



Statutes

of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG,
German Research Foundation)

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Statutes of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)

in the version of the resolution passed by the General Assembly on 2 July 2025, recorded in the Register of Associations under No. VR 2030 at the district court of Bonn on 17 October 2025.¹

[Translator's note: This is the English translation of an original German legal text. In the event of a discrepancy, the German text is binding.]

Preamble

(1) ¹The freedom of research and an efficient system of research are indispensable to an open society. ²The promotion of science and the humanities forms part of Germany's cultural and political self-image and contributes significantly to prosperity and sustainable progress.

(2) ¹The DFG serves science and the humanities and promotes research in all its forms and disciplines. ²It establishes structures and has an integrative effect, making use of its strategic potential in its commitment to academic freedom and fundamental ethical principles, and embracing its responsibility for the further development of the research system.

Section 1 Purpose of the Association

(1) ¹The DFG promotes research of the highest quality. ²The focus is on funding projects developed by the academic community itself in the area of knowledge-driven research. ³It finances research projects, creates competitive opportunities and conducts procedures for the review, evaluation and selection of research proposals as well as for the decision-making. ⁴The DFG helps shape the overall conditions and standards of academic research. ⁵It maintains dialogue with society, politics and business and supports the transfer of knowledge. ⁶It advises state institutions and institutions working in the public interest on issues relating to academic research and research policy.

(2) ¹The DFG acts in a research-driven manner in all its procedures. ²Excellent research requires a broad spectrum of ideas and pluralistic debate; for this reason, the DFG takes particular care to promote international cooperation, early-career researchers, gender equality and diversity in science and the humanities.

¹ Passed by the General Assembly of the Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft (Emergency Association of German Science) on 18 May 1951 in Munich and on 2 August 1951 in Cologne, amended by resolutions passed by the General Assemblies of 22 October 1954, 2 April 1955, 27 October 1959, 10 February 1960, 17 July 1964, 1 July 1971, 27 June 1978, 15 January 1991, 6 July 1993, 3 July 2002, 2 July 2008, 2 July 2014, 3 July 2019, revised on 7 July 2021, amended on 4 April 2023, most recently amended on 2 July 2025 in Hamburg. Entered in the Register of Associations at the district court of Bonn for the first time on 27 March 1952 under No. VR 777, altered on 14 October 1963 to No. VR 2030.

Section 2 Name, Seat, Fiscal Year, Public Benefit Status

(1) ¹The name of the Association is “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft” and its seat is in Bonn. ²It is recorded in the Register of Associations. ³The fiscal year begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December.

(2) ¹The DFG pursues exclusively and directly public-benefit purposes as defined in the tax-privileged purposes section of the German Fiscal Code (Abgabenordnung). ²The Association is nonprofit; it does not primarily pursue its own economic interests. ³Funds of the Association may only be used for purposes set forth in the Statutes.

(3) ¹Members as such do not receive allocations from the funds of the Association. ²No person may gain personal benefit either through payments which do not conform to the objectives of the Association or through disproportionately high remuneration.

(4) The Association may transfer funds to other corporations as per Section 51, paragraph 1, sentence 2 of the German Fiscal Code and to legal persons under public law in order to promote science and research; the transfer of funds to domestically based corporations under private law requires that these are tax-privileged for public-benefit purposes.

Section 3 Membership

(1) ¹Institutions of research of general importance that further the purpose of the Association may be admitted as members.

²These may include in particular:

- a) higher education institutions,
- b) other research institutions; where an institution belongs to a legally constituted association that serves to coordinate and harmonise research activities and represent the common interests of its members externally, only that association should be a member of the DFG,
- c) the academies in the Federal Republic of Germany that are members of the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities.

³Further details are regulated by the General Assembly.

(2) ¹Admission as a member takes effect on the day following the resolution of the General Assembly. ²Admission shall be communicated to the member in text form.

(3) There are no membership dues.

(4) ¹Withdrawal from the Association is only possible at the end of the fiscal year. ²The intent to withdraw must be submitted to the Executive Board in text form no later than six weeks prior to this date.

