

# Round Table Papier

## Discussion on military research at DESY

„Du. Forscher im Laboratorium. Wenn sie dir morgen befehlen, du sollst einen neuen Tod erfinden gegen das alte Leben, dann gibt es nur eins: Sag NEIN!“. Wolfgang Borchert, Hamburg writer, 1947

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### Initial situation

At DESY, the mission statement of 2013<sup>1</sup>: “Unsere Forschung dient zivilen und friedlichen Zwecken.“

Due to the turning-point declaration of the Federal Government in 2022 following the attack by Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine, a discussion about so-called "civilian clauses" was started in research institutions, universities and also at DESY.

The discussions are based on a threat scenario. In an interview in the Bundestag in June 2024, the Federal Minister of Defense, Boris Pistorius<sup>2</sup> declared Russia "ultimately also for NATO" as a threat and demanded that the Federal Republic must be capable of war by 2029.

The demands for an increase in the armaments budget to 5% of GDP also come from US President Donald Trump. In 2024, the Federal Republic of Germany raised 2% of GDP for the military, which is 90 billion euros. With a federal budget of EUR 480 billion<sup>3</sup>, that's 19%. Extrapolated, 5% of GDP would mean 47% of the federal budget for the military.

Special debts of 500 billion euros for infrastructure were decided by the Bundestag and the Bundesrat in March 2025, expenditures "...above 1 per cent in relation to nominal gross domestic product" for defense spending are exempt from the debt brake.

Scientists in the field of security policy warn against an arms race (see lecture by Prof. Michael Staack<sup>4</sup> and Prof. August Pradetto<sup>5</sup> at the Science4Peace@DESY seminar). In a statement<sup>6</sup> from March 2025 by scientists working in the field of security policy, alarmism is warned.

In its history, DESY has played an outstanding and positive role in international cooperation and has made great contributions through international cooperation with countries that do not share the same political values as Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.desy.de/about\\_desy/mission\\_and\\_guiding\\_principles/index\\_eng.html](https://www.desy.de/about_desy/mission_and_guiding_principles/index_eng.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2024/kw23-de-regierungsbefragung-1002264>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bundeshaushalt.de/DE/Bundeshaushalt-digital/bundeshaushalt-digital.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://science4peacedesy.de/Events/Entries/2025/3/s4pdesy-seminar-internationale-rahmenbedingungen-zivile-forschungseinrichtung-und-militarforschung.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://science4peacedesy.de/Events/Entries/2025/4/s4pdesy-durch-aufrüstung-und-geopolitik-zu-sicherheit-und-frieden-.html>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/upload/pdf/250402-hdt-Rationale\\_Sicherheitspolitik.pdf](https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/upload/pdf/250402-hdt-Rationale_Sicherheitspolitik.pdf)

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## Research orientation at DESY

The research at DESY is intended to refer expressly to the preamble of the Constitution<sup>7</sup>, which states: "... to serve the peace of the world as an equal member in a united Europe."

The preamble of the Hamburg Constitution<sup>8</sup> states: "As a world port city, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg has a special task to fulfill towards the German people assigned to it by history and situation. In the spirit of peace, it wants to be a mediator between all the world and peoples of the world."

Article 2 of the constitution<sup>9</sup> of the state of Brandenburg states: "Brandenburg is a democratic country committed to peace, which strives for cooperation with other peoples".

From this we derive a peace mandate.

In its history since its foundation in 1959, DESY has been committed to this mission through many international cooperations, especially with countries from the East. We want to continue and expand this commitment.

In both basic and applied research, a clear separation between civil and military research is often not possible, many topics and products have a dual-use character. Only in some cases is a classification clear.

So far, DESY has applied the mission statement<sup>10</sup> of 2013, which states: "Our research serves civil and peaceful purposes."

In order for this mission statement to be implemented, we propose the following:

In all research projects, the institute and the applicant should and must classify whether the application has a dual-use character. If this is the case, an ethics committee should decide on the application on the basis of the ethical principles of the mission statement.

In the case of projects with a dual-use character, it must be clearly described which peaceful and civil purposes the project is sufficient and what military effects it could have. It must be ensured that projects are mainly of a civilian nature, direct military research must not take place. An exclusion of employees based on their ethical and moral beliefs may not take place.

In addition, it must be ensured that all results are generally accessible in an appropriate form (e.g. via open access publication obligation).

Dual-use projects must have a peace-building character. For this purpose:

- peace-building measures are initiated, e.g. through joint projects with scientists from different countries with the aim of rapprochement and reconciliation. For this purpose, applicants could pay a contribution into a fund.
- scientific monitoring of dual-use research takes place, e.g. through joint projects with the *Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Center for Natural Sciences and Peace Research (ZNF)* and the *Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH)*.
- regular training on security and peace.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/pr\\_ambel.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/pr_ambel.html)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hamburg.de/resource/blob/146366/dc1f64c0be5107669e37d0e3371c4a4d/verfassung-hh-stand-04-2023-data.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://bravors.brandenburg.de/de/gesetze-212792>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.desy.de/about\\_desy/mission\\_and\\_guiding\\_principles/index\\_eng.html](https://www.desy.de/about_desy/mission_and_guiding_principles/index_eng.html)

- regular discussions and re-evaluations of dual-use research.
- in training and doctorates, an assessment of the consequences of one's own research is made, what effects result from the research results, whether the results can be applied in a peaceful and civil manner.
- in the studies, the topics of technology impact assessment / arms control / safety policy and ethics of the natural sciences are dealt with in order to assess the consequences of one's own research.
- the responsibility of the natural sciences and also of the natural scientists are emphasized, taught and lived.

The goal is to preserve DESY as a research institute with a clearly peaceful character and to position it in a political context.

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## Reformulation of mission statement

The mission statement is to refer expressly to the preamble of the Constitution<sup>11</sup>: "... to serve the peace of the world as an equal member in a united Europe" as well as to the preamble of the Hamburg Constitution<sup>12</sup> and Article 2 of the Constitution<sup>13</sup> of the State of Brandenburg.

From this we derive a clear order for peace.

We propose to formulate the mission statement as follows:

"The institute and the staff want to serve peace, peaceful coexistence and international understanding with their research. They therefore work on civil projects, direct military research does not take place.<sup>14</sup> All the results of scientific and technical research will be published in general and publicly available."

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/pr\\_ambel.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/pr_ambel.html)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hamburg.de/resource/blob/146366/dc1f64c0be5107669e37d0e3371c4a4d/verfassung-hh-stand-04-2023-data.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://bravors.brandenburg.de/de/gesetze-212792>

<sup>14</sup> Projects with dual-use character must be clearly marked as such when submitting the application, and an ethics committee decides on their approval, in accordance with the ethical principles of the mission statement.