



Leopoldina
Nationale Akademie
der Wissenschaften

Leopoldina

The German National Academy of Sciences
at a Glance





Dear Readers,

since being appointed German National Academy of Sciences in 2008, the Leopoldina has become a well-established advisory body on society and policy consulting, as well as consolidating international cooperation. In this advisory capacity, the Academy organises important debates on topics such as climate change, energy supply, tackling diseases and promoting health, demographic change, a knowledge society, global nutrition, and the distribution of natural resources.

Our office location in the government district of Berlin provides convenient proximity to policy makers, the media, and international partners. The collaboration with academies from abroad is also very successful: in cooperation with the science academies of the G7 and G20 countries, the Leopoldina contributes to the preparation of the annual summit meetings. The academies then jointly submit statements to the heads of state and government.

This brochure will serve as your guide to the Leopoldina. It describes our work and provides contact information to the reference person on any particular subject. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Halle (Saale), April 2025

Bettina Rockenbach
XXVIII President of the Leopoldina



Conference Room



Lecture Hall



Grand Staircase



Grand Hall

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A relief of the Leopoldina emblem adorns the front door of the Academy building in Halle (Saale).

Leopoldina – German National Academy of Sciences

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The Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina was appointed the German National Academy of Sciences on 14th July 2008. The legal basis for this act was a resolution passed by the Joint Science Conference of the Federal Government and federal states on 18th February 2008. Since then, the Federal President of Germany has been the patron of the Leopoldina. The Academy is independently run and dedicated to the common good.

The idea behind founding a national academy was to create a legitimised scientific institution, operated irrespective of political and economic objectives, which would scientifically review and study future societal issues. Its findings should be conveyed to policy makers, made accessible to the public, and nationally and internationally advocated by the Academy.

The Leopoldina was founded in 1652 in Schweinfurt/Germany and is thus the oldest continuously existing academy of natural sciences and medicine in the world. The Academy selects its members from among outstanding scientists. Since its founding, 7,000 individuals have been appointed members. These include, among others, Marie Curie-Skłodowska, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Alexander von Humboldt, Justus von Liebig and Max Planck.

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Symposium “Human Rights and Academic Freedom in Europe” in March 2024, left to right: Rebecca Everly, Aelona Buyx, Hans Petter Graver, Jan Willem Duyvendak.



Advice for policy makers and society

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Providing guidance on current scientific and science policy issues to policy makers and society is a central task of the German National Academy of Sciences. These may include topics such as climate change, energy supply, artificial intelligence, biodiversity, tackling diseases, reproductive medicine, and evidence-based policy making. The aim is to deliver valuable statements and recommendations to cope with urgent social challenges and identify future issues, where a timely solution without the necessary scientific basis is improbable. It is also a matter of detecting, analysing and commenting on scientifically indicated develop-

ments that may become of significance to society in the future.

The Leopoldina conducts its policy consultation activities jointly with the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities, including the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and acatech – National Academy of Science and Engineering. Their work is guided by a permanent committee, which is led by the Leopoldina. In order to develop recommendations and statements, working groups or ad hoc commissions may be formed separately or in cooperation with other academies, scientific institutions or international partners. As a result, statements, recommendations and reports on interdisciplinary or subject-specific topics, long-term developments, and current, day-to-day political issues are formulated. All findings are subject to a peer review by the Leopoldina, and are subsequently submitted to decision makers and interested parties in the political sphere and society to serve as the basis for discussions and further political measures.

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International relations

International cooperation is the only way to tackle global challenges such as infectious diseases, climate change, and artificial intelligence. The Leopoldina works with strategic partners on all continents to promote the international exchange of knowledge and pools global expertise on these and other topics, for example in the form of symposia or statements.

Advising the G7 and G20 heads of state and governments is one of the Academy's focus areas with respect to international, science-based policy advice. Every year, these countries' national academies prepare joint recommendations on urgent issues in advance of the summits.

One of the Leopoldina's key science diplomacy initiatives is the Joint Science Conference of the Berlin Process Western Balkans. It is coordinated by the Leopoldina and is one of the longest running science diplomacy initiatives in Europe. The Leopoldina's Human Rights Committee (HRC) supports persecuted scientists and academics around the world.

Due to the complex geopolitical situation in the world, national coordination regarding international topics is also increasingly important. The Leopoldina actively promotes this process, for example,



Every year, the science academies of the G7 states jointly prepare science-based recommendations – 2022 under the leadership of the Leopoldina. The statements were presented as part of the Science7 Dialogue Forum in May 2022 in Berlin and handed over to the German Federal Government.

through the International Relations Coordinating Committee (Ausschuss zur Koordinierung der Auslandsbeziehungen, AKA).