Section 4 Bodies

(1) Bodies of the DFG are:

- a) the General Assembly (Mitgliederversammlung)
- b) the President (Präsident or Präsidentin)
- c) the Executive Committee (Präsidium)
- d) the Executive Board (Vorstand)
- e) the Secretary General (Generalsekretär or Generalsekretärin)
- f) the Senate (Senat)
- g) the Joint Committee (Hauptausschuss) and, by its appointment, the Committee for Executive Board Affairs (Ausschuss für Vorstandsangelegenheiten) and the Audit Committee (Ausschuss für Rechnungsprüfung)
- h) the review boards (Fachkollegien)

(2) ¹As a general rule, the bodies of the DFG pass their resolutions in meetings. ²When convening meetings, it may be provided that members may exercise their membership rights without being physically present at the place of the meeting by means of electronic communication (hybrid meeting) or that they must do so (virtual meeting). ³Resolutions may also be adopted without a meeting by electronic or written means (circulation procedure).

(3) ¹Resolutions are adopted by a majority of the votes cast, unless the Statutes provide otherwise. ²Votes in a circulation procedure may also be conducted in such a way that a proposed resolution, or several proposed resolutions combined, shall be deemed adopted if no member of the body objects within the specified period. ³Further details regarding the conduct and procedure of meetings and the forms of adopting resolutions shall be governed by rules of procedure issued by the bodies. ⁴For elections and votes in the General Assembly, the General Assembly may determine different arrangements; Section 5 paragraph 2 sentence 1 remains unaffected.

(4) ¹The bodies may invite guests to their meetings on a permanent or occasional basis.

Section 5 General Assembly

(1) The General Assembly determines the principles of the work of the DFG.

(2) ¹It elects, in accordance with the following provisions, the President, the Vice Presidents and the members of the Senate. ²It confirms the appointment of the Secretary General by the Joint Committee.

(3) The General Assembly receives the annual report and the annual accounts from the Executive Board, and decides on the approval of the actions of the Executive Board.

(4) ¹The General Assembly decides on the admission of new members to the DFG. ²Applications for membership must be submitted to the General Assembly with a recommendation from the Senate. ³A majority of the votes of all members is required for the admission of a new member.

(5) ¹The ordinary meeting of the General Assembly is held once a year. ²The Executive Committee shall determine the venue, the format (in person, hybrid or virtual) and the point in time. ³The President convenes the General Assembly. ⁴The invitation together with the agenda must be received by the members no later than three weeks prior to the General Assembly; it shall be issued in written form (Section 126 German Civil Code – Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, BGB) or in text form (Section 126b German Civil Code). ⁵The General Assembly must also be convened if requested by the Executive Committee, the Joint Committee or one-third of the members. ⁶If the President is prevented from convening the General Assembly or fails to comply with the request within three weeks after its submission, the General Assembly may also be convened by two Vice Presidents.

(6) ¹For each meeting, a secretary must be chosen to keep the minutes of the meeting. ²The chairperson of the meeting and the secretary must sign the minutes.

(7) The General Assembly shall adopt rules of procedure governing the preparation and conduct of elections and votes within the General Assembly of the DFG; Section 4 paragraph 2 sentence 8 shall apply.

Section 6 President

(1) ¹The President represents the DFG internally and externally. ²His or her term of office is four years. ³This period begins on the first day of the calendar year following the election. ⁴Re-election is possible once. ⁵The term of office of the departing President ends when the newly elected President takes office.

(2) The President develops jointly with the Executive Committee the strategic and conceptual direction of the DFG.

(3) The President convenes and chairs the meetings of the Executive Committee, the Executive Board, the Senate, the Joint Committee and the General Assembly.

(4) ¹If the President is prevented from attending, he or she is represented by an Executive Committee member of his or her choice. ²If the President is unable to appoint someone, the Executive Committee chooses which of its members will represent the President.

(5) ¹The President is appointed on a full-time basis. ²The Committee for Executive Board Affairs determines the terms of his or her employment.

Section 7 Executive Committee

(1) ¹The Executive Committee consists of the President and the Vice Presidents. ²The number of members of the Executive Committee is established by the General Assembly. ³The term of office of a Vice President is four years. ⁴This period begins on the first day of the calendar year following the election. ⁵Re-election is possible once. ⁶In addition, the president of Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft is part of the Executive Committee in an advisory capacity.

