

Alliance of German Science and Research Organisations

Press release

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)

Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft (Fraunhofer Society for the advancement of applied research)

Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rectors' Conference)

Leibniz Association

Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina – Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften (German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina)

Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)

Helmholtz Association

Max Planck Society,

Wissenschaftsrat (German Council of Science and Humanities)

14. March 2019

Together for Academic Freedom.

The Alliance of Scientific Organisations is launching a campaign on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the German Constitution.

"Science, research and teaching shall be free", says Article 5 of the German Constitution that was adopted 70 years ago. The science fraternity in Germany will use this occasion to debate the success story and opportunities of academic freedom as well as the threats it poses, and raise the awareness about the responsibilities arising from it. "Freedom is our system. Together for science" (initiated by the Max Planck Society) is an initiative of the Alliance of the ten major science organisations in Germany to promote the importance of freedom of research and teaching through a series of events, speeches, debates and review posts, to critically assess own developments, and to address potential global threats to academic freedom.

The campaign will be kicked off with an **event** entitled '**Supporting the Career Development of Researchers at Risk**', which will be held by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation together with the Forum for Academic Freedom of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany on the **18th of March**. It ends in a prominently attended **closing event held on the 26th of September 2019 at the Futurium in Berlin** with a panel discussion of the future of science. The start and conclusion of the series of events will be crowned by a statement of the Academic Freedom Alliance and a memorandum reflecting the key questions and answers of the campaign.

By autumn, there will be a series of events held by the science organisations on various aspects of academic freedom, which will focus on the following:

- I. "Freiheit, die ich meine: Artikel 5, ein deutsches Individualrecht." (Freedom as I See It: Article 5, German Right of Individuals)
- II. "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit: Voraussetzungen für Rechtsstaatlichkeit und Demokratie." (Unity and Justice and Freedom: Prerequisites for Constitutionality and Democracy)
- III. "Keine Freiheit ohne Verantwortung: Vom Umgang mit neuen Erkenntnissen." (No Freedom without Responsibility: Dealing with the New Insights)
- IV. "Einsamkeit und Freiheit: Tradition im Umbruch? (Solitude and Freedom: Changing Tradition?) Von Einflussnahmen und wachsendem Legitimationsdruck." (About Influences and Increasing Pressure to Defend Legitimacy)
- V. Grenzen der Freiheit: Einschränkungen von Forschung weltweit." (Limits of Freedom: Limitations of Research Across the Globe)

Academic freedom is a basic right that needs to be defended at all times. Recent developments with some international partners are a source of concern. Populist currents have also found a breeding ground and have started increasingly questioning scientific findings and fields of research. At the same time, the scientific standards are increasing with a view to delivering 'efficient' and economically exploitable results, which marginalises numerous key fields of research. Its incentive system needs to be changed too in order to allow and promote continuous free research: If, for example, the volume of scientific publications continues to focus on third-party funding, competitive success and career in science, this would stand in the way of free research into less prominent and publishable topics. Last but not least, this hinders a discriminating public discussion of complex scientific issues

due to critical developments in social media such as *fake news* or by focusing on discussions in closed circles of opinions. However, science still needs tools and careful methodology to address the growing complexity of major macrosocial challenges such as climate change and energy transition, digitisation or demographic change, and to adequately get the relevant scientific insights across to the society.

For more information about the campaign, events, and participating organisations, visit www.wissenschaftsfreiheit.de.

The Alliance of Scientific Organisations is an association of the key scientific organisations in Germany. It regularly reviews and comments on the key issues of scientific policies. The Leibniz Association is a member of the Alliance, which has taken the chair of the Alliance of German Science and Research Organisations for 2019. Other members of the Alliance include the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation), the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft (Fraunhofer Society for the advancement of applied research), the Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft (the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres), the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rectors' Conference), the Max Planck Society, the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, and the Wissenschaftsrat (the German Council of Science and Humanities).

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