

How do we network?

The VDW sees itself as a critical thinking and independent organization within the scientific system and cooperates with various NGOs and scientific institutions to include the broadest possible spectrum of knowledge in the discourse. Institutions of research and teaching need a self-critical view of scientists towards their own field, guidance for achieving an interdisciplinary discourse and opportunity to discuss complex problems of the future.

The VDW networks in the educational system, encourages and supports pupils, students and young scientists to keep the potential consequences of their actions and activities in mind and to implement ethical principles in scientific practice – responsibly and with commitment. In this sense, a central challenge for a strong science of tomorrow is to promote academic education. The most important catalyst for this is the credible role model function of recognized scientists.

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Who are we?

Scientists from different disciplines network within the Federation of German Scientist (VDW, Vereinigung Deutscher Wissenschaftler) to reflect on topics concerning the responsibility of science. In addition, the consequences of scientific research and technological development for society are reflected in annual conferences, study groups and lectures. With our scientific expertise, we actively and responsibly shape the social discourse regarding important and current topics such as peace and security, sustainability and climate change, economy, and digitalization. The VDW also supports political debates and democratic decision-making processes with scientific argumentation.

The Young VDW as an independent and interdisciplinary think tank is affiliated to the VDW (junge-vdw@vdw-ev.de).



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What are our values?

Responsibility, honesty, transparency, independence, non-partisanship and solidarity are the basic principles of the VDW. We realize these values through discourse between researchers, lecturers, and experts in a constant dialogue between science, politics, and society.

How can I support the VDW?

If you would like to become a member of the VDW, please contact our office in Berlin.

You can also support our work for responsibility and sustainability in science in the form of a donation to the following bank account:

GLS Bank Bochum
IBAN: DE45 4306 0967 4022 7875 00
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

Vi.S.d.P.: Ulrike Beisiegel, Götz Neuneck

How has the VDW developed?

The VDW was founded on October 1st in 1959 by physicists of the so-called "Göttinger 18", whom were members of the "German Physical Society", today's DPG. Starting point was the "Göttingen Declaration" from April 12th in 1957, responding to the German government's plans at that time to equip the Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) with nuclear weapons. Signatories included Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, Werner Heisenberg, Otto Hahn, Max Born and Max von Laue, who later contributed their expertise to the VDW.

The VDW responded to the need, on the one hand, to contribute directly to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of war in the nuclear age in the context of the newly founded Pugwash movement and, on the other hand, to take a stand on issues of the social responsibility of science. The "Federation of American Scientists" (FAS) and the "Society for Social Responsibility in Science" (SSRS) served as models. This was the origin of the name 'Federation of German Scientists', which has been retained since then for historical reasons, even though today's VDW is a federation of international scientists of all genders. The German group of the "Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs" (Nobel Peace Prize 1995) is still associated with the VDW today.

In 2022, the VDW was merged with the "Society for Responsibility in Science" (GVW), which was founded in 1965 as the German branch of the SSRS (USA).

Why is the VDW necessary?

Science and technology are important foundations for the development of our society and have significant consequences for our civilization and culture. To ensure that innovative developments also contribute to humanitarian progress for mankind, they have to be discussed and implemented sensibly according to the results of the discussion. The wide range of scientific expertise and the critical questioning of institutionalized science are strengths of the VDW.

The VDW aims to promote the understanding of science and its consequences in politics and society. The VDW wants to sensitize scientists to these tasks and encourage them to discover alternative proposals and activities. We draw on decades of experience in science and technology assessment, the preparation of studies on the core topics of war, peace, and climate change

How do we implement our goals?

In study groups, we bundle, deepen, and expand expertise, in particular through interdisciplinary discourse on our cross-thematic core topics. Project groups take up new, current topics and can develop into study groups.

Annual conferences, symposia, workshops, and publications as well as media work and concrete proposals and recommendations for policy makers are the ways in which we want to bring scientific findings and discourses into the public domain and to political decision makers and institutions.

For our projects, we cooperate with national and international organizations and institutions to present our topics in an appealing and target-group oriented way. Our projects are in the context of peace research and security policy, sustainability, biodiversity and climate change as well as digitalisation and science communication.

As successor to the "Society for Responsibility in Science", which merged with the VDW in 2022, the VDW awards the "Max Born Medal" for services to the responsibility of science.

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