(2) ¹The Executive Committee prepares the resolutions of the Senate and the Joint Committee as far as these are no funding decisions. ²The members of the Executive Committee attend the meetings of the Senate, the Joint Committee and the General Assembly in an advisory capacity. ³They are also entitled to attend the meetings of all

bodies in an advisory capacity. ⁴This does not include meetings of the Executive Board, the Committee for Executive Board Affairs and the Audit Committee. ⁵Section 13 paragraph 1 and Section 14 paragraph 1 remain unaffected.

Section 8 Executive Board

(1) ¹The Executive Board as defined by Section 26 of the German Civil Code consists of the President and the Secretary General. ²At the recommendation of the President and after discussion by the Executive Committee, the General Assembly may appoint a member of the Executive Committee as an additional full-time member of the Executive Board. ³This person's Executive Board membership ends when the President's term of office comes to an end. ⁴The Committee for Executive Board Affairs determines the terms of his or her employment.

(2) ¹The Executive Board conducts the regular business of the DFG and performs all duties not assigned to another body under these Statutes. ²It represents the DFG in legal transactions. ³If only one Executive Board member is appointed, this member is the sole representative of the Association. ⁴If the Executive Board consists of more than one person, the Association is represented by two Executive Board members. ⁵The Executive Board may appoint special representatives for certain types of business as per Section 30 of the German Civil Code.

(3) ¹The Executive Board reports to the Executive Committee on the performance of its duties. ²It reports to the Senate, the Joint Committee and the General Assembly on the affairs of the DFG.

(4) ¹The President lays down the guidelines for the activities of the Executive Board and determines the allocation of responsibilities within the Executive Board, subject to the rights and duties of the Secretary General under paragraph 5 and Section 9, paragraph 1. ²The Executive Board adopts rules of procedure.

(5) ¹The responsibilities of the Secretary General include the implementation of the budget in accordance with the decisions of the Joint Committee. ²He or she may object with suspensory effect to decisions made by an Executive Board consisting of three persons that affect the implementation of the budget if there is any doubt as to its legality or economic viability. ³If no agreement is reached, the Executive Board reports the matter to the Executive Committee. ⁴The Executive Committee may pass a decision on the matter or refer it to the Joint Committee for final decision. ⁵If the matter fundamentally concerns the financial management of the DFG, the Executive Committee shall, at the request of the Secretary General, refer it to the Joint Committee.

(6) In the event of the termination of employment of a member of the Executive Board, he or she no longer holds their position on the Executive Board.

(7) ¹If a member of the Executive Board resigns before the end of his or her regular term of office, the Executive Committee may appoint a substitute member. ²In the case of the position of Secretary General, this requires the approval of the Joint Committee. ³The term of office of the substitute member ends when a person appointed by means of a regular procedure takes office.

Section 9 Secretary General

- (1) The Secretary General manages the Head Office of the DFG on a full-time basis.
- (2) ¹He or she is appointed by the Joint Committee upon recommendation of the Executive Committee for a period of up to eight years and confirmed by the General Assembly. ²Reappointments are possible. ³The term of office does not begin prior to confirmation by the General Assembly.
- (3) Early dismissal of the Secretary General by the Joint Committee or the Committee for Executive Board Affairs is possible upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, which requires a two-thirds majority of its voting members.
- (4) ¹Early dismissal by the Committee for Executive Board Affairs requires the approval of all its voting members. ²The members of the Joint Committee are to be notified immediately of the decision to dismiss the Secretary General. ³It takes effect 14 days after the dispatch of the notification, unless the majority of the members of the Joint Committee, the representatives of the federal government, or the majority of the representatives of the federal states on the Joint Committee demand before this date that the matter be referred to the Joint Committee.
- (5) The Committee for Executive Board Affairs determines the terms of employment of the Secretary General.
- (6) ¹He or she attends the meetings of the Executive Committee in an advisory capacity. ²The Executive Committee may exclude the Secretary General's participation in individual agenda items for important reasons. ³The Secretary General may also attend the meetings of all other bodies, with the exception of the meetings of the Committee for Executive Board Affairs and the Audit Committee, in an advisory capacity.

Section 10 Head Office

- (1) The Head Office supports the work of the bodies and other committees of the DFG, implements their decisions and administers the funding programmes.
- (2) The Head Office reports to the Executive Board and the Executive Committee on the current business of the DFG.
- (3) The activities of the Head Office are governed by rules of procedure adopted by the Executive Board.

