German Rectors Conference seated in Bonn) and similar were the interactions with France (Paris), Austria (Vienna) and Hungary (Budapest), apart from the closest Slovakia (Bratislava).

Quite a lot of effort was needed for achievements, today considered natural, such as the Czech Rectors Conference being the Full Collective Member of the European University Association that originated from a merger between the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Confederation of European Union Rectors Conferences (Confederation). As soon as the CRC had been established, its representatives were regularly invited to CRE Council meetings. It could be considered extraordinary that as early as in 1996 the CRE 47th Bi-Annual Conference took place in the Czech Republic (Palacký University in Olomouc, October 1996). Thanks to the systematic negotiations of its representatives, CRC has been accepted for the Confederation observer already since 1994 and since 1996 it has received the status of the associated member. If the list of CRC international activities should continue the length would be formidable containing names of many other players who claim credit for developing CRC international contacts. The Czech Rectors Conference holds a fast position as a fully-fledged partner of Rectors Conferences in the whole Europe.

It should be also mentioned that the CRC was the first Rectors Conference from non-EU member countries hosting the Confederation of European Union Rectors Conferences Board meeting (Masaryk University in Brno, May 1997). The CRC should also be given credits for hosting 2001 summit of European ministers of education by Charles University in Prague in May or for 2006 EUA Conference taking place in Brno hosted in October by Masaryk University. Another CRC big success is also 2009 EUA Convention held in Prague in March before the ministers of education May summit. The noted event held in the period of the Czech Republic EU Presidency was hosted by Charles University in Prague, along with the CRC.

Another exceptional progress favourable for the CRC and not only the CRC is that based on the CRC proposal Professor Václav Hampl, Charles University in Prague rector and that time the CRC Vice-President for creative activities, later the CRC President, was elected EUA Board member for the four-year office period of 2011-2015 by the EUA General Assembly (Denmark, Aarhus, April 2011). The similar situation was repeated in 2017. On the CRC proposal Professor Hana Machková, rector of the Prague University of Economics and Business, was elected EUA Board member for the four-year office period of 2017-2021 by the General Assembly (Norway, Bergen, April 2017).

Since its establishment, the CRC has held 176 CRC Plenum Meetings and 193 CRC Presidium Meetings. The State of emergency was declared in March 2020, when a first wave of the pandemic of COVID-19 caused by a new type of coronavirus broke out. Consequently, the April 155th CRC Plenum Meeting and the 164th CRC Presidium Meeting had to be cancelled. CRC Presidium Meetings took place from 23 March 2020 to 2 June 2020 in the form of videoconferences. The second wave of the pandemic of COVID-19 broke out in October 2020. Consequently, the December 158th CRC Plenum Meeting and the 167th CRC Presidium Meeting had to be cancelled.

The number of CRC members has grown from the original 27 (all public and state higher education institutions in the Czech Republic) to 45 (all 26 public higher education institutions, both state higher education institutions and 17 private higher education institutions). The CRC Secretariat has kept its location in the Masaryk University headquarters building in Brno since its creation employing only one person as the CRC Secretary General till mid-October 2009. Since 15 October 2009 till 31 July 2018, the CRC Secretariat employed the CRC Secretariat Assistant along with the CRC Secretary General. Since 1 August 2018 the CRC Secretariat has consisted of three employees – the CRC Secretary General and two CRC Secretariat Assistants.

CRC Presidents in 1993-2024

Prof. **Zdeněk Kovář** († 14 December 2014), Rector of the Technical University of Liberec, 28 January 1993 – 24 February 1994, President;

Prof. **Stanislav Hanzl** († 14 June 1996), Rector of Czech Technical University in Prague, 25 February 1994 – 14 June 1996, President;

Prof. **Jan Hron**, Rector of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, 15 June 1996 – 6 March 1997, Acting President, 7 March 1997 – 24 February 2000, President;

Prof. **Ivan Wilhelm**, Rector of Charles University, 25 February 2000 – 31 January 2006, President;

Prof. **Petr Sába**, Rector of Tomas Bata University in Zlín, 24 February 2006 – 10 May 2007, President;

Prof. **Jan Hron**, Rector of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, 11 May 2007 – 31 July 2007, Acting President, 1 August 2007 – 31 July 2009, President;

Prof. **Petr Fiala**, Rector of Masaryk University, 1 August 2009 – 31 July 2011, President;

Prof. **Václav Hampl**, Rector of Charles University, 1 August 2011 – 31 January 2014, President;

Prof. **Tomáš Zima**, Rector of Charles University, 20 February 2014 – 31 July 2019, President;

Prof. **Petr Sklenička**, Rector of Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, 1 August 2019 – 31 July 2021, President;

Prof. **Martin Bareš**, Rector of Masaryk University, 1 August 2021 – 31 July 2023, President;

Prof. **Milena Králíčková**, Rector of Charles University, 1 August 2023 – 31 July 2025, President.

Brno, 5 December 2024

Marie Fojtková
Czech Rectors Conference Secretary General

Czech Rectors Conference Presidents 1993-2024



Zdeněk Kovář
28.1.1993–24.2.1994
(† 14.12.2014)



Stanislav Hanzl
25.2.1994–14.6.1996
(† 14.6.1996)



Jan Hron
15.6.1996–24.2.2000



Ivan Wilhelm
25.2.2000–31.1.2006



Petr Sába
24.2.2006–10.5.2007



Jan Hron
11.5.2007–31.7.2009



Petr Fiala
1.8.2009–31.7.2011



Václav Hampl
1.8.2011–31.1.2014



Tomáš Zima
20.2.2014–31.7.2019



Petr Sklenička
1.8.2019–31.7.2021



Martin Bareš
1.8.2021–31.7.2023



Milena Králíčková
1.8.2023–31.7.2025



Meeting of Rectors with President Václav Havel after the 25th CRC Plenum Meeting
Lány, Villa Amálie, 3 May 1996