

Strong Scientific Cooperation

■ **A shared duty** – Politics is never simple; but in Germany, it seems to be even more complex than elsewhere. The fate of the nation is in the hands of no less than 16 state governments, as well as one federal government. For this reason, a commission was set up in the fall of 2003 to unravel and restructure the complex web of responsibilities. Some lengthy negotiations were required before the first part of the reform of our federalist system finally took effect last September. However, opinions differ as to the results. In our “Viewpoint” (page 14 ff.), Emeritus Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Fritz W. Scharpf, outlines his fundamental criticism of the reform. As for the Max Planck Society, it may be said that our principal concern has been heeded: science remains a duty incumbent on both federal and state governments. Both will continue to share responsibility – including financial responsibility – for non-university research organizations. For the universities, however, that is only partially the case. Competence for the organization of studies, for example, and for employment conditions, which were once covered by the Federal Higher Education Act, now falls to the states, which will, in the future, also be solely responsible for financing university construction costs. Now the state governments must live up to their word and fulfill the responsibility they have accepted.

■ **A shared future** – Heidelberg has traditionally been a stronghold of science. The city is home to the oldest university in the Federal Republic, the German Cancer Research Center and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL). The Max Planck Society has no fewer than four institutions there: the Institutes for Astronomy, Nuclear Physics, Medical Research and Comparative Public and International Law. Naturally, our scientists have long worked hand in hand with Heidelberg University. As you can read in “Pinboard” (page 86), an outline agreement signed with the university in February paves the way for an even closer future partnership. Cooperation with universities in general is a major concern of ours, given that both partners profit. By working together, researchers at both institutions can address a far wider spectrum. They can attract third-party funding for joint projects, share the use of expensive equipment and libraries, and cooperate in encouraging the

next generation of scientists – for example, via International Max Planck Research Schools. The Heidelberg agreement encompasses the whole gamut of possibilities. As such, it will serve as a template for further extensive joint ventures.

■ **A shared work** – Most subjects in science are complex. At the Max Planck Society, we attach great importance to addressing issues from a wide variety of aspects. MAXPLANCKRESEARCH regularly reports on such work, especially in its “Focus” articles. We now intend to expand on and



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consolidate this information in a series of German-language books. The first volume in the series has just been published: *Die Zukunft des Alterns – Die Antwort der Wissenschaft* (The future of aging – an answer from science). You can read an abbreviated version of the chapter on “Politics in an Aging Society” in this issue (page 54 ff.), which deals with the social consequences of aging – a topic that is set to become a serious issue in coming decades. We also have biologists and medical scientists, psychologists and neuroscientists, demographers and educational researchers who are all studying aspects of aging. To supplement its activities to date, before the end of the year, the Max Planck Society will establish a new institute that will be concerned specifically with the biology of aging. If there is one thing that this book highlights, it is that many fundamental aspects of this vital subject remain unresolved.

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