

Project title: Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus – Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident – Mainz / Frankfurt

Project number: W7/2018

Executive Summary

The Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus – Byzantium between Orient and Occident (LWC Byzantium) has created a centre for interdisciplinary research and education on Byzantium from an alliance of several "small disciplines" and across national and international networks. The structures have been set up in such a way that they can have a long-term impact beyond the funding period. Thanks to the LWC Byzantium, the special role of Byzantium and Byzantine research in Germany are much more present and visible both in academic discourse and in public perception. Overall, the strategic goal of creating a long-term structure to advance the research topic of Byzantium within an interdisciplinary environment has been achieved. The LWC Byzantium has significantly increased the success of thematically relevant third-party funding and enabled new transdisciplinary research approaches. In addition, the international Master's degree programme has laid the foundations for a European centre.

1. Achievement of objectives and milestones

For the second funding phase, the LWC Byzantium focussed on the framework topic Byzantium between Orient and Occident: Appropriation, Translation and Dissemination of Knowledge, Ideas and Objects, to which three work packages (WPs) have been assigned:

For WP 1, two working groups of scholars at different career stages were formed. The main aim was to offer postdocs an optimal environment for developing and applying for their own third-party funded projects, while the other participants developed further projects on the framework topic. The minor milestones were exceeded with the successful application of all three project-funded postdocs and further applications from the PIs.

The plan for WP 2 was to develop a joint project on the topic of Christian Objects from the Near East in the Rhine-Main area: Migrations and Collections in Context and to design an exhibition. An application for third-party funding was defined as a minor milestone. The joint project and its sub-projects were designed as modules specifically for the former Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF, now: BMFTR) Language of Objects funding line. The preliminary application was submitted in 2017. After an initial negative decision, a new application was planned during the second funding phase. Due to the cancellation of the BMBF funding line, the original concept was modified (without an exhibition) to fit into the DFG funding programme Scientific Networks, which is expected to be submitted by S. Paulau and J. Pahlitzsch in 2026.

WP 3 on the topic of Goldsmithing Technology in Intercultural Comparison aimed to build on the project The Greek Treatise "On the Highly Valued and Famous Art of Goldsmithing" from the first funding phase and to compare Eastern and Western goldsmithing traditions. The plan was to develop a third-party funding application for a follow-up project (minor milestone). Because the main initiator and co-director of WP 3, Susanne Greiff, accepted a position at the University of Tübingen in 2021 and the second co-director, Antje Bosselmann-Ruickbie, took up a new position as a research assistant at the University of Giessen, the intended follow-up project was not realised as planned. Instead, the monograph on the aforementioned Greek treatise, which has been finalised and is currently being prepared for printing, was expanded with a promising view to comparing eastern and western medieval traditions.

The long-term establishment of the location (Rhine-Main region) as a centre for research and education on Byzantium was defined as a major strategic goal. To this end, the establishment of an international Master's degree programme and an application for funding from the EU Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree programme was planned as a major milestone in WP 4. The milestone was achieved with the joint accreditation of the degree programme *Byzantine*

Studies. Perspectives on the Global Middle Ages at Johannes Gutenberg University at Mainz (JGU), the University of Cyprus and the Ca Foscari University of Venice and the submission of the funding application in February 2025. In addition, a professorship for Christian Archaeology and Byzantine Art History was to be established at JGU as a joint appointment with the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) in order to bolster the aforementioned degree programme and strengthen cooperation between the applicant Leibniz Institute and JGU in the long-term. The position was initially advertised as a W1 professorship with tenure track. However, the recruitment process did not ultimately result in an appointment. LEIZA and JGU therefore agreed to re-advertise the position with the same profile, but as a W2 professorship, in 2023. The procedure resulted in a shortlist of three highly distinguished candidates, underscoring Mainz's strong international visibility and attractiveness as an academic location. While all three ultimately pursued exceptional professional opportunities elsewhere, the excellence of the shortlist attests to the success of the recruitment process. The personnel funds earmarked for the W1 professorship in the original financial plan were redeployed for other cost items in line with the LWC objectives. JGU used funds from the co-financing envisaged for the professorship to strengthen, by other means, the important subject area of Byzantine archaeology in accordance with the project objectives. In addition, LEIZA will provide a long-term contribution to the teaching load in Byzantine archaeology by delegating part of this to the Managing Director of the LWC. In July 2025 he submitted his habilitation thesis in the subject at JGU, so that the LWC Byzantium will be strengthened in the long term by a person with qualifications equivalent to the planned professorial appointee.