The Leopoldina also represents German science in international academy networks. It is a member of the following associations: All European Academies (ALLEA), European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), Federation of European Academies of Medicine (FEAM), InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), and International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (IHRN).

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▲ At the traditional Christmas lecture in 2024, Nobel Prize Winner Svante Pääbo spoke about his research into Neanderthals and Denisovans.



▲ At the Leopoldina Night 2023, visitors had the opportunity to experience a deep-sea lounge, a science slam, a scientific puppet show, and a commons debate.

Public events

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Policy advice always includes advising society as well. In order to participate in political discussions, the public should be provided the opportunity to access all information on current scientific topics. Issues of societal importance, such as the development of artificial intelligence (AI), the opportunities and challenges associated with migration and integration, and securing energy supplies are therefore presented and discussed in diverse events. Within an array of lectures, exhibitions, and discussion events, participants are given the opportunity to exchange views on current issues with one another and with experts.

On the first Friday in July, the Leopoldina opens its main office in Halle (Saale) as part of the Long Night of Sciences. A multifaceted programme illustrates science for visitors of all ages. Regularly, guided tours offer interested visitors the opportunity to get to know the Leopoldina's main office and the archive.

To promote interdisciplinary discussions between scientists and to disseminate their scientific findings, the Leopoldina regularly organises symposia, often in cooperation with universities, research institutes, and other academies. The Annual Assemblies of the Leopoldina provide members, scientists, and individuals interested in science with an additional opportunity for exchange. They each address a currently relevant topic, such as artificial intelligence (AI), or the origin and beginning of life.

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Publications

The German National Academy of Sciences informs the public about its work through the Leopoldina Newsletter. Alongside reports on current events and new policy advice statements, interviews with experts are also featured. The Leopoldina Newsletter is published in German and English and is accessible via subscription at www.leopoldina.org/en/newsletter-registration.

The Leopoldina makes its scientific discussion available to the public. The Leopoldina's "NAL-conference" series is a continuation of the world's oldest medical and natural sciences academic journal, which was founded as the "Miscellanea curiosa" in 1670. The "NAL-historica" series focuses on topics relating to the history and theories of science. The "NAL-miscellanea" primarily documents official Leopoldina events. "NAL-live" is the Leopoldina's new online scholarly journal (www.leopoldina.org/nal-live). Articles in NAL-live are peer-reviewed, open to online comments and discussion, and regularly updated – they are living documents.

Leopoldina publications are available in the digital library at: www.leopoldina.org/en/digital-library.



Programme of the Leopoldina Annual Assembly 2022 on Global Health.

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Distinctions and fellowships

The Leopoldina honors outstanding scientific achievements by awarding medals and prizes. These awards are presented, for example, in recognition of lifetime achievement, significant scientific discoveries or research achievements, and contributions to the Leopoldina.

- Honorary Membership
- Cothenius Medal
- Carus Medal
- Mendel Medal
- Schleiden Medal
- Medal of Merit
- Emperor Leopold I Medal
- Greve Prize
- Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Prize
- ZukunftsWissen – the Early Career Award from the Leopoldina and Commerzbank Foundation
- Georg Uschmann Prize for the History of Science
- Leopoldina Prize for Junior Scientists

The Greve Prize, the Carl-Friedrich-von-Weizsäcker Prize, and the ZukunftsWissen Prize are particularly important. The Greve Prize, endowed with 250,000 euros, is donated by the Helmut and Hannelore Greve Foundation for Science, Development and Culture. The Weizsäcker Prize, endowed with 30,000 euros, is awarded in cooperation with the Stifterverband. It honours outstanding scientific achievements and societal engagement. The ZukunftsWissen Prize is endowed with 50,000 euros. The Leopoldina and Commerz-



The Greve Prize statuettes, which were awarded in 2024.

bank Foundation launched the annual prize in 2024 to honour outstanding young researchers.

Since 1997, the Leopoldina has been supporting outstanding young post-doctoral students from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland by providing post-doctoral scholarships in its Fellowship Programme. The programme enables them to carry out independent research at a renowned scientific institution abroad (or in Germany) for up to two years. Following their return from abroad, the Leopoldina supports its fellows with post-doctoral funding and a mentoring programme for up to five years to facilitate integration into the German academic landscape. The programme is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the State of Saxony-Anhalt.

