

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 2017

4 September 2017 | Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Dear Professor Lenaerts,

Dear Professor Nowotny,

Dear delegates of the ALLEA Academies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tonight is a night of celebration, a celebration of exceptional intellectual achievements within the European context. And I must say, I believe both recipients of today's prizes are fully deserving of all the praise they receive. Dear Professor Nowotny, you are fully aware of all of the appreciation I have for you and I wholeheartedly congratulate you to your prize.

I myself will be focusing on this year's ALLEA Mme de Staël Prize for Cultural Values and this year's laureate, Professor Koen Lenaerts.

This year is the 4th year that we are presenting the Mme de Staël Prize. The first three years were kindly co-financed by the German Stiftung Mercator and to celebrate our first three laureate's we have prepared this book, in which you can read all about our previous laureates Luisa Passerini, Dame Helen Wallace, and Rémi Brague.

This year we are very grateful to the Compagnia di San Paolo, which is co-sponsoring this prize. Professor Quadrio-Curzio, dear Alberto, please extend my gratitude to President Profumo of the Compagnia for this very kind support, but also to you thank you very much for initiating the contact.

Madame de Staël, in this year, the 200th anniversary of her passing, maybe more so than ever, serves as an important reminder to us that open and intellectual exchange, in her case taking place in salons, is a powerful tool to positively affect societal discourse and challenge pre-conceived notions of what is right and wrong. As communication and the exchange of information is moving more and more into the digital realm, the information we are exposed to, whether we know it or not, is filtered and we, and especially younger generations, can end up in self-perpetuating

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and self-affirming circles of opinion and thereby run the danger of no longer regarding other, contrary, opinions as valid or even worth listening to. It is not far-fetched to assume that for Mme de Staël, this break down of inter-society communication would be an absolute nightmare. And for us it should be too. While awarding a prize in the social sciences and humanities can undoubtedly only be considered a humble gesture of counteraction, we strongly believe that the intention of the Mme de Staël prize to highlight the values of research carried out in good faith on topics in these disciplines is a necessary contribution to encourage intellectual exchange in Europe.

With that said I am glad to announce the 2017 ALLEA Mme de Staël Prize for Cultural Values. Koen Lenaerts is not only a personality with a distinguished academic record, he has been Professor of European Law at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven for more than 30 years, which is all the more impressive when you account for his relatively young age. He also uses his expertise in a very practical way as the current sitting President of the European Court of Justice. In both of these positions Koen Lenaerts has gained a great reputation for his knowledgeable and incisive judgment among students and peers alike. In the past, the ALLEA Prize has been awarded to great academics, whose work has decisively influenced our understanding of Europe as a continent, but also as a Europe of institutions. Koen Lenaerts and his colleagues at the Universiteit Leuven as well as at the European Court of Justice are acutely aware of this work and are faced with the daily challenge to create a mutually satisfactory balance between national systems and unity with the EU. I must say, I can only admire Professor Lenaerts for this work and his commitment to good law.

I could go on about Koen Lenaerts' merits as a scholar and judge, but there is someone much more capable of doing that among us. I am very pleased to be able to invite Sir David Edward on stage in just a few moments to give his laudatory lecture for Professor Lenaerts. Sir David himself is a highly decorated lawyer, formerly appointed as one of the inaugural judges of the European Court of First Instance and later as a Judge at the European Court of Justice. He is a Fellow of our member academy the Royal Society of Edinburgh and holds many honours at home as well as abroad. His international recognition is nothing but justified given his life

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accomplishments. It is therefore not surprising that upon his retirement, a collection of essays for him was published called "A True European". In this spirit and in the spirit of the Mme de Staël Prize I can truly not think of a better speaker to take the stage now.

Sir David, please.

***** End of speech*****