The COVID-19 pandemic generated an enormous need for knowledge. To pick up the momentum and coordinate closely within the research community, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) established the Interdisciplinary Commission for Pandemic Research in June 2020.

Until November 2023, the interdisciplinary commission broke new ground in order to bring together the creativity and problem-solving expertise of knowledge-driven research with an interdisciplinary vision.

The commission consisted of 21 members from all academic disciplines. The Chair of the Commission was Professor Dr. Katja Becker, President of the DFG.

The aim was to make a contribution to pandemic monitoring from a scientific perspective by observing the national and international pandemic research landscape, continuously identifying research gaps and supporting evidence-based research in all pandemic-related subjects.

A special feature was its independence from direct political advisory contexts.

Work of the commission:

- Identify research needs and gaps in a long-term perspective, beyond current political and social debates.
- Contribution to research networking, through participation in international conferences and workshops.
- Provide scientific background through exchange and publications and closing information gaps by means of targeted contributions by its members.

Between June 2020 and June 2021, the Commission prepared a total of seven calls for “COVID-19 Focus Funding”. Call topics covered a broad spectrum of particularly pressing scientific issues:

- “Immunity, Host Susceptibility and Pathomechanisms of SARS-CoV-2 Infection”
- “Measures to Prevent Infection in Social Settings and Population Groups”
- “SARS-CoV-2 Sequencing Projects”
- “Impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic in the Global South: Health Systems and Society”
- “Aerosol Particles and their Distribution”
- “Education and Corona – The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Educational Processes in the Life Course”
- “Exploiting Spatial Data as a Basis for Decision-making as Part of Pandemic Control”

The interdisciplinary composition made it possible to take a stand on various current topics:

- Final Report issued by the DFG’s Interdisciplinary Commission for Pandemic Research (March 2024)
- Statement on a pandemic agreement planned by the World Health Organisation (July 2023)
- Statement „The Sciences and Humanities in the Coronavirus Pandemic” (September 2022)
- Statement „Long COVID as a Multidisciplinary Research Challenge” (November 2021)
- Statement „Urgent Action Required concerning Health Research Data” (October 2021)
- Position paper „Coronavirus pandemic: How is it possible to prevent infection through aerosols?” (July 2021)
- Dossier „Know more – make informed decisions” (January 2021)
- Interview series in the DFG’s print magazine „forschung”

By organising it’s international, virtual scientific conference „Preparedness for Future Pandemics from a Global Perspective” on 15 November 2021, the DFG and the Commission has actively contributed to the interdisciplinary networking of DFG-funded research projects in the field pandemic and epidemic research and strengthen the structure of national and international cooperation.
Members of the Interdisciplinary Commission for Pandemic Research

► Chair: Professorin Dr. Katja Becker, President of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn
► Professor Dr. Frank Allgöwer, Institute for Systems Theory and Automatic Control, University of Stuttgart
► Professor Dr. Marcus Altfeld, Institute for Immunology, University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf
► Professor Dr. Christian Apfelbacher, Institute of Social Medicine and Health Systems Research, Medical Faculty of Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg
► Professorin Dr. Cordula Artelt, Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (LIfBi) and Chair of Longitudinal Educational Research, University of Bamberg
► Professorin Dr. Cornelia Betsch, Heisenberg Professor of health communication and health behavior, University of Erfurt; Dr. Carsten Butsch, Institute of Geography, University of Cologne
► Professor Dr. Christian Drosten, Institute of Virology, Charité Berlin
► Professorin Dr. Eva Grill, Institute for Medical Information Processing, Biometry, and Epidemiology, LMU Munich
► Professorin Dr. Susanne Herold, Department of the Infectious Diseases Unit, Justus Liebig University in Giessen
► Professor Dr. Stefan Liebig, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Berlin
► Professor Dr. Stephan Ludwig, Institute of Virology, University of Münster
► Professor Dr. Micheal Meyer-Hermann, Department of Systems Immunology, Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research
► Professor Dr. Jörn Müller-Quade, Working group Cryptography and Security Research, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
► Professorin Dr. Carla Nau, Department of Anaesthesiology and Surgical Intensive Care, University Medical Center Schleswig-Holstein, Lübeck Campus
► Professorin Dr. Karen Nolte, Institute of Medical History and Ethics, University of Heidelberg
► Professor Dr. Micheal Schlüter, Institute for Multiphase Flows, Technical University of Hamburg
► Professor Dr. Jonas Schreyögg, Center of Health Economics, University of Hamburg
► Professorin Dr. Britta Siegmund, Medical Clinic for Gastroenterology, Infectiology and Rheumatology, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin
► Professorin Dr. Simone Sommer, Institute for Evolutionary Ecology and Conservation Genomics, University of Ulm
► Professorin Dr. Caren Sureth-Sloane, Professor of Business Administration, in particular Business Taxation, University of Paderborn
► Professor Dr. Uwe Volkmann, Chair of Public Law and Philosophy of Law, Goethe University Frankfurt

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