

# Foreword by the President

The Max Planck Society is one of the most productive scientific organizations in the world. The starting point for this success is the great trust that the society of our country places in the work of our scientists. We enjoy excellent framework conditions and are equipped with the appropriate level of financial resources. And these investments are paying off.

Alongside our own capabilities, however, the strength of the European Research Area *as a whole* is of great importance to us. Over the long term, the success of the Max Planck Society will be inextricably interlinked with the success of the European Research Area. Given the scientific and economic competition from Asia and America, the European level is becoming more and more significant. Much has been achieved on the path towards a European Research Area over the past few years. With Brexit, however, Europe will lose one of its strongest scientific drivers, which it cannot easily replace.

The Max Planck Society will – despite all the obstacles – continue to support the European Research Area. It will do this by supporting the establishment of strategic alliances in Europe. For example, there are already Max Planck Centers with the University College London, Sciences Po in Paris, Universiteit Twente, EPF Lausanne, and ETH Zurich. In 2018, another Max Planck Center with the University of Cambridge was added. We are seeking to co-operate and initiate dialogue with European institutions which are strong in research with the aim of enhancing collaboration in new research areas.

With the new format of the *Dioscuri Centres of Scientific Excellence*, we also intend to help initiate and expand scientific excellence in Central and Eastern Europe. In a first step, the people-centric funding programme will be established initially in Poland. The German and Polish governments will be mutually responsible for funding. With this project, we want to improve opportunities for proven scientists in Eastern Europe, with additional funding and targeted integration into an international network of cutting-edge researchers.

Applications for the first Dioscuri Centres were called for in autumn 2017. Forty-five scientists from a broad range of disciplines applied. The international nature of the applicants illustrates the attractiveness of the programme (going beyond Poland); only 10 per cent of applicants are cur-

rently employed in Poland. Individuals will now be selected for management positions by a scientific committee made up of internationally renowned researchers. I was able to win over Prof. Dr. Joachim Sauer as chair of this committee. The committee will follow the strategies for securing excellence, which have been tried and tested over decades by the Max Planck Society.

With the *Max Planck Schools*, which will be explained in more detail on the following pages, we want to bring together the brightest minds from German universities, the Max Planck Society, and other non-university research institutions. Germany has top scientific personalities in various locations. This geographic distribution is of great benefit socially and especially economically. However, if we want to win the battle internationally for the best minds, we need to combine this excellence into supra-regional research and education networks to make them more visible. I am of course delighted that this initiative from the German scientific community is enjoying such solid support.

**Sincerely,  
Martin Stratmann**