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POLITICS

A pact for diversity in science

What future do you wish to have for your own PhD? And is there anything you would like to change for the next generation of doctoral researchers? [N² - Network of Networks](#) currently deals with those questions and aims to initiate a dialogue about the future of doctoral researchers in Germany. In a joint political [statement](#) of N², the PhD networks of Leibniz, Max Planck and Helmholtz demand a **national pact for diversity and a cultural change in science**.

In early 2017, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research claimed that a scientific career is getting more and more attractive. N² does not share this overly optimistic perspective and identified several systemic flaws that need to be addressed with appropriate measures:

- Enabling **national and international mobility** by securing the financial coverage.
- A **new and innovative scientific management** separating the professional supervision and disciplinary leadership.
- **Fully paid full-time positions for four years** as a realistic time-frame for a PhD and positions subject to social insurance contributions especially for those doctoral researchers who work on stipends.

On top of that, N² makes a case for a **phase of intersectoral mobility**. A very large majority of doctoral researchers does not stay in academia and leaves science after finishing the PhD. During their PhD, doctoral researchers should have the opportunity to test alternative career paths in non-scientific organizations, such as foundations, private companies, and public institutions. Such a measure would also foster dialogue and exchanges between science and the non-scientific sphere. However, this does not imply that a scientific career should be less appealing than a career outside academia. A pact for diversity would help science to attract and keep the best minds.

You can read more about this in the [comment](#) published on the [ZEIT Chancen Brief newsletter](#) on October 16th.

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REPORT

Leibniz PhD Network at the Kick-Off Meeting of the Leibniz Postdoc Network

From October 26th to 27th 2017, the Kick-Off Meeting of the Leibniz PostDoc Network took place in in the [Research Center Borstel – Leibniz Center for Medicine and Biosciences](#) (FZB). Representatives of postdoctoral researchers of 45 out of 91 institutes joined the first meeting. The event was organized by the PostDoc Initiative Borstel, who prepared a very interesting program, including invited talks by the president of the [Leibniz Association](#), Prof. Matthias Kleiner; and the spokesperson of the [Leibniz Mentoring – Alumnae Network](#), Diana Modaresi-Tehrani.

The aim of the Kick-Off Meeting was to build a network among the postdoctoral researchers within the Leibniz Association, to share experiences, and to create and discuss ideas.

During this event, the participants defined their denotation of 'Postdoc' and accordingly designated the target group of their network. Furthermore, they also discussed their needs and interests as postdoctoral researchers as well as the goals and missions to be pursued with the network. Last but not least, the first Steering Committee was elected. We congratulate the first spokespersons of the Leibniz Postdoc Network: Sabine Bartel from the FZB and Elena Martellato from the [Museum für Naturkunde – Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science](#) in Berlin.

The [Leibniz PhD Network](#), represented by our spokesperson Katarzyna Stoltmann, received a warm welcome in Borstel during this meeting. We were invited to share the experiences we have had with the creation and development of our network. Fruitful discussions arose as a result of this colloquy, most of them linked to setting up an intranet, an internal communication strategy, and a survey on working conditions, as well as concerning the organization of events. We are looking forward to continuing the exchange on these and further topics with the Leibniz Postdoc Network!



Participants of the Kick-Off Meeting of the Leibniz Postdoc Network.

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UPCOMING EVENT

N²'s "Science Beyond Borders - Science Festival" in the Berlin Science Week

The [Berlin Science Week](#) (BSW) is coming up this 1st-10th of November! This series of events is dedicated to the exchange of ideas between science and society. It seeks to foster interdisciplinary dialogue for a better understanding of our world. Within the framework of this event, [N² – the Network of Networks](#) will host the public event "[Science Beyond Borders – Science Festival](#)" on November 6th in the [Museum für Naturkunde](#). Check the [program](#) to learn more about what is offered by us and by the BSW!

This year's BSW was announced to the public in a press conference on Friday, October 20th. Among big personalities such as Michael Müller, the Governing Mayor of Berlin, and Prof. Sabine Kunst, president of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, who patronize the BSW, Teresa Hollerbach represented N² as one of its board members. Check out the article in the Tagesspiegel newspaper that resulted from this press conference!



From left to right: Lucie Menz (press speaker of the Falling Walls Foundation), Prof. Dr. Jürgen Mlynek (Coordinator Berlin Science Week, Chair of Falling Walls Board of Trustees), Michael Müller (Governing Mayor of Berlin), Prof. Dr. Sabine Kunst (President Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Dr. Stefan von Holtzbrinck (CEO Holtzbrinck Publishing Group), and Teresa Hollerbach (N² Board Member). Copyright: Daniel Meza.

