

# Message of the President

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Dear Reader, and so ends 2021. Another pandemic year – our second – is finally over. In my post from a year ago, I asked, “Could 2021 possibly be worse than 2020?” and the answer is more of a timid “2021 has only been marginally better”. Again, it curtailed our activities, but even so, we are fortunate to have still managed to get by relatively well. And we owe this to the prudent planning of our director Markus Leuenberger with his team in the office and in the research stations and the good support of all our partners. I hope that you, esteemed HFSJG delegates have also managed the situation relatively well and in good health.

This year, we had to plan far ahead in an important personnel matter. It concerns the position of the director of our research stations, Markus Leuenberger, who is also a professor at the Physics Institute of the University of Bern and will retire at the end of 2024. As is well known, university succession planning is addressed at an early stage, and so we had to take actions as early as spring 2021. We were able to successfully achieve in this important business that the University of Bern commits to continue funding a professorship for climate and environmental physics at our university at 50% for the directorate task of the research stations. We thank the university management for this extremely important support of our foundation. Thus, we are well prepared for the future.

In early 2021, we learned that the European Chemical Society had issued a call for proposals for a EuChemS Historical Landmark Award to emphasize that chemistry is an essential and integral part of Europe’s cultural heritage. As a result, we decided to submit a proposal together with our colleagues from the Belgian Liège group entitled “The Jungfrauoch High-Altitude Research Station in Switzerland as a Top Research Site for the Belgian Université de Liège: *Une Liaison Réussie*, Empowering Pioneering Studies in Atmospheric Spectroscopy and Chemistry since the 1950s”. Our proposal is intended to honor the pioneering work of the research group of Prof. Marcel Migeotte (1912-1992) at the Jungfrauoch research station. Importantly, our proposal was strongly supported by the national chemical societies of Switzerland, Austria and Germany, as well as by the Belgian F.R.S.-FNRS Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique. In spring 2022, the jury in the Brussels office and the executive board of the European Chemical Society will decide who will be nominated for the award in 2022 - let’s hope for the best.

The Virtual Alpine Observatory (VAO) has existed since 2012 as a network of European high-altitude research stations in the Alps with the aim of answering scientific questions in the intertwined system of atmosphere, biosphere, hydro- and cryosphere. In the future, the VAO consortium intends to establish a formal European Network for Territorial Cooperation (VAO-EVTZmbH), which will provide a strong European platform for the consortium. Upon our request, the University of Bern has decided to become an institutional member of this new corporate form. Since the University is also a member of our Foundation HFSJG, all our interests are thus represented in this Association. It was planned to finalize this process during the 6th VAO Symposium in March 2022 in Germany. However, due to the still ongoing Covid situation, this event had to be postponed to 2023.

The Swiss Academy of Arts and Sciences has again announced an educational program for the period 2021-2024 to promote MINT competencies (Mathematics, Informatics, Natural sciences, Technology) at the middle school level in Switzerland. An application submitted by the HFSJG team in the context of the Stellarium Gornergrat was positively evaluated and with the awarded funds the didactic offer at the Stellarium can now be significantly expanded. I would like to thank Timm-Emanuel Riesen, who prepared the application perfectly and led it to success (see also his report on the Stellarium Gornergrat).

It is with great regret that we learned that our Corresponding Member, Prof. Dr. Heinz Hugo Loosli, passed away in Mai 2021. He was heavily engaged in public relations work of the HFSJG and was an active member in the Jungfrauoch Commission of the Swiss Academy of Sciences. We are deeply indebted to Heinz Hugo Loosli and lose a sociable, humorous and likable colleague.

Finally, we look forward to the next HFSJG Board meeting on October 21-22, 2022 in Interlaken, where we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Jungfrauoch Commission which then led to the establishment of the research station.



Bern, February 2022

Silvio Decurtins

