

## Speech by Leopold, Duc d'Arenberg

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dear rectors, professors and students of the Coimbra Group, dear representatives of the European Commission, Mesdames et Messieurs, meine Damen und Herren,

Thank you for being with us today as we are awarding the 2020 Arenberg-Coimbra Group Prize, which recognizes the academic value of the Erasmus student exchanges.

**2020 is a very special year, for all of us, and I believe that this pandemic has taught us already two important lessons:**

- First, we are not the masters of the Universe and we are learning once more what the word 'humility' really means.
- Second, we become more aware that nothing replaces the personal contact between human beings and I'm sure that our senior citizens who are deprived of family visits, and our students who can't experience the joys of campus life, are going to agree with me.

If we look back in time, we realize that everything is possible, that nothing is ever granted, that life is a never ending movement for the better or for the worse.

Nevertheless, so far humanity has successfully overcome the deadliest pandemics. We are going to survive this one as well, with all of us hoping that we are going to learn something out of this and do things differently in the future.

Our Arenberg Coimbra Group Prize for Erasmus students has been awarded every year since 2007, the first time being in Turku (Finland) almost 15 years from now, and much before any other international recognition of Erasmus activities. **This reveals the great importance that both the Arenberg Foundation and the Coimbra Group place in the physical mobility of students and researchers within Europe.**

This physical mobility, that we used to take for granted, has strongly reduced since March, for good reasons, but hopefully only temporarily. Indeed these Erasmus mobilities play a crucial role in strengthening the European integration and identity from the bottom-up.

Thus we are suddenly reminded, in 2020, of the many obstacles still ahead – in this case obstacles that we thought would never come back in Europe, such as governments travel restrictions and, in some cases, even the closure of national borders.

We hear a lot about virtual mobility, while knowing in the deepest of ourselves that nothing replaces the face-to-face contact, the shortest distance between two people being a smile. This shall encourage us to advocate, and act, even more towards enhancing and promoting the circulation of students and researchers within Europe, which, as Ms Maddalena Centanni demonstrates this year again, provides an essential contribution to:

- The advancement, excellence and cross-fertilisation of academic work,
- The circulation of talents across Europe - as highlighted earlier by Ms Anna Panagopoulou from the European Commission, and
- The consolidation of European academic and professional careers.

**La Fondation d'Arenberg fait la promotion de l'Histoire et de la Culture dans un esprit résolument européen** à partir de la ville belge d'Enghien/Edingen in het Nederlands.

Nous mettons un grand fonds d'archives familial à disposition des chercheurs qui viennent de toute l'Europe. Nous organisons des concerts, des conférences, des séminaires, des rallyes automobiles culturels ; nous organisons ou participons à des expositions comme par exemple celle qui se déroule en ce moment à la bibliothèque de l'Arsenal à Paris à l'occasion du bicentenaire de la Société des bibliophiles français.

**Nous attribuons différents prix**, à savoir deux prix d'Histoire tous les deux ans, ensuite le prix Arenberg-Coimbra Group qui encourage la mobilité estudiantine entre les universités européennes du Coimbra Group dans le cadre du programme Erasmus, et enfin le prix Collège de l'Europe Arenberg par lequel nous récompensons des travaux qui étudient les mécanismes permettant aux peuples de vivre ensemble, à la fois dans le vrai respect de leurs différences et dans un esprit d'union européen.

**Nous publions - ou contribuons également à publier - des livres**, plus d'une trentaine à ce jour. Cette année, nous avons publié quatre ouvrages, sur la famille d'Arenberg en Autriche, Bohême-Moravie et Italie du Nord ; sur les 'caregivers', ces personnes qui aident les blessés de guerre américains à se réinsérer dans la vie civile ; sur la résistance armée en Europe de l'Est entre 1944 et 1956. Enfin, un quatrième ouvrage intitulé "Allemagne et France au cœur du Moyen-Âge" et publié en collaboration avec l'Institut de France et l'Institut historique allemand à Paris s'attache à décrire la notion de frontière entre les parties de l'empire carolingien qui deviendront l'Allemagne et la France.

Wir gratulieren sehr herzlich den Professoren Dominique Barthélémy und Rolf Grosse die es geschafft haben anhand aussergewöhnlichen Urkunden dieses erheitzige Projekt in kurzer Zeit zu einem guten Ende zu bringen.

Si nous nous donnons autant de peine pour contribuer modestement à faire l'Europe d'en-bas, celle des citoyens, c'est avec l'idée de **contribuer à leur réapprendre à penser par eux-mêmes, à penser lentement, à penser dans le long terme et à penser, à nouveau, en termes de géopolitique.**

Je ne peux m'empêcher de lancer ici un vibrant hommage à ce jeune professeur français d'histoire-géographie, Samuel Paty, lâchement décapité le 16 octobre dernier par un fanatique religieux tout simplement parce qu'il s'efforçait d'ouvrir le monde à la jeunesse.

**Let's talk now about the student and researcher of the day, about Maddalena Centanni, our laureate 2020.**

She first got a Bachelor of Science degree with Summa Cum Laude from the Amsterdam University College (2012-**2016**). Thereafter she successfully completed cum laude a Master of Science in Bio-Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Leiden with a six-month exchange period in Sweden at Uppsala University (2016-**2018**). And since February this year, she has been pursuing a PhD in Clinical Pharmacology at the University of Uppsala – as a direct result from her Erasmus experience (**2020**). The topic of her PhD is about a model-base development of dosing strategies for improved cancer treatment, a disease everybody wants to get rid of.

**She is the fourteenth laureate of the Arenberg-Coimbra Group Prize and our second laureate from Leiden University.** We warmly congratulate Maddalena Centanni for her achievements and wish her a long career in successfully fighting cancer and other diseases for the benefit of all of us.

This Prize is an annual award, open to all Master degree candidates at a Coimbra Group University who have previously undertaken an Erasmus exchange with another Coimbra Group University, in any discipline. The Prize, which distinguishes the student who best demonstrates the added value of the Erasmus exchange to his or her Master degree work and today **I would like to encourage all eligible candidates from Coimbra Group universities to apply as we are launching the 2021 edition.**

Sincerely yours,

For the Arenberg Foundation

[www.arenbergfoundation.eu](http://www.arenbergfoundation.eu)

Duke of Arenberg

Pully, October 20th, 2020