2. Activities and obstacles

The implementation of the planned work and activities was temporarily impeded by the coronavirus pandemic. The working plans of collaborative projects thus had to be rescheduled to be successfully implemented. Conferences and workshops had to be converted to new digital formats. The pandemic and the widely differing administrative requirements within the European university landscape also made it difficult to find suitable partners for the realisation of the international Master's degree programme (WP 4) and to design the curricula. The Master's degree programme project could not be implemented with the partners envisaged in the original application, the Universities of Vienna and Thessaloniki, but was finally realised with the University of Cyprus and the Ca Foscari University of Venice. Consequently, the timeline for achieving certain goals and milestones was adjusted. The extension of the funding period by two years, which was granted due to the pandemic, was helpful in this respect. The implementation of individual milestones required adjustments following changes in the composition of the PI team and the associated redistribution of expertise. The circumstances surrounding the unfilled professorship in Christian Archaeology and Byzantine Art History at JGU are outlined under point 1 above.

Overall, the partners in the consortium met the challenges described in the implementation of the work programme with great flexibility and made targeted adjustments in line with the application objectives. The strategic goal of establishing the network in the long term beyond the funding period was, nonetheless, achieved. Key activities in this regard include: the extension of the DFG-funded Research Training Group 2304 *Byzantium and the Euro-Mediterranean Cultures of War* until September 2027 (JGU); the acquisition of the ERC Starting Grant *Mount Athos in Medieval Eastern Mediterranean Society* (JGU: Z. Chitwood); the integration of previously lacking specialist expertise via the acquisition of an internationally recognised long-term fellow at the Gutenberg Research College for five years until 2026 (JGU; P. Agapitos: Byzantine history of literature); the establishment of a junior professorship for Islamic Archaeology and Art History at the Goethe University Frankfurt (GU: H. Nol); the integration of a junior professorship for Islamic History (JGU: B. Henning); and the acquisition of the DFG long-term project *Commentary on John of Ephesus' Ecclesiastical History* funded until at least 2028 (GU: H. Leppin/University of Leuven: Ph. Forness). Further smaller projects were successfully acquired and additional projects developed from the network are in preparation.

3. Results and successes

The second funding phase of the LWC Byzantium was extremely successful in terms of the desired structure and scientific output. A total of 148 titles have been published on the research programme by the participating researchers: 18 monographs, 18 edited volumes, 37 articles in specialist journals, 41 articles in conference proceedings, 38 articles in other edited volumes, 10 book chapters, and 2 other publications. Numerous other publications are nearing completion or are in preparation. The print and open access publication series of the LWC [*Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident*](#) (BOO) ensures that the research results have high visibility. During the funding period, 18 volumes have been published and 6 more are in preparation or in planning. The well over 150,000 downloads since 2020 with five-digit accesses from Germany and the USA, and four-digit accesses from 22 other countries, demonstrate the big international interest in the results. In addition, the RTG 2304 has founded the series [*Byzanz und die euromediterranen Kriegskulturen*](#) (BEKK) for the results of the project, which will be published in print and open access (5 volumes to date, 2 in preparation). During the funding period, 33 dissertations were started in connection with the LWC Byzantium, mainly within the framework of RTG 2304. Nine of these projects have been completed so far. Five more will be completed in 2025, the remaining work is expected to be completed in the period 2026-2028. Furthermore, the managing director of the LWC was able to finalise and submit the manuscript of his habilitation thesis (the procedure is expected to be completed in spring 2026).