About the event “Science Beyond Borders – Science Festival”

Science communication is an important topic across all research disciplines. Successfully communicating relevant findings to the public is imperative for an effective learning process in the society we live in. This public event is addressed both to scientists and to a non-academic audience, to whom enthusiastic junior scientists are happy to present their research. It is embedded in the N² science communication conference designed to inspire young researchers to communicate their scientific findings in alternative and creative ways to the society. Our aim is to blur the lines between art, culture, and science for an outreach that makes science accessible to everyone.

Don't miss out on this learning experience! November 6th 2017, 8 p.m. in the [Museum für Naturkunde \(U Naturkundemuseum\)](#).

Register for this event [here](#).

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Meet the survey group!

The survey group is a subgroup within the working group of diversity, equal opportunities, and working conditions of the Leibniz PhD Network. This group's task is to develop, conduct, and evaluate internal surveys that help the network to know more about the doctoral researchers it represents. This information will then be utilized to shape the argument's thrust of the network in order to advocate fair working conditions for its members. Meet here those who are behind this important mission!



Yusuf Nadi Karatay

I'm doing my PhD research on greenhouse gas mitigation strategies in agriculture at the [Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy](#) (ATB) in Potsdam. I contribute to developing the survey in our working group. I most enjoy reading/talking about languages, history, and evolution. Sports (esp. basketball) and music are also essential for me.

Christa Gotter

I am currently doing my PhD at the [Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies](#) (IAMO) on the working conditions of livestock workers on East German large-scale farms and their professional ethics when interacting with the animals. In our working group I am coordinating the development process, and contributing to the design of the survey. In my spare time I enjoy spending time with my family, meeting and talking with friends, and listening to music.



Verena Ott

I am currently preparing a PhD thesis while working in a project about migration and its potentials for rural regions in Saxony-Anhalt at the [Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography](#) (IfL) in Leipzig. Being involved in the group from the beginning, I find it a really good opportunity to learn more about survey design. Plus: I enjoy the nice atmosphere in our working group!

Antonio Arcudi

I'm currently doing my PhD at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt ([Leibniz Institut Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung](#), HSKF) on contestation and development of international norms: I'm interested in the question of how disputes on international norms affect the norm's development. I studied Political Science, Economics and Peace and Conflict Research before. In my free time, I like traveling and doing sports, for example bouldering, football, and cycling.



Tom Konzack

I am a doctoral PhD representative at the [GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies](#) in Hamburg. The focus of my dissertation is on social movement radicalization, in particular towards terrorism. I also work in a project on discrimination, grievances, and mobilization of religious minorities. In our working group, I contribute to the creation of our survey and am interested in equal working conditions of doctoral researchers. My leisure time I use for bouldering, longboarding, concerts, and traveling.

Other members of the survey group

Richard Höchenberger, [German Institute of Human Nutrition](#) (DIfE)

Friedrich Anders, [Leibniz Institute for Astrophysics Potsdam](#) (AIP)

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OPINION

Questions to the outgoing spokespersons - Martin Schmidt and Olga Naumov on their experience

Olga Naumov and Martin Schmidt were the first spokespersons of the Leibniz PhD Network. Today, they are sharing their thoughts on the experiences in this position.

What was your biggest eye opener for you to realize how important the network is/could become?

MARTIN For me, the moment was during the first World Café back in 2016. I moderated a table and got in contact with a lot of doctoral researchers there. We talked about problems and possible future implications and it really made me feel that we were about to start something big.

OLGA During our first general assembly, I talked to a lot of participants and realized that those who were going to finish their PhD soon had one thing in common: Most of them didn't know exactly what to do afterwards. Especially those who wanted to stay in academia faced challenges like: Do I really need a postdoc position abroad? How do I apply for a position abroad? Where do I get funding? So I wanted to build a network where doctoral researchers can learn about their future perspectives, share their knowledge and experiences.

*What was your biggest challenge during your time
as a spokesperson of the Leibniz PhD Network?*

MARTIN My biggest kind-of-a-challenge was to stand for the election. It was not my intention to become a spokesperson, but during the meeting in Gatersleben I somehow got the feeling that I had to give it a try. In the end, it was a great opportunity and one of the most interesting things I did during my PhD.

OLGA I already had a little management experience, but I didn't know how challenging it can be to keep everyone motivated since the network is voluntary work. Communication and transparency is the key, so I have tried to communicate as often as possible with everyone.

*Do you have tips for your successors how to dodge similar bullets or where
to go and where not? What is important to consider being a spokesperson?*

MARTIN In my point of view, I am not the wise guy to give tips. Hence, I would be happy if the new spokespersons could intensify the contact to the doctoral researchers to listen to them. There are so many unheard voices!

OLGA It would be great if the new board could intensify the political work with N² and increase our visibility. I'm sure that the new spokespersons will do a great job.

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