

REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT
ROBERTO ANTONELLI

Authorities, dear Fellows, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank all of you for your presence at the inauguration of the 424th academic year of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.

Next 25 March will mark the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, the founding act of the European Community, in a situation of unprecedented crisis for the international order in which the European Union, born from those Treaties, is inserted. The President of the Republic has repeatedly emphasised this, highlighting the completely new intersection between political crisis and new scientific and technological phenomena:

"The geopolitical crisis risks sweeping away the previous world balance, the world order designed decades ago, without a new one on the horizon. And this condition of fragility is recorded in an era in which phenomena break out that give an unprecedented speed to change, which itself represents a factor with which to measure oneself. The combination of techno-sciences and changes in the economic-financial architecture can produce disorientation and upheavals far greater than those that manifested themselves at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the first industrial revolution. This revolution – of our time – is enormously deeper, faster, global" (Palazzo del Quirinale, 20 December 2023).

The war on European soil, in Ukraine, and the wars in the Middle East have upset the Union's traditional alliances and are seriously threatening the European project itself, which is also called into question by recurrent nationalisms and sovereignisms that prevent its further political and institutional development.

President Mattarella himself recently recalled (Messina, 22 January 2025) the seriousness of the situation and the need to react to the crisis:

"The limited political awareness that the Union has of itself is conditioning its concrete work and makes it too often inadequately resolute – and therefore timely – in the face of the great challenges that the European States and peoples find themselves facing. It is commonly said that the European Union was built and is being built in times of crisis and emergency. This is, in part, certainly true. In recent times, the financial crisis and the pandemic have provided an opportunity to make courageous choices, overcoming short-sighted conceptions of identity and national interest. However, this attitude no longer appears sufficient. The hairpin turn in history that we are going through requires us to draw the necessary conclusions from the awareness that European States individually are not able to provide adequate responses to the challenges of the present."

In this unprecedented and dangerous situation, President Mattarella has represented and represents a fundamental point of reference for all Italians and for Italy's presence and security on the international scene. The Presidency of the Republic has been for all Italians, of all political tendencies, the safe haven to look to with confidence, recovering the sense of belonging to a supportive and advanced community. For these reasons, the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei has just published a volume dedicated to the presidential speeches of the last five years, entitled *Resistance, Constitution, Italy, Europe, World. One hundred speeches by the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella (2022-2026).* Through the President's speeches and messages we intended to reactivate the memory of the challenges and the historical context in which we find ourselves, and with the memory to propose to everyone a clear and strong call to our conscience and to the sharing of the ethical and civil values founding the Republic and our society.

The Academy, for its part, has always remembered that Europe constitutes one of the strategic horizons, in addition to the national and global one, with regard to its three fundamental missions, which we will never tire of bringing to mind, because they constitute – all the more so in this new situation – the profound identity of the Lincei with respect to the whole of Italian society and the international context. First of all, *science for science's sake*, i.e., free research that is not immediately finalised, which obviously remains the first of the Academy's missions, but also *science for politics, society and economics* and *science for international cooperation and diplomacy*, i.e., now and first and foremost for peace, to which we have dedicated a conference whose proceedings have just been published.

In the planning of the year that we are inaugurating today, the Academy's activities will therefore remain intense, as always, with regard to all three fundamental missions, but it will have as its ideal fulcrum the celebration of those Treaties: to remind ourselves and everyone how vital the balanced and peaceful action of the European Union is for European civilisation and for the international order, today more than ever the place of those values that have led to our longest period of peace.

For 19-20 April 2027, we have therefore organised, thanks to the commitment of the European Commission, the international conference *What future for Europe? Values, institutions, competencies*. It will involve the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission Raffaele Fitto and many of our distinguished members in seven working sections (*Democracy and the Rule of law; Internal market, Common goods and monetary sovereignty; Energy and environment; Knowledge, research, technology and health; Welfare state, demography and work; Culture of Europe and European cultures; International order, strategic position and European institutions*). It will be concluded by the round table *For the future of Europe*, which will be attended by Italians who have contributed to "making Europe", with those holding top responsibilities in the European Commission and in the Union in previous decades: Giuliano Amato, Enrico Letta, Mario Monti, Romano Prodi.