Knowledge transfer has taken place in different formats to suit various target audiences. The academic specialist audience was addressed in a total of 13 conferences and 22 workshops. Of these, 9 workshops were organised by or for the Young Academics Network (YAN). The publication series mentioned above have also catered for this specialist audience. The lecture series, *Byzantium in Mainz and Frankfurt*, which is organised every semester, addresses both the academic audience and interested members of the public. The digital cross-sectional project Mapping the Reception of Byzantium (MARBy) will communicate selected results of the research of WP 1 to an international public (online by end of 2026). New background texts on Byzantine exhibits for museum transfer have been developed for the LEIZA's permanent exhibition, which will address the broader public and open in 2027. In addition, the photographic archive of Byzantine silver objects by the renowned Canadian scholar E. Cruikshank Dodd has been digitised and processed as a resource for research and transfer. A total of 11,951,774 euros in third-party funding was raised in connection with the research programme. Most of this is attributable to the second funding phase of the DFG-funded RTG 2304 *Byzantium and the Euro-Mediterranean War Cultures* at JGU, the ERC project by Z. Chitwood's (the first ERC grant in FB 07 at JGU and the first in Byzantine Studies in Germany), the establishment of a junior professorship for Islamic Archaeology and Art History at GU (with funding from the Volkswagen Foundation), and the DFG-funded long-term project on John of Ephesus (GU: H. Leppin/University of Leuven: Ph. Forness). It should also be emphasised that the international study programme, *Byzantine Studies: Perspectives on the Global Middle Ages*, at JGU and the partner universities has been accredited for the period 10/2025-9/2031. The projects and measures mentioned represent important successes of this cooperation, which contributes significantly to the long-term structural development of the centre.

4. Equal opportunities, career development and internationalisation

The LWC Byzantium does not have its own legal form. Staff are recruited via the partner institutions LEIZA, IEG, JGU and GU, in accordance with the legal requirements concerning equal opportunities. Measures to ensure equal opportunities are the responsibility of the respective partner institutions.

The self-organised and very active YAN of doctoral students and young postdocs was created during the first funding phase to promote the careers of young researchers. The network

received financial support for its activities (workshops, guest invitations, travel expenses). A separate series has been created to record the results of the round tables organised by YAN postdocs, one volume having been published to date ([Mainz Young Academics - Roundtables](#)). It is especially worth emphasising that representatives of the YAN have received funding for networking measures as part of the "[Kleine Fächer - Sichtbar Innovativ](#)" competition organised by the German Rectors' Conference and the BMBF. Through the [Princeton graduate exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine and early Medieval history](#), the LWC Byzantium is involved in an informal international doctoral colloquium at which doctoral students from the LWC's environment (including YAN) present their work for discussion each year.

The RTG 2304 *Byzantium and the Euro-Mediterranean Cultures of War* has been at the core of funding doctoral students. This group funding format straddles both funding phases of the LWC. All positions in the RTG were advertised internationally. During the second funding period of the LWC Byzantium (7/2019-6/2025), a total of 33 doctoral projects were accepted. Of these, 29 were or are being funded by the RTG 2304, and three further individual projects by the DFG, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, and from short-term project funds.

For the second funding phase, a particular focus of the junior researcher funding was on the group of postdocs. In RTG 2304, a four-year postdoc position was planned and filled for each funding phase. In addition, as part of the Leibniz funding of the LWC, WP 1 focussed on two working groups of researchers at different career stages, in which embedded postdoc positions were advertised internationally (see above point 1). The aim of the model was to create the best possible environment for postdocs to submit a project proposal by embedding them in the working groups. The model was successful. The three postdocs supported by project funds have all developed and acquired their own externally funded project. In addition, postdoc positions at the JGU were filled for the preparation of the projects of WP 2 and WP 4 (as part of the co-funding).

The Wolfgang Fritz Volbach Fellowship aimed to expand the international network of LWC Byzantium by funding four-week research stays in Mainz or Frankfurt for early-career postdoctoral researchers as well as senior scholars. The senior researchers also regularly organised workshops for the YAN. The fellowship was awarded to ten fellows from Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, the UK and the USA.

Overall, the LWC has created an extremely attractive environment for international researchers specialising in Byzantine Studies and related subjects. Three members of the LWC from Belarus, Germany and the USA were appointed to professorships during the funding phase: JProf. Dr S. Paulau (Martin Luther University Halle Wittenberg: Global History of Christianity/Focus on Orthodoxy), Prof. Dr S. Greiff (Eberhard Karls University Tübingen: Archaeometry), and Prof. Dr Z. Chitwood (Ludwig Maximilians University Munich: Byzantine Studies). It is also worth mentioning that the managing director was actively involved in the research programme alongside his administrative duties and completed his habilitation thesis during the funding period.

