



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*

Initial situation

The mission statement of 2013 at DESY states: "Our research pursues goals that are peaceful and serve civil society."

As a result of the Government's declaration on the "Zeitenwende" in 2022 following the attack by Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine, a discussion about so-called "civil clauses" began 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 Defense Minister, Boris Pistorius declared that Russia is a threat "ultimately also for NATO" and demanded that the country must be capable of war by 2029.

Demands for an increase of the military budget to 5% of GDP also come from US President Donald Trump. In 2024, Germany raised the spending for military to 2% of GDP, which is 90 billion euros. With a federal budget of 480 billion euros, this is 19%. Extrapolated, 5% of GDP would mean 47% of the federal budget.

Special debts of 500 billion euros for infrastructure were decided by the government in March 2025, expenditures "...above 1 per cent in relation to GDP" for defense spending are exempt from the "Schuldenbremse".

Scientists in the field of security policy warn against an arms race (see lecture by Prof. Michael Staack and lecture by Prof. August Pradetto at the Science4Peace@DESY seminars). In a statement from March 2025 by scientists working in the field of security policy they warn on alarmism.

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.

Research strategy at DESY

The research at DESY should to refer explicitly to the preamble of the Constitution, which states: "... to serve the peace of the world as an equal member in a united Europe."

The preamble of the Hamburg Constitution 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 location. 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 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 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.

So far, DESY has applied the mission statement of 2013, which states: "Our research pursues goals that are peaceful and serve civil society."

In order to implement this mission statement, it must be guaranteed:

- cooperation of DESY with institutes and companies that are directly involved in military projects (and wars) must not take place.
- research by external groups on mainly military projects must not take place
- direct internal military research does not take place

However, 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.

In all research projects, the institute and the applicants should and must classify whether the application has dual-use character. If this is the case, the 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 serves and it must be ensured that projects have a mainly civilian character, direct military research must not take place. An exclusion of employees due to their ethical and moral convictions must 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).

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

- peace-building measures should be 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.
- dual-use research should be complemented by additional scientific projects, 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 policy should take place
- regular discussions and re-evaluations of dual-use research should be initiated
- in training and studies, an assessment of the consequences of one's own research must be made.
- the topics of technology-impact-assessment / arms-control / security-policy and ethics of the natural sciences should be covered during the study in order to assess the consequences of one's own research.
- responsibility of the natural sciences and also of the individual scientists must be emphasized, taught and lived.

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

Reformulation of mission statement

The mission statement is to refer explicitly to the preamble of the Constitution: "... 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 and Article 2 of the Constitution of the State of Brandenburg.

From this we derive a clear mandate for peace.

We propose to formulate the mission statement as follows:

"The institute and the staff aim to serve peace, peaceful coexistence and international understanding with their research. They therefore work on civil projects, direct military research does not take place. All results of scientific and technical research are generally published and made publicly accessible."

All info under: <https://science4peacedesy.de/Events/Entries/2025/6/s4pdesy-infos-on--round-table-paper-against-military-research.html>