The other conference celebrating the Treaties, *European Literature and Values* (3-5 February 2027), identified with reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union and analysed from the works considered most significant in European literature, chosen thanks to a very large survey of students and teachers from various countries, will also focus on the characteristic values of European civilisation.

Again, on this occasion, I will not make an exhaustive list of the scientific and cultural conferences scheduled for next year: I will limit myself to the most demanding or new ones, asking you to refer to the booklet distributed for the complete list. However, I would like to emphasise that they all deal with the leading problems we face: energy and the environment, health, digital transformation, cultural heritage, overcoming inequalities, the crisis and future of Europe. These are all questions that require the encounter between the natural sciences and the humanities, as it is inscribed in our identity heritage. I will only mention the commitments outlined in the text distributed, without repeating them: *Protein dynamics, complexity and functional control* (24 November 2026); *Controlled thermonuclear fusion: the future between science, ethics, social acceptability and communication*, organised by the Lincean Centre (20-21 January 2027); *Italian agriculture in the new global scenario: challenges and opportunities* (27-28 January 2027); *Hazards related to natural risk factors* (24-25 February 2027); *Astrochemistry 2027: roots and current events*, organised with the Fondazione Donegani (2-3 March 2027); *Geodesy* (5 March 2027); *From physics to physiology to medicine: a tribute to Antonino Cattaneo* (19 March 2027); *Legal science in the age of nihilism and Natalino Irti* (6 April 2027); *Southern Italy: unsolved question* (22-23 April 2027); *Gamma astrophysics, ASI Agile mission* (6-7 May 2027); *The attraction of origins* (17-18 May 2027).

As every year, we will also pay particular attention to two crucial issues for our future: the environment and water, to which the *XLIV Environment Day*, *Water Day* and the *I World Oceans Day* (7-8 June 2027) are dedicated.

In addition to all this, there are conferences targeted at high school students aimed at promoting orientation towards the university and world of work: *Current*

events in the Humanities. Stories of Women (6 November 2026) and *Fellows of the Lincei meet students: epigenetics as inspiration for future STEM scientists*, as part of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (10 February 2027).

In July 2027, the Academy will organise, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth, a conference on Quintino Sella, to whom we owe the modern restructuring of the Lincei as a pivotal institution of the new Italy from a scientific and cultural point of view. The celebrations dedicated to Sella, curated by Vice President Carlo Doglioni, will be inaugurated by a Day on *Quintino Sella. The training of a scientist and statesman*, intended for high school students (26 November 2026).

The Lincean conferences on Thursday afternoon and the institutional ones on Friday morning will be dedicated to Lincean fellows who are Nobel Laureates or winners of international Feltrinelli Prizes: half of the competence of the Class of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences and half of the Class of Moral, Historical and Philological Sciences. Therefore, six per Class, necessarily addressed for now only to some disciplinary areas, but first and foremost to the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Lincean and institutional conferences should be seen together with the series dedicated again this year to *The future of humanity* and the first *Lincean Research Day*, set for 15 February 2027 (the date of birth of our most illustrious fellow, Galileo Galilei), an initiative that is particularly important to us. On *Lincean Research Day*, a selection of the most relevant acquisitions achieved in the previous calendar year in the Natural Sciences and Humanities will be presented. It will be an event dedicated to the presentation of the best fruits of world research and our work, but also and above all aimed at deepening the relationship of science with Italian society and with public opinion, so necessary for the entire country.

The series dedicated to *The future of humanity*, although of a high level and specialised nature, represented, with great public success, the first realisation commitment in the same direction: to involve public opinion in research and in its results. The 2025-2026 cycle will conclude with the conference *Scientific and economic aspects of nuclear fusion* (3 December), while for next year, in addition to the conference dedicated to the bicentenary of Alessandro Volta and the epochal revolution originating from his discoveries (*Volta European Scientist: a Legacy for the Future*, 17-19 February 2027), there will also be a conference on an extremely topical and primary issue, the *Digital society in the age of artificial intelligence* (24-25 May 2027).

