

Recommendations for the organization of Boards of Trustees in the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

– adopted by the Senate of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft on 23 March 2018 –

Given the varied nature of the Max Planck Institutes and the corresponding communication requirements with the public, the *Rules for Boards of Trustees* agreed by the Senate of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft are limited to important parameters which generally require guidelines. In an effort to promote successful work within the Boards of Trustees, recommendations for the organization of Boards of Trustees are provided in the following document. These recommendations are primarily intended for the Directors of the Institutes, but may also be of interest to members of the Boards of Trustees.

I. The necessity for and function of a Board of Trustees

Academic research is reliant on the public and its interest in using the opportunities discovered through research, as well as its willingness to cover the costs of research. The establishment of Boards of Trustees offers the opportunity to promote a mutual understanding and should therefore be used to a greater extent. For this reason, a Board of Trustees should exist at every Institute.

Boards of Trustees are a vital element of well-founded PR work and reflect the anchoring of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft and its Institutes within society. They are particularly intended to forge links to groups who are interested in the research of the Institutes and who are in a position to support this work in both a tangible and intangible way. The body should also serve as the interface for Institute concerns and promote interactions with the scientific and social environment of the Institutes. The Board of Trustees should communicate the specific needs of basic research to society.

The main tasks of a Board of Trustees are therefore:

- To raise awareness about the results of Institute work among relevant social groups and in this way promote public trust in the work of autonomously organized research,
- Vice versa, to communicate the concerns of the outside world to the Institute,
- To broker contacts, including finding financial support for the Institute,
- and to advise both the Institute and the Management of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft if problematic social or scientific policy developments arise.

Boards of Trustees should not see their primary function as being the mouthpiece and interest representative of the Institute towards the Management of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. Instead, the desire is much more for (possibly critical) suggestions from the varying experience and areas of activity of the individual Trustees as a source of ideas for Institute work, as well as the active support and promotion of the Institute, particularly with regard to its relations with third parties.

The participation of Boards of Trustees in appointment procedures or budget matters is not provided for in the Statutes of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. As a result, statements by Trustees should only be made with caution; however, this does not prevent the Board of Trustees' interest in specific academic developments at the Institute from being articulated.

II. Composition of a Board of Trustees

The composition of the Board of Trustees should be tailored to its tasks. In contrast to Scientific Advisory Boards, Boards of Trustees should not be primarily made up of specialist scientists, but representatives of those areas of society relevant for the Institute, particularly from politics, industry, academia and the media. They should include individuals who are seen as multipliers and who can promote the networking with society, as well as those who can make a different contribution to supporting the Institute.

A special concern of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft is for there to be an adequate gender balance on the Boards of Trustees. In addition, it is fundamentally advisable to recruit people who are still professionally active and who have a current network.

The Board of Trustees should appropriately represent the following areas of society:

- "Politics"
e.g. the minister for science or possibly other ministers or high-level representatives of the host federal state, parliamentary secretaries of the host federal state, the mayor of the host city, the member of the national and/or federal state parliament for the local constituency, EU representatives, or representatives from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), or similar, where appropriate;
- "Business / Industry / Trade / Banks"
particularly at Institutes whose research fields have a direct link with specific sectors;
- "Academia"
e.g. the president or dean of the neighbouring university, as well as representatives from non-university research institutions, whereby existing and desired partnerships should be taken into account;
- "Media"
e.g. representatives of the local or national press, radio and TV, paying particular attention to their ability to communicate scientific topics;

- "Other"
possible involvement of Supporting Members of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, as well as other potential supporters or multipliers whose cooperation within the Board of Trustees makes sense in specific cases.

To ensure the Board of Trustees is always composed of high-ranking members, the *Rules for Boards of Trustees* stipulate that Trustees cannot be represented at the meetings by a deputy. Particularly in the case of ex officio Trustees, such as politicians, who are sometimes unable to attend, it is nevertheless recommended that a proposed replacement be invited as a guest (without voting rights) to attend one single meeting.

In suitable cases, the establishment of an inter-institutional Board of Trustees is possible, e.g. for Institutes located on the same site and sharing related topics.

III. Meeting frequency and duration

To ensure the continuous upkeep of contacts, it is recommended that Board of Trustees meetings take place once a year.

The Management of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (particularly the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General) shall strive to participate in every second meeting; in order to ensure there is a continuous flow of information, designated representatives of Administrative Headquarters (e.g. the respective Institute Liaison) should regularly participate in the meetings.

The duration of meetings should generally not exceed half a day in order to limit the amount of time required of the participants.

IV. Relationship to the Scientific Advisory Board

As the Scientific Advisory Board and the Board of Trustees have fundamentally different tasks to fulfil, it should be a matter of principle that members do not sit on both boards.

In order to establish a link between the Board of Trustees and the work of the Scientific Advisory Board, the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Board should report to the Board of Trustees on the results of the work of the Scientific Advisory Board every two years in line with the regulations governing Scientific Advisory Boards and those governing Boards of Trustees. When agreeing dates, it is therefore recommended that the Board of Trustees meeting directly follows the Scientific Advisory Board meeting in every second year in order to make it easier for the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Board to fulfil this task.