Section 11 Senate

- (1) ¹The Senate is the central scientific body of the DFG. ²It deliberates and makes the decisions concerning all major matters of the DFG based on the principles adopted by the General Assembly, unless the matters are reserved for the Joint Committee. ³The Joint Committee adopts its own rules of procedure.
- (2) ¹The Senate also decides which review boards are to be formed and how they are to be structured. ²In doing so it ensures that the review boards in all their forms and disciplines cover the full range of fields in science and the humanities and take due account of their disciplinary research interests and interdisciplinary relationships.

(3) The Senate consists of 39 members.

(4) ¹36 members are elected by the General Assembly based on a rolling system. ²Researchers who work at institutions of higher education or other research institutions are eligible for election. ³The General Assembly may also elect other persons, in consideration of certain expertise relevant to the DFG. ⁴Voting is based on the person; elected members of the Senate do not act as representatives of institutions. ⁵Adequate representation of the entire spectrum of research disciplines must be sought in the composition of the elected members.

(5) ¹The ex officio members of the Senate are the respective President of the German Rectors' Conference, the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities and the Max Planck Society. ²Members of the Senate by virtue of their office may be represented at meetings by other authorised representatives of their respective institutions to be appointed in advance.

(6) ¹The term of office of the elected members of the Senate is three years. ²This period begins on the first day of the calendar year following the election. ³A second term of office is possible. ⁴If an elected member of the Senate retires during their term of office, the Senate may co-opt a substitute member from previous lists of nominees for the remainder of the term of office of the retiring member. ⁵For the elections, the Executive Committee, acting on proposals received from the members of the DFG and with the involvement of the Senate, prepares lists of nominees, which usually comprise three names for each vacant seat.

(7) ¹Meetings of the Senate are convened by the President of the DFG. ²He or she must convene the Senate at the request of at least one-third of its members.

(8) Within its mandate, the Senate may establish committees and commissions whose members do not have to be members of the Senate.

Section 12 Joint Committee

(1) ¹The Joint Committee is responsible for the funding of research by the DFG. ²It decides on the budget. ³It also deliberates and decides on the development of DFG funding policies, funding activities and programme planning on the basis of resolutions by the Senate. ⁴The Joint Committee adopts its own rules of procedure. ⁵Its members may attend the meetings of the General Assembly with an advisory vote.

(2) ¹The Joint Committee consists of the members of the Senate, representatives of the federal government, with a total of 16 votes, 16 representatives of the state governments with one vote each, and the representative of Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, with a total of two votes. ²The General Assembly appoints two representatives of the member organisations as permanent guests of the Joint Committee in connection with matters according to paragraph 1 sentence 3.

(3) The public funding bodies may be represented by other authorised persons of their respective public authority to be appointed in advance or they may transfer their voting rights in writing, by fax or electronically to another member of the Joint Committee. ²The transfer of a voting right to another member must be granted separately for each meeting of the Joint Committee.

(4) ¹Within the scope of its authority, the Joint Committee may establish subcommittees whose members do not have to be members of the Joint Committee. ²To the extent that such subcommittees are delegated powers of the Joint Committee under paragraph 1, sentence 1, they must adopt rules of procedure which at least govern their composition and require the approval of the Joint Committee. ³Paragraph 3 applies accordingly to subcommittees.

Section 13 Committee for Executive Board Affairs

(1) ¹The Joint Committee establishes a Committee for Executive Board Affairs consisting of an elected member of the Senate, a representative of the federal government, a representative of a federal state, and a member of the governing body of a member organisation appointed by the General Assembly. ²The Committee is chaired by the member appointed by the General Assembly. ³Deputy representation shall be regulated in the rules of procedure adopted by the committee pursuant to paragraph 3. ⁴A further representative of a state and two members of the Executive Committee who are not members of the Executive Board attend the meetings of the Committee for Executive Board Affairs in an advisory capacity. ⁵The Committee may require members of the Executive Board to attend during individual agenda items.

(2) ¹The Committee for Executive Board Affairs is responsible for concluding, amending and terminating employment contracts with the President, the Secretary General and the additional full-time member of the Executive Board according to Section 8 paragraph 1 sentence 2. ²It determines in particular their remuneration and is responsible for the reporting and approval of these persons' ancillary activities as well as for determining the rights and obligations of these persons under the terms of their employment. ³Based on a resolution adopted by the Joint Committee, the Committee for Executive Board Affairs may grant an appropriate expense allowance to the Vice President.

