

**GCRI INTERVIEW**

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**Professor Dr. Karl Ulrich Mayer  
President of the Leibniz Association****What distinguishes the Leibniz Association from all of the other non-university research organisations in Germany, such as the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft and Fraunhofer Gesellschaft?**

The Leibniz Association focuses on basic and applied research and covers the widest range of research topics. Our 86 Leibniz Institutes, which are located all over Germany, work in the humanities, education research, and the social sciences, as well as the life sciences, the natural sciences, engineering, and the environmental sciences. For instance, all major German economic policy institutes are members of the Leibniz Association. What's also special about us is the fact that apart from "classical" research institutes, the Leibniz Association comprises **eight research museums** in natural and cultural history as well as numerous **infrastructure facilities**, such as specialist libraries, collections and databases. We're the youngest of the four research organizations, uniting long-established institutes many of whom don't bear "Leibniz" in their name. That's why people are often surprised when we tell them that famous institutions such as, for example, the **Deutsches Museum in Munich** or the **Weierstrass Institute in Berlin** are members of Leibniz.

Also, typically Leibniz Institutes strive to cooperate with universities. For example, there are 156 common research groups, including joint labs, and almost 300 jointly appointed institutes' directors and professors. In 2009, we have also begun to establish **Science Campuses** that connect Leibniz Institutes and nearby universities for their mutual benefit.

**In what ways are Leibniz Institutes addressing some of the global challenges of the 21st century?**

Leibniz scientists deliver first-class research, and at the same time they are dedicated to principle of *theoria cum praxi*, i.e. science for the benefit and good of humankind. This motto was coined by Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz [1646-1716], a universal genius, after whom the Leibniz Association was aptly named. The disciplinary resourcefulness found within the Leibniz Association facilitates unique interdisciplinary collaborations. Take, for example, the **Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research**: Here, researchers from the natural and the social sciences work together on how to tackle the consequences of climate change. What's more, we fund the establishment of transdisciplinary **Leibniz**

**Networks.** These clusters generate critical masses of concerted research on pressing issues and are open to cooperating with universities, other research institutes, industry, and foreign partners. Existing Leibniz Networks tackle subject matters ranging from biodiversity, nano security, and food production to educational potentials and the role of the past in the present.

**To what extent are Leibniz Institutes interested in transatlantic collaboration and what kinds of institutions or organizations are the Leibniz Institutes considering as prospective partners?**

Nearly all of our 86 Leibniz Institutes collaborate with top American universities, research organizations, or businesses. Unsurprisingly, the United States is a key cooperation partner for us. Last year alone, 220 U.S. researchers came to work at Leibniz Institutes for more than three months' time each, a significant share of whom have received funding either directly from their Leibniz Institute or through other German funding bodies such as the DAAD or Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. We invite American researchers to get in touch directly with Leibniz Institutes of their choice and to consider a research stay at a Leibniz Institute, even if they don't speak German. Remember that at the moment, we are living through the 'golden years' of research funding in Germany. As one of the responses to the recent economic crisis, the German Federal Government and the Federal States decided in 2009 to invest 18 billion Euros into research until 2015. Subsequently, all of the Leibniz Institutes profit from an annual 5% growth in funding.

We strive to recruit a cosmopolitan group of scientists ranging from doctoral students and post-docs to established researchers. Attracting top women scientists for top positions and facilitating family-friendly research environments, especially in the early stages of academic careers, is one of our priorities. If you are interested in learning more, you are welcome to attend our [German Science Evening on September 10, 2012, at the DFG in Washington, D.C.](#) and listen to what we do at Leibniz to attract – and keep – the best and the brightest.

**Does the Leibniz Association plan to establish Leibniz Institutes abroad?**

The institutes of the Leibniz Association not only have widespread contacts with foreign research groups, but also maintain a large number of field research stations, including one for primate research in Madagascar and one for researching tropical diseases in Kenya. Expanding and strengthening our international relations is a top priority for us in 2012 and beyond. The Leibniz Association also aims at establishing Leibniz research groups abroad within the organizational framework of individual member institutes.

**What are the roles and the benefits of the Leibniz Graduate Schools?**

In 2012, we recorded 22 **Leibniz International Graduate Schools** in addition to cooperating with another 94 graduate schools, covering a total number of 833 out of all

3500 Leibniz doctoral students. Our increasingly popular Leibniz International Graduate Schools offer young scientists structured ways of embarking on a PhD and the chance to acquire key skills on the way. With this, we enable young people to better rely and foresee their academic careers and job perspectives – inside or out of academia. Many Leibniz International Graduate Schools provide full funding to their scholars. All of them cooperate with universities, increase their participants' international exposure, and support their academic networking activities. Since classes are held in English, Leibniz International Graduate Schools are a perfect way to start an academic career in Germany.

For all those who already hold a PhD, we encourage excellent post-docs to apply for a **Leibniz-DAAD research fellowship**. Each year, around 18 researchers in the early stages of their postdoctoral career receive full funding to work at a Leibniz Institute of their choice for the duration of one year. Please see [www.daad.de/leibniz](http://www.daad.de/leibniz).