V. Planning and preparation of Board of Trustees meetings

A Board of Trustees can only fulfil its purpose if it is appropriately supported and served by the corresponding Institute. In particular, this requires careful preparation and appropriate organization of the meetings by the Institute Management to appeal to the addressees.

When planning Board of Trustees meetings, it should be borne in mind that their main aim is sparking interest in academic research and the work of the Institute, communicating information about the general development within the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, and promoting an insight into the value and benefits of the research - particularly basic research. This can be promoted by agreeing an interesting agenda which takes into account current topics and the wishes of the Trustees, as well as by organizing the meeting in an appealing way, with sufficient scope for discussion. The Trustees themselves should also have the opportunity to speak about topics which they themselves have selected.

Experience to date has shown that Trustees are particularly interested in the latest results of the Institute's work. Academic presentations should therefore play an integral role in meetings, although it should also be considered that the members of the Board of Trustees - in contrast to those of the Scientific Advisory Boards - are not primarily specialist scientists, and the presentations should therefore be kept at a level understandable to the general public.

In general, there is also a need for information on the social relevance of the research carried out in the respective Institute and the specific specialist expertise of the Institute.

To prepare for the meetings, the Trustees should receive suitable documents with brief information about the Institute. Generally, appropriate material is already available at the Institute. This particularly includes information on the following points:

- Research focus of the Institute and new research results;
- Size and structure of the Institute and its Departments;
- Resources (staff, basic funding and third-party funding, special features of the range of equipment and infrastructure);
- Participation in special programmes within the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (research groups at universities, tandem projects, inter-institutional research initiatives, International Max Planck Research Schools etc.);
- Support of junior scientists;
- Prizes and awards;
- Cooperation programmes (with universities, non-university research institutions, industrial companies both at home and abroad);
- Use of research results (patents, spin-offs);

- PR work;
- Other documents desired by the Board of Trustees (provided they are not confidential, such as Scientific Advisory Board reports, appointment documents or similar).

For the constituent meeting of the Board of Trustees or for informing new Trustees, suitable material regarding the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft overall and the Institute in particular should be made available (existing brochures such as the latest Annual Report of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, information sheets etc.).

VI. Holding Board of Trustees Meetings

When organizing the meetings, the particular circumstances of the respective Institute, as well as the specific interests of the Trustees should be considered first of all. In some cases, it is advisable to have a focus topic of current relevance, whereby both the Institute and the Trustees can suggest such a topic.

The Institute should also clearly express its expectations to the Trustees, while the Trustees should make it just as clear what support they are able to provide.

In recognition of the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees and the Deputy Chairperson, it is recommended that the meeting be postponed when both are unable to attend.

When organizing the meetings, the following points should be considered:

- At the constituent meeting: election of a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson

- Introductory talk by the Managing Director

(or interchanging with other members of the Board of Directors) with information on the following topics:

- Current research projects at the Institute, methods used, results achieved and possible applications;
- Developments and prospects (retirements, new appointments, ground-breaking projects etc.);
- the topics named in Section V - prepared with documents - should be addressed and explained further in this presentation depending on the current needs and developments.

- Discussion forum / Main topic

Consideration should be given to both the discussion requirements of the Trustees, as well as those of the Institute Management.

- Short talks from (junior) scientists

These talks (generally no more than two or three) should be selected based on the level of interest for Trustees, as well as the ability of the speaker to communicate the issues.

- Every two years: report by the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Board

- Talk by the Management of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

This type of talk by the Management of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft or its representatives may be particularly suited to topics which impact the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft and its science policy environment.

- (Prepared) short talks by members of the Board of Trustees

Talks are also conceivable by BMBF representatives on previous or planned BMBF support, by university representatives on future plans on campus, by local authority representatives on the importance of the Institute for the economy of the area, or on its acceptance among the local population or similar groups, by representatives of industry on specific expectations of businesses in respect of institutions/cooperation issues, and by media representatives on the issue of communicating science to the public etc.

- Recommendations of the Board of Trustees (including on the PR work of the Institute)

- Invitation to special events (e.g. Open Day)

- Suggestions and wishes, date for the next meeting

- Tour of the Institute, presentations

Trustees should be afforded the opportunity to gain a direct impression of the Institute's work by visiting individual Departments, or the entire Institute if required, in conjunction with descriptive presentations.

- Networking

It is recommended that the Board of Trustees meeting is rounded off with a joint meal and an informal get-together.

The minutes to be produced for the meeting, which shall be signed by the Chairperson and the person taking the minutes, and which should generally be available within two months of the meeting, are also intended as a source of information for the President and Secretary General and should therefore be sent to them immediately on completion.



VII. Reimbursement of costs for Trustees

Participation in the Board of Trustees is voluntary; therefore, members do not receive any payment or fees for meetings. Nevertheless, if required they should be offered reimbursement of their travel costs in line with the regulations laid down in the German Travel Expenses Act (*Bundesreisekostengesetz*).

The German version is always the authoritative text.