Among the events that will open the new academic year, a particular role is played by the exhibition "The Queen of Culture: Christina of Sweden in Rome", which opens today at 6:00 pm (the related conference will take place from 16 to 18 December 2026). It marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of Christina, patron saint of Italian and European sciences and arts, still today an icon of the female presence in world culture. We can consider Christina almost a *genius loci*, since she

lived for thirty years in Palazzo Corsini (then Palazzo Riario), making it the seat of one of the most important European courts of the century.

The exhibition and conference are part of the Triptych of the so-called epochal centenarians, inaugurated with the conference *Divided Europe*. *The time of the battle of Pavia* (1525) and the exhibition *All of Italy in flames and fire: the time of the battle of Pavia*. The Triptych will end next year with the exhibition on the sack of Rome, focused on the graffiti of the *Wedding Hall of Alexander the Great and Roxanne* of Villa Farnesina. I thank the institutions and bodies that have championed us: in particular the Ministry of Culture, for the important scientific and organisational support and the relevant contributions, and Banca Intesa Sanpaolo, which has always been a partner in our most demanding initiatives.

The Corsini Library, where the exhibition on Christina of Sweden will take place, in addition to dedicating itself to the exhibition activity, has continued its work of dissemination and use of the library resources in its possession, providing for the digitisation and metadata generation of a large *corpus* of manuscripts, thanks also to the committee set up for this purpose. The *Lincei Digital Library* was thus implemented, which makes images related to several types of documents accessible: manuscripts, incunabula, graphic and archival material. The organisation of the Corsinian Readings continues on the part of the Supervisory Board of the Library. This year, the readings began with the lectures *Molecular Sponges: science and applications of nanoporous materials* (4 October 2026) and *Economics as a moral science*. *The lesson of John Maynard Keynes* (8 November 2026).

The heritage of the Corsini Library and the Digital Library are continuously enriched by the publications of the Academy: in the period from June to October alone, in addition to the "Rendiconti" of the two Classes, the "News of the Excavations of Antiquities", the three volumes of the "Ancient Monuments", the Supplements of the "Bulletin of the Classics", eight volumes of the Proceedings of the Lincean conferences, while another four are being printed.

Our dear Fellow Antonio Sgamellotti, who passed away last year, founder of the Lincean Research Centre on Cultural Heritage Villa Farnesina (*Centro Linceo di Ricerca sui Beni Culturali Villa Farnesina - CERIF*), dedicated himself with passion to the conservation of Villa Farnesina. On 23 November, the conference *Environmental sciences for cultural heritage: the multidisciplinary legacy of Antonio Sgamellotti* will be dedicated to his memory. In the ever-present memory of his teaching and his scientific commitment, the Ministry of Culture and the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei intend to address the new frontiers of preventive conservation of cultural heritage, in the light of current climate and environmental challenges.

For many years, the Fellows of the Lincei have also contributed to the dissemination of culture through the organisation of exhibition activities and exhibitions dedicated to events and personalities of great cultural importance. Now the Academy has started a more intense collaboration with the new

Management of the Central Institute for Graphics for the realisation of shared exhibition projects and the enhancement of the Corsini Fund. It is an immense artistic heritage that well deserves to be increasingly known by the general public.

Many of our conferences and initiatives are attended by the members of the Lincean Interdisciplinary Youth Centre (*Centro Interdisciplinare Linceo Giovani - CILG*), who have just held their second *Symposium* – dedicated to a beloved Italian researcher, Giulio Regeni, brutally tortured and murdered, to whom the Academy has decided to name a human rights award – and their fourth conference, *Frontier Geosciences* (26-27 October 2026). The participation of the Youth Centre also in institutional moments, such as the Lincean School, has brought new stimuli and ideas and demonstrates the importance and good functioning of that intergenerational pact that we sought to achieve with the establishment of the Feltrinelli Youth Awards and those of the Centre and now with the *Collegium*, open to those who have finished six years of stay in the Centre and want to continue interacting with the Academy.

