

ALLEA 25th anniversary, 8 May 2019

## Speech of the Rector Prof. Dr. Christian Leumann

*The spoken word applies.*

- Monsieur le conseiller fédéral Guy Parmelin, chef du Département de l'économie, de la formation et de la recherche (DEFR)
- Dear Antonio Loprieno, President of ALLEA and the Swiss Academies
- Dear Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission
- Dear Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, President of the European Research Council
- Dear Francesco Profumo, President of the Compagnia di San Paolo
- Dear Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild
- Dear Mariana Mazzucato, Laureate of the Madame de Stael Prize for Cultural Values; Dear colleagues of the scientific community
- Dear members of parliament and executive bodies
- Dear guests - Ladies and gentlemen

I am honored to welcome all of you today for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of ALLEA – the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, representing 60 Academies from 40 European countries.

The first "academies" in European history evolved already in the 15th century as a counter point against contemporary political and ecclesiastical power. Their focus was engaging in the dialogue between science and society, highlighting the importance of fact based knowledge and education. In current times where

fake news and fake facts are distributed in an uncontrolled way via digital media, one realizes that the academies have certainly not lost their reason to exist. In contrary, we need them more than ever to carry along the virtue of science.

Today their challenge also includes mediating between policy makers and the scientific community, which is important for the finding of common solutions to pressing social problems. University associations, such as The Guild, the network of European research-intensive universities, of which the University of Bern is a member.

The Academies continue to be important advocates for science policy, addressing important questions such as scientific integrity, Open Access etc. but also for identifying key research areas of our time, as for example Climate change or Biodiversity loss, to name only a few of them.

Today's celebration is hosted by the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, member of ALLEA since many years, together with their sub-organizations, namely the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT), the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS), the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS), and the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences (SATW). We are happy to host this meeting here in Bern at the seat of the University of Bern. But who is the University of Bern?

In a nutshell we are a comprehensive University with eight faculties and nine strategic research centers focusing on excellence in research and teaching with emphasis on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

Our University places a high value on 5 thematic areas, namely health and medicine, matter and the universe, sustainability, intercultural knowledge and politics and administration. The latter touches upon the fact that we are located in the capital of Switzerland.

The University of Bern has a strong and long-lasting tradition in Space science. Some of you may know that it was here in Bern, where the Solar Wind Composition experiment was designed, which was sent to the Moon on board of the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. The solar wind sail was enrolled on the moon by Buzz Aldrin even before the US flag – a fact that still makes us very proud and which is one of the reasons why we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing this year in June – to which I warmly invite all of you.

In the area of sustainability we help to make the earth a better place to live with our well known climate science (Oeschger Center for Climate Change Research) and our center for development and environment (CDE). Making the world a better place to live is also one of the aims of the academies by promoting an open dialogue between science, politics and society.

Let me thank our partners of the ALLEA General Assembly and the Swiss Academies. I will now give the floor to Mister federal councillor Guy Parmelin.