

**Media release / Bern and Brussels, December 5, 2022**

## **University of Bern joins European University alliance ENLIGHT**

**This year, Swiss universities can participate in European University alliances as “associated partners” for the first time. The University of Bern joined ENLIGHT, an alliance of comprehensive, research-intensive universities, on 1 December 2022.**

Swiss universities are fighting to retain their connections to European networks. They do so under difficult conditions since Switzerland was excluded from Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. Now Swiss universities have the opportunity to join European University alliances as "associated partners" (see info box below). ENLIGHT is a European University alliance that consists of nine comprehensive, research-intensive universities based in Ghent (Belgium), Tartu (Estonia), Bordeaux (France), Göttingen (Germany), Galway (Ireland), Groningen (Netherlands), Uppsala (Sweden), Bratislava (Slovakia), and the Basque Country (Spain). On 1 December 2022, the University of Bern was elected as associated member member by the ENLIGHT Governing Board.

ENLIGHT envisions a seamless mobility and knowledge creation between its member universities. They implement a wide range of exchange opportunities and promote transdisciplinary learning in order to prepare students for the challenges of an interconnected world. “Even though our researchers still urgently need Switzerland's association to Horizon Europe, to be part of the most important research network in the world, joining ENLIGHT is an important step for us to retain our connections in Europe and promote exchanges as well as cooperation,” said Christian Leumann, Rector of the University of Bern.

### **Cooperation in research, teaching and mobility**

ENLIGHT universities cooperate closely in areas where the University of Bern can contribute actively, such as health, climate change, digitization or renewable energy. ENLIGHT members work together to create conditions where research can flourish and collaborate closely in learning and teaching.

"ENLIGHT membership is an opportunity for the University of Bern to remain an active part in a rapidly-changing European higher education landscape," said Virginia Richter, Vice Rector for Development at the University of Bern.

“As a comprehensive university with a strong research focus, the University of Bern is an ideal extra member for ENLIGHT, fully matching our vision is to break down barriers to shared learning and research between universities. In this way, we want to enable students to tackle the societal challenges of today as well as of tomorrow,” said Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Director for Internationalisation of Ghent University and project coordinator of ENLIGHT Erasmus+.

Six member universities of ENLIGHT, including the University of Bern, are also members of [The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities](#), an association of 21 renowned research-intensive European universities in 16 countries. The Guild represents its member universities, researchers and students in Brussels, whereas the European University alliances work towards shared campus activities. "Joining ENLIGHT usefully complements our membership in The Guild and strengthens our presence in Europe," added Virginia Richter.

#### **University of Bern**

The University of Bern is a public institution, based in Switzerland's capital city, with a strong focus on providing excellence in research and teaching. The university has approximately 19,500 students who benefit from a full range of courses in most disciplines at undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as continuing education. It also hosts international research platforms, national centers of competence in research and trans- and interdisciplinary programs. The University of Bern offers state-of-the-art facilities to students and teaching staff at its eight faculties. The current annual budget is CHF 939 million of which CHF 367 million stem from third-party funding for research.

Website: [http://www.unibe.ch/index\\_eng.html](http://www.unibe.ch/index_eng.html)

#### **ENLIGHT**

ENLIGHT is a European University alliance of ten comprehensive, research-intensive universities, with approximately 325,000 students, 65,000 employees and over one million alumni. The alliance consists of the universities Ghent (Belgium), Tartu (Estonia), Bordeaux (France), Göttingen (Germany), Galway (Ireland), Groningen (Netherlands), Uppsala (Sweden), Bratislava (Slovakia), Basque Country (Spain) and now enlarged with Bern (Switzerland) as associated member. Together, they develop flexible international forms of exchanges in research and teaching; in the long term, ENLIGHT members strive for common curricula and degrees. ENLIGHT focuses on societal challenges in the following areas: health and well-being, digital revolution and impact of digitization, climate change, energy transition and circular economy and equity. The acronym ENLIGHT was derived from **E**uropean university **N**etwork to promote equitable quality of **L**ife, **s**ustainability and **G**lobal engagement through **H**igher education **T**ransformation.

Website: <https://enlight-eu.org/>

#### **European University alliances**

The European University alliances are an important part of the European Strategy for Universities and of Erasmus+ (2021-2027). The alliances are seen by the European Commission as the «universities of the future». The European Union funds 44 European University Alliances, comprising 340 universities in 31 countries. In addition to universities, they also include 1,300 partner organizations, such as non-governmental organisations, companies, regional and city governments. Since 2022, Swiss universities have been able to participate in European University alliances as "associated partners" for the first time. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) supports the participation of Swiss universities in Erasmus+ via Movetia, the Swiss agency for exchanges and mobility. In addition to the University of Bern, the Universities of Basel, Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich have also joined different alliances.

Website: [Movetia, the Swiss agency for exchanges and mobility](#); Website: [European Commission](#)

**Contact:**

Professor Christian Leumann  
Rector, University of Bern, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 (0)31 631 82 55  
Email: [christian.leumann@rektorat.unibe.ch](mailto:christian.leumann@rektorat.unibe.ch)

Professor Guido Van Huylenbroeck  
Director of Internationalisation, Ghent University, Belgium  
Tel: + 32 497 06 89 30  
Email: [Guido.VanHuylenbroeck@UGent.be](mailto:Guido.VanHuylenbroeck@UGent.be)