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Library and archive

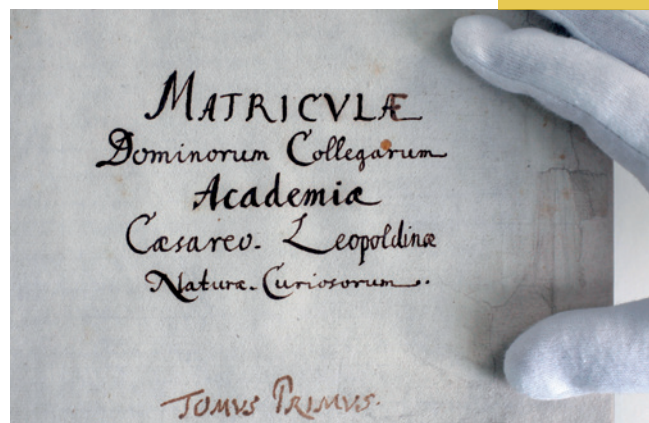
The Leopoldina library was founded in 1731. With over 260,000 books, monographs and journals on natural sciences and medicine, it is a rich resource of traditional and modern knowledge. The focus of the collection is on publications about the history of science, particularly of natural sciences and medicine, as well as on publications by scientific societies and associations. The literature can be viewed or borrowed in the reading room of the Leopoldina in Emil-Abderhalden-Straße 36 in Halle (Saale). External users may request materials by interlibrary loan. The electronic catalogue is available at www.leopoldina.org/en/library-opac.

As one of the oldest academy archives in the world, the Leopoldina's archive stores around 1,700 metres of documents dating from over 350 years. The core collection of the Leopoldina archive includes matriculation records and minute books, curricula vitae, publication lists and portraits of the members, as well as series of correspondence and comprehensive administrative records of the Academy. In addition, the archive stores some 50 bequests from important personalities, over 10,000 photographs featuring the history of the Academy and science, and various works of art, such as paintings, drawings and medals. With its collection on the history of the Leopoldina and its biographical materials, the archive offers science historians excellent research opportunities.



▲ A view of the storeroom of the Leopoldina library in Halle (Saale).

Document from the early days: the Leopoldina's first matriculation book from the year 1652. ►



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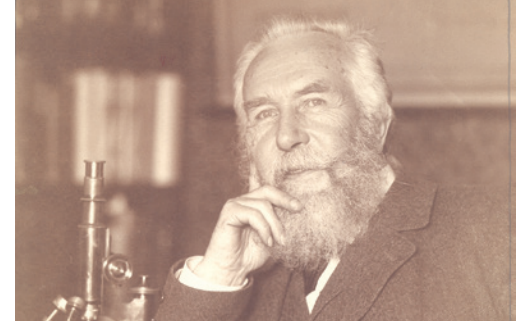
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Leopoldina
Library Server



▲ The Centre for Science Studies staged an exhibition of globes that showed how our view of the Earth, the moon, and other planets has changed since the early modern age.



▲ Zoologist Ernst Haeckel was appointed to the Leopoldina in 1863.

Centre for Science Studies

The Centre for Science Studies coordinates the Academy's activities relating to the history of science and focuses on fundamental science theory issues of relevance to the subjects represented by the Leopoldina.

The centre offers a good working environment for visiting researchers who wish to make use of the Leopoldina's library and archive. It is also developing its own programmes to process the Leopoldina's library and archive materials and make them available to the public. It also coordinates the Leopoldina's long-term projects, which are funded by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities.

For more information, please visit:

www.leopoldina.org/zfw

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Science studies

Science studies address the sciences themselves as the topic of focus. It is an interdisciplinary field of research examining the sciences based on methods and theories pertaining to the humanities, social sciences and cultural studies. Projects at the Centre for Science Studies focus on the following topics: International science relations, history of scientific academies and their members, fundamental questions of science and society, scientific editions and digital forms of indexing, and interdisciplinary reflection on science. The projects include a historical-critical edition of Goethe's writings on the natural sciences, completed in 2011, and the project "Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919): Edition of Letters".



The charter with which Kaiser Leopold I awarded the academy special privileges in 1687 is made of bound parchment with red satin binding and an imperial seal.

A National Academy with a long tradition

The Leopoldina, which was named *Academia Naturae Curiosorum* at the time, was founded by four physicians in 1652 in the Free Imperial City of Schweinfurt. They aimed to deepen knowledge of the natural sciences and improve communication among the natural scientists of that era.

In 1677, the independent Academy was officially recognised by Kaiser Leopold I and was awarded special privileges in 1687. Since then, it has had the title of *Sacri Romani Imperii Academia Caesareo-Leopoldina Naturae Curiosorum*, from which its current abbreviated name, Leopoldina, was derived. Since 1878, the Academy has been based in Halle an der Saale.

The period of the Third Reich left its marks on the Academy, too. Both members and directors of the Academy succumbed to the Nazi regime. Academy members who were murdered in the concentration camps are commemorated by a stele on the Academy premises at the Jägerberg in Halle. During the GDR era, the Leopoldina largely preserved its independence. It selected its members, particularly from what was then the Federal Republic of Germany and from other countries in the West, without the exertion of state influence. Following German reunification, it received the status of a registered association.

