

Foreword by the President

The clock showed 10:51 a.m. on 14 September 2015 when the detectors rang out in the two observatories in Livingston and Hanford, USA. Triggered by something that had happened a billion years ago, the sound signalized the merger of two black holes. The existence of gravitational waves – predicted by Albert Einstein 100 years ago – had been proven for the first time. Scientists from the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics in Hannover and Potsdam-Golm made crucial contributions to this discovery in several key areas. The detection of gravitational waves was the scientific highlight of 2015, and we report on it in more detail in this Annual Report (see page 52).

The Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in Frankfurt officially took up its work on 13 October 2015. The Max Planck Society is breaking new academic ground here, bringing various disciplines together for fruitful collaboration under the roof of a single Institute. The scientists in Frankfurt are keen to engage in interdisciplinary cooperation, employing a range of methods to study fundamental mechanisms and the many types and nuances of aesthetic pleasure as well as the role played by individual, social and cultural differences.

And there was another significant event: 2015 was the year in which we extensively reorganized our support for junior scientists in the Max Planck Society. We did this in the full knowledge that the academic success of our Institutes would not be possible without the input provided by our junior scientists. The overall package spans more than new funding structures and detailed support guidelines. It is intended to also bring greater transparency to the issue of career paths. The process of restructuring should be complete by 2017. The sum we are already spending, however, is not insubstantial: the Max Planck Society will be investing close to 50 million euros a year in the conversion of

research scholarship to funding contracts by the time the system is fully in place (see page 6).

And speaking of money: The new accounting system introduced in the Max Planck Society in 2015 creates more transparency and is based on the linking of budgetary requirements and commercial regulations for large enterprises. It has altered our reporting obligations – and therefore the structure of this annual report, which now includes the informative management report with key data as well as the actual annual accounts with the auditor's report. Much of the content is not where it used to be and other content, as I said, has been added. Take a look inside and see for yourself.

Sincerely, Martin Stratmann