(3) ¹The Committee adopts rules of procedure, which require the approval of the Executive Committee and the Joint Committee. ²Resolutions require a majority of the votes cast. ³If requested by the representative of the federal government or the representative of a federal state, the subject of a resolution is to be referred to the Joint Committee. ⁴Section 9 paragraph 4 remains unaffected. ⁵Section 4 paragraph 2 and Section 12 paragraph 3 apply accordingly.

Section 14 Audit Committee

(1) ¹The Joint Committee shall establish an Audit Committee; Section 13 paragraph 1 shall apply accordingly.

(2) ¹The Audit Committee is responsible for auditing the legality and regularity of the implementation of the budget and the accounting activities. ²It may inspect and audit the books and records of the Association as well as its assets, in particular its treasury and holdings of securities and goods. ³It may also delegate these tasks to individual members or, in the case of certain tasks, to special experts. ⁴It appoints external auditors to audit the annual accounts, determines the scale and scope of the audit assignment, receives the auditors' report, and forwards it to the General Assembly with a recommendation regarding the approval of the actions of the Executive Board.

(3) Section 13 paragraph 3 applies accordingly.

Section 15 Review Boards

(1) ¹The review boards evaluate research funding proposals. ²In doing so, they also ensure the maintenance of uniform standards in the review process. ³They are consulted on issues concerning the further development and refinement of the funding programmes of the DFG.

(2) ¹Members of the review boards are elected by researchers for four years in accordance with election regulations to be adopted by the Senate. ²Re-election is possible once.

(3) The review boards adopt their own rules of procedure, which must be approved by the Senate.

Section 16 Funding of Research Projects

(1) Researchers and research institutions may submit proposals for funding of research projects and their supporting structures within the funding programmes.

(2) ¹Funding decisions are made based on an academic review by persons or bodies and subsequent evaluation by different bodies in each case. ²The Joint Committee decides on exceptions; Section 16 paragraph 3 sentence 2 remains unaffected.

(3) ¹Research projects are reviewed in writing or by a review panel. ²In the latter case, the review panel may also carry out the necessary evaluation if at least one member of a relevant review board participates.

(4) All decisions on grant proposals are made by, or based on, a decision by the Joint Committee or its subcommittees.

(5) The DFG Head Office administers the review, evaluation and decision processes.

Section 17 Expense Reimbursement, Limitation of Liability

(1) ¹Unless otherwise provided for in the Statutes, membership of the organs of the DFG is on an honorary basis. ²For activity in the statutory and other bodies and the associated expenditure of time, no remuneration is paid, including no allowances for attendance of meetings, unless the Statutes provide otherwise. ³However, members of such bodies are entitled to reimbursement of expenses demonstrably incurred in connection with activity in these bodies in accordance with a resolution of the Joint Committee.


(2) ¹Liability of members of statutory and other bodies to the Association and to the members is limited to intent and gross negligence. ²If members of such bodies are liable to compensate third parties for any damage they have caused in the performance of their duties within these bodies, they may request from the Association to be exempted from liability, provided that the damage was not caused intentionally or by gross negligence.

Section 18 Statutory Amendments, Dissolution of the Association, Dedication of Assets to Public Benefit

(1) ¹Any amendments to the Statutes and dissolution of the Association require a three-fourths majority vote by the General Assembly. ²The General Assembly may only resolve to dissolve the Association if at least three-quarters of the members are represented. ³If the required number of members is not represented, another meeting of the General Assembly must be convened, which is then quorate regardless of the number of members represented.

(2) ¹In the event of dissolution of the Association or should the Association pursue objectives which are other than non-profit, the Association's assets are transferred to an institution under public law or to another tax-privileged organisation to use for the promotion of science and research. ²If several institutions are under consideration, the General Assembly decides. ³This decision requires approval by the public funding bodies.

(3) A decision by the General Assembly to amend or delete paragraph 2 requires approval by the public funding bodies.



Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
Kennedyallee 40 · 53175 Bonn, Germany
Postal address: 53170 Bonn, Germany
Tel.: + 49 228 885-1
Fax: + 49 228 885-2777
postmaster@dfg.de
www.dfg.de