

Principles of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) for Science-Based Policy Advice¹

Preamble

In accordance with § 1 Section 1 of its Statutes, the DFG helps shape the overall conditions and standards of academic research, maintains dialogue with society, politics and business, and supports the transfer of knowledge. It advises state institutions and institutions working in the public interest on issues relating to academic research and research policy. In doing so, it provides research findings and expert assessments and suggests possible courses of action to inform political and societal decision-making processes, thereby contributing to informed public and political debate.

The following principles of science-based policy advice describe how the DFG performs this role. These principles provide transparency regarding the standards that govern the DFG's activities and clarify the necessary distinction between research expertise and institutional advocacy.

They offer guidance for all bodies and individuals acting in an advisory capacity on behalf of the DFG, who are generally mandated by the DFG Senate or Executive Committee, and ensure transparency regarding the standards governing their work.

1. Role and Responsibility

The DFG provides science-based policy advice drawing on the research expertise of the members of its statutory bodies. It distinguishes between science-based policy advice and research policy advocacy.

Science-based policy advice considers what conclusions can be drawn from the current state of research and/or an in-depth understanding of the research system in order to address societal or political challenges. It provides research findings, contextual assessments and recommendations for action. It cannot replace the weighing of considerations required in political decision-making or dictate political decisions.

By contrast, research policy advocacy is guided by the question of what framework conditions science and research require in order to fulfil their responsibilities as effectively as possible. Although the two activities have fundamentally different points of reference, they overlap in practice insofar as findings from research and insights relating to the research system inform advocacy activities. The Code of Conduct for representatives of special interests in the framework of the Lobbying Register Act applies to the DFG's representation of interests vis-à-vis the German Federal Parliament and the federal government.

2. Freedom of Research and Independence

The DFG's science-based policy advice is founded on the freedom to pursue knowledge and form judgements through research. This constitutionally protected freedom of research entails a responsibility to express positions that may be uncomfortable or unpopular with the public and to engage actively in controversial debate.

The DFG safeguards the independence of its advice from extraneous interests of a party-political, commercial, institutional or other nature. The members of the DFG's statutory bodies are appointed as independent experts from the research community.

3. Research Quality and an Evidence-Based Approach

The DFG bases its science-based policy advice on the standards of good research practice. Care and quality are guiding principles. Embedded within the research system, the advice draws on the latest international research and is continually updated to reflect new knowledge. The origins, robustness and limitations of the underlying evidence are presented transparently. Research-based statements are clearly distinguished from personal opinions.

Knowledge generated through research is subject to uncertainty. The DFG therefore makes clear which statements are well supported, where gaps in knowledge exist and which issues are subject to differing views within the research community.

Uncertainties, methodological limitations and differing expert positions are presented transparently.

4. Plurality of Expertise

Addressing complex societal challenges requires a range of research perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches. The DFG therefore maintains close dialogue with other stakeholders, particularly within the research system, and takes their expertise into account.

The DFG ensures that the expertise is appropriate to the subject matter, interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse. Differing research and structural perspectives are made visible and incorporated in the advice provided.

5. Transparency

The composition of the advisory bodies is disclosed, as are the underlying data sources, methodological assumptions and other forms of evidence.

Conflicts of interest are disclosed and bias is avoided.

¹ Adopted by the Senate of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) on 16 September 2026

6. Clear and Responsible Communication

Science-based policy advice is communicated clearly and transparently in a manner appropriate to the intended audience. Simplification must not result in distortion. Research findings must not be exaggerated or oversimplified for political or media purposes.

7. Reflection, Evaluation and Refinement

The DFG regularly reflects on and refines its advisory activities. The aim is to continuously safeguard quality, transparency, credibility and institutional independence.

Concluding Remarks

The principles set out above form the basis of the DFG's science-based policy advice. They serve to assure quality, provide institutional guidance and ensure transparency towards policymakers, the research community and the public.

Further information on science-based policy advice provided [by the DFG](#) and through the [Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany](#)