Organisation

The Leopoldina is a supranational association of scientists. More than a quarter of its members come from outside Germany. Prospective members are first proposed by an Academy member and then election is carried out by the Presidium in a multi-stage selection process. Each member belongs to a specific section in accordance with his or her scientific discipline. Among its members, each section elects a representative to the Senate. Other members of the Senate are notable personalities from other scientific organisations and the public. Election of Presidium members, statement of accounts audit and decisions on the Academy's scientific strategy are the responsibilities of the Senate.

The Academy is a registered non-profit association. It is financed by public funds from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (80 %) and the State of Saxony-Anhalt (20 %), where its main office is located. The Executive Board is comprised of the President and four Vice-Presidents. The Presidium is additionally complemented by other members and bears responsibility for all Leopoldina activities. A full-time Secretary General heads the office and is supported by the administration.



Leopoldina members and the city of Schweinfurt donated this president's chain of office to the Academy in 1955.

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Presidium



The Presidium of the Leopoldina in April 2025, from left to right: Martin Quack, Franziska Hornig, Claus Bartram, Jutta Gärtner, Thomas Lengauer, Bettina Rockenbach, Onno Oncken, Regina Riphahn, Charlotte Klönk, Thomas Krieg, Ulla Bonas. Other members not pictured here are Wolfgang Baumjohann, Jörg Hacker, Gerald Haug, Volker ter Meulen.

Presidium

President Professor Dr Bettina Rockenbach, Halle (Saale)

Vice Presidents Professor Dr Ulla Bonas, Halle (Saale)
Professor Dr Thomas Krieg, Cologne
Professor PhD Regina Riphahn, Nuremberg

Class Secretaries *Class I: Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Engineering*
Professor Dr Onno Oncken, Potsdam

Class II: Life Sciences
Professor Dr Claus R. Bartram, Heidelberg

Class III: Medicine
Professor Dr Jutta Gärtner, Göttingen

Class IV: Humanities, Social and Behavioural Sciences
Professor Dr Charlotte Klönk, Berlin

Members Professor Dr Wolfgang Baumjohann, Graz/Austria
Professor Dr Thomas Lengauer, Saarbrücken
Professor Dr Martin Quack, Zurich/Switzerland (until 30 April 2025)
Professor Dr Thomas Stocker, Bern/Switzerland (from 1 May 2025)

Secretary General * Franziska Hornig, Halle (Saale)

Former Council Members * Professor (ETHZ) Dr Gerald Haug, Mainz (XXVII President)
Professor Dr Jörg Hacker, Berlin (XXVI President)
Professor Dr Volker ter Meulen, Würzburg (XXV President)

* With a consultative vote

Members, sections, and classes

With currently around 1,700 members from more than 30 countries, the Leopoldina has the largest number of members among German academies. All members are organised in specialised sections, which in turn are grouped into four classes.

These classes integrate the members more strongly than before in the drafting of statements and recommendations and also strengthen inter-

disciplinary exchange. The classes focus on natural sciences, life sciences, medicine, humanities, and social and behavioral sciences. They also serve as a platform for international exchange and the selection of new members.

The Annual Assemblies provide a forum for all members.

The Leopoldina's classes and sections

Class I: Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Engineering

- Mathematics
- Informatics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Earth Sciences
- Engineering Sciences

Class II: Life Sciences

- Agricultural and Nutritional Sciences
- Physiological and Evolutionary Biology
- Genetics/Molecular Biology and Cell Biology
- Biochemistry and Biophysics
- Microbiology and Immunology
- Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine
- Physiology and Pharmacology/Toxicology

Class III: Medicine

- Global Health
- Anatomy and Anthropology
- Pathology and Forensic Medicine
- Internal Medicine and Dermatology
- Surgery, Orthopaedics, Anaesthesiology
- Gynaecology and Paediatrics
- Neurosciences
- Ophthalmology, Oto-Rhino-Laryngology and Stomatology
- Radiology
- Veterinary Medicine

Class IV: Humanities, Social and Behavioural Sciences

- History of Science and Medicine
- Philosophy of Science
- Economics and Empirical Social Sciences
- Psychology and Cognitive Sciences
- Cultural Sciences

Associated institutions

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Friends of the Leopoldina

On the initiative of the Leopoldina Presidium, Friends of the Leopoldina was founded in August 2007 with the objective of intellectually and materially promoting science and research at the Leopoldina. All interested parties are welcome to join the Friends of the Leopoldina.

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Leopoldina locations



All Leopoldina locations in Halle (Saale) are within short walking distance of the tram stop Moritzburgring. It is served by line 7 from the main railway station Halle Hauptbahnhof.

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The Berlin offices are within short walking distance of the railway station Friedrichstraße.

You can find detailed directions at www.leopoldina.org/en/arrival

Leopoldina Main Office

Jägerberg 1
06108 Halle (Saale)



Archive

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Library

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Reading Room

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