

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Opening Remarks by Günter Stock

All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values

in the context of the ALLEA General Assembly 2018

16 May 2018 | Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

Dear Professor Pető,

Dear Professor Revalski,

Dear Deputy Minister Dimov

Dear Luisa,

Dear Alberto,

Dear delegates of the ALLEA Academies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends

It is my great honour to welcome you to this 5th ALLEA Mme de Staël Prize for Cultural Values award ceremony here tonight in this beautiful venue of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. I am very glad to be able to share and celebrate with you the outstanding academic contributions of Professor Andrea Pető in the field of gender studies, though really the impact of her research reaches far beyond her discipline.

ALLEA is proud to be able to award this prize now in its fifth year running to highlight some, though not nearly all, of the

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excellent work academics across the continent are producing on the topic of European identity, whichever form it may take.

We are also happy because awarding this prize would not have been possible without the co-sponsorship of the Compagnia di San Paolo, which graciously renewed their support this year for this important endeavour. My dear Friend and President of the Academy of the Lincei, Alberto Quadrio-Curzio, will address you on behalf of the foundation in just a minute.

I am also thankful to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences which is hosting us not only tonight, but also at our symposium earlier today and tomorrow with great hospitality and care. Dear President Revalski, I can only repeat my thanks from this morning, it is now just as appropriate as it was then.

Likewise, I want to point out that while I stand before you as a member of the prize jury, my fellow jury members have discussed in great detail the merits of all candidates, all of whom would have been deserving of today's honour. I'm therefore very grateful for all of their work, including Luisa Passerini, our very first Mme de Staël laureate and jury

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member, will give a much more knowledgeable laudation on Andrea Pető later on.

Mme Germaine de Staël could not be a better representative to illustrate the importance of Andrea Pető's work of *unsilencing* women in their historical context. Her story, her life, is one of challenging the status quo using her unwavering will to oppose Napoleon Bonaparte, certainly the most powerful man of his time, and using her outstanding intellect to bring together great thinkers in her famous salons.

When we first set up this prize our search for a namesake quickly arrived at Mme de Staël for the values she upheld throughout her life, were the same as the ones we would like to see in our laureates. We felt that the prize should be awarded to scholars whose scholarly works contributed in one way or another towards the creation, maintenance or preservation of a better Europe, guided by humanistic ideals and an understanding of common bonds between the nations on our continent.

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Her life's journey from France to Switzerland, her marriage to a Swede and her keen interest in Germany influenced her extensive bibliography encompassing a wide range of publications from novels to political essays and everything in between. Though her probably most famous work was a theory of romanticism, her influence goes far beyond that as her clear vision and understanding of over-arching societal issues place her among the most noteworthy personalities of her time.

Back in 2014, at the first ALLEA prize award ceremony, we were delighted to have chosen such a prolific scientist as Luisa Passerini. Luisa is not only previous laureate and engaged member of the prize jury, she is first and foremost a groundbreaking historian whose work has taken her all across the globe before she settled at the European University Institute in Florence. Much like Andrea Pető, Luisa is fascinated by the concept of memory and remembrance, particularly with regards to questions of gender and diasporic subjectivities. Clearly, we could not have asked for a more capable person to sing Professor Pető's praise this evening.

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As an association with a truly European perspective, our relationship with the European Institutions is naturally of great importance to us in all of our activities. We are therefore pleased and honoured to welcome a representative of the European Commission here tonight, the European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel, who came all the way from Brussels to hand over the prize to Andrea Pető.

Mariya Gabriel's initiative on the Digital Single Market, the establishment of a High Level Group on Fake News as well as her campaign *No women no panel* are all closely related to many of ALLEA's recent activities and as the youngest currently serving Commissioner, she brings a wave of fresh air in the way the Commission thinks and acts on those issues. We are looking forward to working with her in the future and even more so to hear her speak today.

Before I pass the baton on to Alberto, I would like to take this moment to personally congratulate Andrea Pető to this prize. Her academic pedigree certainly speaks for herself, and I

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believe that exploring the relationship between gender and memory, and thereby making the voices of so many women heard who were previously ignored is in and of itself not just worthy of our praise, but indeed a necessary activity. Similarly necessary and another sign of the Andrea Pető's strength of character was her resistance with her peers to the Lex CEU, which was passed in Hungary last year and which almost led to the closure of her university, the Central European University in Budapest, which, for a while, was also my university, when I served on its Board of Trustees. Her work of unsilencing oppressed groups can only flourish when academics are free to pursue their research unimpeded by higher powers, no matter if they are governmental, economical, or indeed societal. Andrea Pető's discipline of gender studies and her university are both examples why we need academic freedom and why all of us need to fight to ensure academic freedom.

With that off my chest, I would now like to invite Alberto Quadrio-Curzio on the stage to say a few words on behalf of our co-sponsor, the Compagnia di San Paolo.

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Thank you very much

~~~End of speech~~~