5. Structures and collaboration

In the second funding phase, the network of LEIZA and JGU was expanded to include the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz and GU, which are represented by members on the executive board. To this end, the partners signed a new cooperation agreement, which replaces the older agreement signed on 3 June 2011 and which was valid during the first funding phase 2015-2019.

Through the international Master's degree programme (WP 4), lasting ties with the University of Cyprus and the Ca Foscari University of Venice were established. During the course of the project, new collaborations were forged through the departure or appointment of members to other institutions (cf. points 1 and 4) and contacts established through the Wolfgang Fritz Volbach Fellowship. These academics are integrated into the network via the status of an Associate Membership. They carry out their own research or are involved in projects to varying degrees.

6. Quality assurance

The rules for good scientific practice were already implemented at the partner institutions of the LWC Byzantium (LEIZA, IEG, JGU and GU) before 2019. The quality assurance of the overall project was ensured by the international Scientific Advisory Board. At the level of the thematic focus areas and joint projects, coordination and quality assurance are ensured through regular working meetings. Peer review was introduced for the publication series of the LWC [BOO](#). All volumes are published simultaneously with the print edition in open access. The volumes in the series [BEKK](#) also appear (almost without exception) in open access.

7. Additional resources

The co-financing for the period 7/2019-6/2025 amounts to around EUR 3,076,000, which was mainly provided by the partners as "in-kind" personnel contributions.

LEIZA: personnel funds approx. 279,332.00 euros, material funds approx. 266,757.00 euros

IEG: personnel funds approx. 179,200.00 euros, material funds approx. 40,200.00 euros

JGU: personnel funds approx. 507,592.00 euros, material funds approx. 1,619,151.00 euros

GU: personnel funds approx. 173,712.00 euros, material funds approx. 10,000 euros

From 2019-2025, JGU provided a lump sum of 100,000 euros each year for the LWC Byzantium in addition to the "In-kind" co-financing. The funds could be used flexibly by the Executive Board and contributed significantly to the success of the programme.

8. Outlook

Several developments in recent years necessitate and make relevant a continued, long-term focus on Byzantium, and its role in shaping the history and culture of the eastern Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. A strong shift towards a broadened historical perspective on the Middle Ages including Western Europe and Byzantium and their interaction is of particular importance. In this context, it is important to emphasise the contemporary relevance of Byzantine studies. The expansion of the European Union into regions shaped by Byzantine culture, the use of historical narratives rooted in Byzantine traditions to justify Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, ongoing conflicts in the Middle East with historical preconditions reaching back to Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Middle Ages, as well as the growing interest among populations in Central and Western Europe in the Byzantine heritage of their countries of origin, all underscore the continued significance of this field.

The centre, which has been firmly established in the Rhine-Main region through the LWC Byzantium, will make a long-term contribution to this challenge. Several projects from the LWC programme, such as RTG 2304, will continue beyond the end of the funding period and ensure the continuity and visibility of the centre. The newly-created professorships for Islamic Archaeology and Art History (GU) and for the History of Islam in the Eastern Mediterranean (JGU) have created important prerequisites for advancing the desired change in perspective in the Rhine-Main region. But the plan for the future is to expand the LWC into a larger national centre and to firmly integrate additional partners in Germany. In cooperation with the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), the LEIZA will become increasingly involved in the field of archaeology in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, focusing on the interrelationships between the Byzantine world and neighbouring regions. Central to this aim is work on the Kievan Rus and their interactions with the Scandinavian, Slavic and Byzantine worlds. Finally, LEIZA will provide a permanent position for a coordinator and will continue to serve as a central organ for the transfer of research results in this field by continuing the publication series *Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okkident*. Furthermore, the international Masters degree programme laid the foundation for a European network. Specifically, the plan is to turn the centre into a Europe-wide network using the EU-funding format *Cooperation in Science and Technology*. It is expected that this will further enhance the research centre in the medium term.