

## **Strengthening science in a bid to secure the future - A BR50 Position Paper on the occasion of the 2021 elections -**

*This document is an abridged version of the detailed BR50 [Position Paper \(in German\)](#)*

Berlin has a unique diversity and spatial density of research institutions. The capital city's non-university research landscape in particular is diverse and covers a wide range of topics. Together with the universities that make up the Berlin University Alliance (BUA), non-university research institutions are key location factors. Close cooperation is essential for excellent cutting-edge research. To give Berlin as research metropolis and the region Berlin-Brandenburg a visible position at the international level, it is essential to intensify the already existing cooperation between the non-university institutions and with the universities, universities of applied sciences, and the Charité and to strengthen the important role of the Einstein Foundation in terms of the cross-institutional scientific collaboration.

This is the goal of the Berlin Research 50 (BR50) initiative, which was founded in spring 2020. The network pools the expertise and interests of more than 50 non-university research institutions in Berlin. For the future of Brain City Berlin, it is now crucial to pave the way forward and to adapt the framework conditions. The institutions united in BR50 especially identify the following political challenges that the future senate should address at the state level and within the scope of its influence at the federal level:

### **Attracting the best minds to the metropolitan regions**

#### **1. Simplification and promotion of joint professorships**

It is crucial that Berlin develops a competitive model for joint professorships (special professorships) since this is tremendously important for collaborative efforts between non-university institutions and universities. This means that the federal state bears the costs of pension provision, and a reduction of bureaucracy enables the appointment process to be shortened to a normal and competitive level. To be able to fully exploit the potential for cooperation, it is important to ensure that such professorships cease to play a role in terms of capacity.

#### **2. Equal rights for junior research group leaders**

Junior research group leaders at non-university research institutions are to be placed on an equal footing with those at universities. For BR50 it is important to develop, together with the BUA, strategies that allow junior research group leaders at non-university institutions, independent from the discipline, to supervise doctoral students, including the right to be officially involved in doctoral examinations. This is as well valid in a similar way for joint professorships under the so called *Jülicher Modell*.

#### **3. International networking and diversity as location factors in a global research economy**

Political support is important to ensure that Berlin remains internationally competitive as a science location and that it can successfully recruit early career researchers from all over the world. To this end, structured programs, like the Einstein Strategic Professorship Program to achieve

successful implementation of cutting-edge appointments for Berlin, must be developed together with the Federal State of Berlin and the BUA. The Einstein Foundation can support the program development. Special emphasis should be placed on the promotion of diversity and equality, the provision of dual career options, bilingual/English-language courses and the expansion of fast-track PhD programs. At the federal level, efforts should also be made to facilitate the issuing of visas for scholars from abroad.

### **Ensuring framework conditions for excellent research**

#### **4. Taxation of research cooperation hampers science**

The Federal State of Berlin should work together with the stakeholders involved in the science system and the Federal Ministry of Finance to develop an adequate application of VAT regulations for joint professorships and cooperation between universities and non-university institutions.

#### **5. Promotion of infrastructure for excellent research**

Political and financial support for the development of shared research infrastructures (e.g. research equipment, laboratories, analogue and digital research data infrastructures) would be a key locational advantage for Berlin as a hub of research. Also with a view to the goal of technology sovereignty, it is crucial to pool existing expertise and to build integrated value chains. Decentralized technology platforms and technology networks or the establishment of a virtual institute would be conceivable. The implementation and long-term monitoring of such structures requires highly qualified staff. To be able to retain such staff, politically supported permanent positions are required in this important area of science support.

#### **6. Ensuring adequate spatial arrangements for research**

Policymakers must develop a medium-term strategy in conjunction with research institutions to ensure adequate and plannable spatial arrangements. Having a state fund for the renovation of dilapidated research buildings, not letting rental expenses burden institutions' budgets, and having the possibility to expand institutions' premises to available buildings and spaces with little bureaucracy and at low cost appear to be expedient elements in finding a solution.

### **Recognising and promoting diversity in science**

#### **7. Honest and realistic communication on animal experimental research**

The stated goal is to enhance the replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) in terms of animal testing. To achieve this, the development of alternative methods for animal testing is already an integral part of research. Nonetheless, it is not possible to completely dispense with animal experiments in research at present. Maintaining research success and international competitiveness requires political acceptance of necessary animal experiments on the one hand and support for projects to reduce animal testing in general in Berlin on the other. The aim should be political support for the pooling of expertise in Berlin so that the city can assert itself as a pioneer in the development of alternative technologies to animal experiments. This includes a transparent and reflected communication by all stakeholders and a higher efficiency during approval procedures for animal experiments.

#### **8. Expansion of support for small and individual projects**

The Berlin Senate should firmly advocate the announcement of funding for small and individual research projects in order to close the gap between the DFG's research grants and the EU's research funding formats, and in this way adequately exploit the potential of scientific diversity, individual creativity and specialisation. At the federal level, more funding should also be provided for collaborative projects in the humanities and at the interface between the humanities/social sciences and the engineering sciences, which at the same time take into account the fact that smaller non-university institutions are only able to contribute small amounts of their own funding on account of their structure.

#### **9. The Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Region as a healthy place to live**

The combination of material sciences, health sciences, social sciences, and life sciences is unique in Berlin. An interdisciplinary approach building on this diversity is required to be able to address societal challenges such as pandemic control and human-induced environmental change. Berlin and Brandenburg can together develop into a model region and show that it is possible and desirable to maintain a healthy environment where biodiversity, climate change mitigation and sustainable mobility play a key role.

#### **10. Venture capital for a start-up scene in Berlin**

It is in the interest of Berlin policy that spin-offs from the research scene remain in Berlin and are not relocated abroad. To promote Berlin as an attractive start-up location for scientific spin-offs, there is a need for support programmes (e.g. grant funds, awards, incentives) and a reduction of bureaucracy in spin-off processes.

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