

**Prof. dr. Mara Cotič**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska**

**opening address at the conference**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the VII. International Congress »Social Recognition and Attitudes towards Disability in the Era of Technology«. A special welcome to prof. dr. Dragan Marušič, the Rector of the University of Primorska, His Excellency Rev. Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Msgr. Jurij Bizjak, the Bishop of Koper, Vlasta Nussdorfer, Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia, Tomaž Kunstelj, the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in Vatican City, Peter Bolčič, the Vice-mayor of the Municipality of Koper, Giuseppe D'Agosto, the General Consul of Italy in Slovenia, dr. Mirjam Bon Klanjšek, the President of the Committee of Education, Science and Youth of the Slovenian National Assembly, Michela Carrozzino, President of the Association of Mediterraneo senza handicap, and to Nassim Djaba, the president of the Student Organisation of the University of Primorska. A warm welcome to all the guest and Congress participants.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. And a society is only as strong as its most vulnerable member. It is fair to say that evolution has enabled an increasingly advanced and sophisticated cooperation between large groups of people and that the digital revolution has overcome the human limitations of perception, time and space. It would also be fair to say that our concern and care for the most vulnerable is ever more advanced and sophisticated. But is it? Is providing a proper environment for people with special needs, the elderly, the underprivileged and other vulnerable groups in our community, town or state enough? Certainly not. It is not enough to provide some basic conditions for people who like everybody else nurture dreams and visions. Our main goal should be recognising and developing their potential and thus contribute valuable assets to our society. By co-operating in the organisation of this Congress as well as by developing study programmes and other activities in the area of inclusive pedagogy, the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska is strongly committed to meeting this goal.

It is true that the world is today connected more than ever before. However, it is also true that it is easier to look away from people whose rights to a decent life have been trampled upon. This is why initiatives which don't want to look away and which dedicate all their efforts to overcome social inequalities deserve all our attention and support. And this is why I'm especially honoured to be here today and to be able to welcome the organisation »Mediterraneo senza handicap«, an organisation which is set upon pursuing this noble cause.