The Lincean School, as you know, intends to complete that design and the collaboration between generations, proposing to devote itself only to emerging lines of research of a strongly interdisciplinary nature. The Founding Committee of the Centre elected on 10 June has been hard at work since last summer, developing the draft for a first call and also revising the Regulations approved last 10 June, in light of the complexity of the problems gradually discovered, starting with an in-depth examination of the possible paths of interdisciplinarity, that is, the great novelty of the School itself: it is a discussion aimed at deepening one of the great themes of research, in every field, and we will dedicate a seminar to it together with the Beniamino Segre Interdisciplinary Centre and the *CILG*.

The School represents an attempt that certainly does not touch the great social question posed by the exodus abroad of researchers, and above all by the distress of young people witnessed by the latest events in Italy and Europe in the face of the ever-increasing widening of social and economic inequalities (upon which the Academy will intervene again in the near future). However, it constitutes, for the time being, a first sign of attention, if only of strong symbolic value.

In addition to the Lincean Interdisciplinary Youth Centre, work has begun for an ever greater synergy with the many Lincean Centres that have now been established: in addition to the historic Beniamino Segre Interdisciplinary Centre (since 1971) and the *CERIF* Centre just mentioned, the Giuseppe Galasso Centre for Studies on Southern Italy has been founded, which has planned a series of events dedicated to our South this year. Recently established, the Lincean Centre for Research and Scientific Cooperation with China (*Centro Linceo di Ricerca e Cooperazione Scientifica con la Cina - CERLIC*) has already organised two Days on the theme *China: culture and science, prospects for collaboration*. They were important preliminary opportunities for reflection and debate on the complexity of contemporary China, retracing its historical roots and outlining the future of

scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries, in the humanities and social fields, as well as in the scientific field.

The activity of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, aimed at promoting and disseminating culture and scientific knowledge, is also carried out, as you know, through the awarding of about fifty prizes and scholarships, among which the "Antonio Feltrinelli" International Prizes, the Italian equivalents of the Nobel Prizes, stand out. In addition to enhancing and rewarding scholars of high scientific profile, both nationally and internationally, the Academy assigns important economic contributions to organisations engaged in the humanitarian, social and medical sectors, through the "Antonio Feltrinelli for an exceptional enterprise" Award. These initiatives take on even greater significance in the current historical context, marked by armed conflicts and environmental disasters, as they contribute to supporting activities and institutions that work concretely in favour of the community and the well-being of society.

The Centres and the twenty Committees into which the life of the Academy is now structured allow wide-ranging participation of the Fellows and many new proposals, without this entailing the dispersion of the initiatives, thanks to the dialectic ensured by the collaboration between the Committees and the President's Council and by the delegations on many specific issues, starting with international relations, which are more intense and active than ever.

The Accademia dei Lincei has in fact contributed to the drafting of the documents drawn up by the G7 of Academies organised by France and those drawn up by the G20 held in Washington. As part of bilateral relations, last 14 July the agreement with the French Académie des sciences and with the two embassies – Italian in Paris and French in Rome – was renewed on the organisation of the new series of conferences *Penser et fare la scienza, ensemble*.

However, it will be necessary to reflect further on the organisation necessary to meet the now vast commitments of the Academy and on the need to insist with the Government and Parliament that the financial contribution granted by the State be increased, now completely inadequate in relation to the gigantic work we carry out and the international responsibilities that fall within our competence.

In particular, we are now in difficulty with the Lincei Foundation for Schools (where we have been trying to diversify the sources of funding for many years) and with the National Academic Union, an institution that is glorious in terms of achievements and international commitments.

As you may have noticed, I have not mentioned any of the Fellows who have made such a rich and demanding programme possible: you know them all. I therefore thank them collectively, just as I thank the Presidents of the Committees, the Directors of the Centres and of the Lincean Youth Centre. And of course and primarily the President's Council and the Vice-President, Carlo Doglioni, the Academic Administrator Antonio Gambaro, the Chancellor Francesco Paolo Fazio,

and all the officials, always operating well beyond the call of duty. I did not want to weigh down an already too lengthy report with long theories of names, but we all are well aware of their value, and we all know that without their contribution, truly extraordinary, nothing of the vast Academy programme could thus be achieved.

Thank you. And thank you all for your kind attention and patience.

I declare the 424th academic year of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei open.