

25th Annual Meeting European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)
4 September 2019

Speech of Rector Prof. Dr. Christian Leumann

The spoken word applies

Dear all,

I am delighted to welcome all of you to the 25th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists. I must say that I am highly impressed by this event. During my time as rector of the University I have never had a chance to open a meeting with that many participants, more than 1800. I am inclined to believe that all archeologists of this world are here in Bern today and this makes me proud.

Let me welcome in particular

- The Mayor of the city of Bern, Alec von Graffenried, and of course our guests of honor
- Prof Kristian Kristiansen
- Sir Prof. Colin Renfrew

Nobody in this audience has forgotten that both of you have been founding members of EAA 25 years ago, and that Prof. Kristiansen was the first president of the society and Sir Colin Renfrew held the first opening lecture 25 years ago in Ljubljana.

I also welcome the representatives of the following institutions, who support the University of Bern and thus the Annual meeting of the EAA:

- the Federal Office of Culture
- the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW)

- the lottery fund of the Canton of Bern
- the City of Bern
- the Burgergemeinde Bern
- the Swiss Conference of the Archeologists of the Cantons
- and the Swiss national Science foundation

Thank you very much for your important contribution without which we would not be here today.

The EAA meets for the first time in Switzerland and I congratulate you on your choice to come to Bern. The University of Bern is, as you may know, a comprehensive university with eight faculties. As a research intensive University, we are driven by scientific interest and social needs and we strongly endorse interdisciplinary research on all levels, encompassing all major academic fields.

The University of Bern recognizes its ethical responsibility and stays behind its main vision: Knowledge creates value. In our strategy 2021 we concentrate on five major key areas in research and teaching across all of our disciplines. One of these areas of focus is Intercultural knowledge.

Intercultural knowledge is getting more important in our globalized world, and archeology plays an important role in this context. Knowing the past and present of cultures and cultural exchange throughout the globe are key competences to understand the behavior of humankind and its development. Our University places a high value on intercultural knowledge and invests considerably into encouraging the dialogue with global partners.

Intercultural knowledge also implies the dialogue between different academic fields. With this background we run our interdisciplinary Oeschger Centre for Climate Change research, which focuses on the impact of climate change on humans and ecosystems and thus contributes to the «Sustainability Focus» of our strategy.

Prof. Albert Hafner, who is Chair of the Scientific Committee and representative of the Local Organizing Committee, is also member of this research Centre, specialized in Holocene climate events and climate evolution as well as palaeoecology.

Being a natural scientist, I am impressed by seeing how archeologists use physical methods as tools for their research. I am thinking particularly on radiocarbon dating. This reminds me that the first Radiocarbon Lab at the Physics

Institute in Bern was built in 1957. More than 60 years ago the archaeologist Hansgeorg Bandi, the palaeoecologist Max Welten and the physicist Hans Oeschger joined forces and were able to establish one of the first of its kind in Europe. In 2013, the University of Bern set another milestone and put a modern AMS Radiocarbon Lab into operation at the Department of Chemistry which is heavily used by our archeologists.

But the field of archeology is of course much wider than just dating remnants of cultures. And, archeology is also not only about the past. This year's annual meeting shows this clearly evidencing the socio-political dimensions of archaeological knowledge. I think an international association like the EAA has an important role in overcoming cultural boundaries as well as preserving cultural heritage.

Before I close, I would like to thank all those people of our University that helped to let this meeting fly. These are specifically the house services, the financial services and the catering services. Even archeologists are sometimes hungry, as well as all people behind the scene and stages. My thank goes also to the University Orchestra, which gives the opening ceremony an elegant touch.

I wish you a wonderful and successful event in Bern and would like to give the word to Prof. Hafner.