Press Release

“She will continue to live on in the memory of the University”: Several thousand mourners remember Gabrielė

Last Thursday, thousands of students and Mannheim citizens remembered the murdered student Gabrielė with a moving memorial service and subsequent candlelight march to her crime scene. The University’s auditorium was completely full for the service. In addition to Eduardas Petkevičius, Counsellor at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the Federal Republic of Germany, Prof. Dr. Leta Dromantienė and two students from the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius were in attendance. The exchange student from Lithuania had studied psychology there for two years.

Gabrielė’s mother and brother were also in attendance. Prof. Dr. Ernst-Ludwig von Thadden, President of the University of Mannheim, addressed the mother: “It breaks my heart when I think of what has happened to you and your family. I hope that you will always hold Gabrielė’s smile in your heart and allow it to warm your soul in the same way it warmed ours. She will continue to live on in the memory of the University.”

“I am particularly grateful for the sympathy which Gabrielė’s university in Vilnius has shown towards us,” said the President von Thadden. “I am pleased to have Prof. Leta Dromantienė, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Policy, and two of the faculty’s students here with us this evening. I thank you for making the long journey to stand alongside us and offer your support today. Yesterday, the Vice Rector of Mykolas Romeris University, Giedrius Viliunas, wrote us with the following statement: “On behalf of Mykolas Romeris University and personally I would like to extend my deep appreciation regarding your condolences. This tragic incident has indeed shattered our community, the city of Vilnius and Lithuania as a whole. Thank you once again for your support and expressed sympathies.”

The University’s President continued: “After consulting with Vilnius, we are holding this commemorative event today together with the City of Mannheim and the University of Mykolas Romeris. What a clear sign of solidarity between our universities! A solidarity that Gabrielė wanted to explore, but was not allowed to experience. I am also grateful for the sympathy from the Lithuanian State, which today has been expressed by the presence of Counsellor Petkevičius.”

Dr. Peter Kurz, the Mayor of Mannheim, has also been deeply affected. “Gabrielė came to Mannheim as an exchange student full of hopes and expectations. These young people who are optimistic and happy to embark on new experiences are a sign of hope and the promise of
a peaceful future which is characterised by understanding. Her horrible death has shaken our city to the core. The sympathy and sorrow goes far beyond the university of our city and region.” This sentiment served as an offer of condolence to Gabrielė’s parents and all of those who were close to her.

Student Lukas Böhm spoke on behalf of the University’s students: “Just two weeks ago, I was sitting in a lecture with her. Gabrielė wanted to discover a new world and has lost her life in doing so.” University Chaplain Jürgen Weber concluded with a prayer for the Catholic students. The String Ensemble of the University of Mannheim ended the commemoration with Edvard Grieg’s “Andante Doloroso”.

More than 500 people attended the ceremony. Another thousand mourners gathered in the forecourt of the castle to follow the memorial service over the PA system. With musical accompaniment by the University Choir, the funeral procession began at 6.15 pm. Gabrielė’s mother and brother, the University’s President, the Mayor of Mannheim and the Counsellor of the Lithuanian Embassy led the procession. They were followed by Gabrielė’s Lithuanian friends and relatives, students from the University, City Council representatives and many Mannheim citizens. Altogether, around 4,000 people took part. Flowers were laid and candles were lit at the crime scene until 8 pm.

With the help of the Lions Club Mannheim Rhein-Neckar, an account for donations to Gabrielė’s family was established.

On the night of 3 October, Gabrielė was brutally murdered. Based on the investigative results that are available so far, the Mannheim Public Prosecutor’s Office is acting on the assumption that the 20-year-old was the victim of a violent sex crime. The exchange student from Lithuania had been studying psychology at the University of Mannheim since September. She was very active and had a promising future ahead of her.