

Publication Projects with Researchers in Russia as a Problem in Terms of Good Scientific Practice

- Statement by the "German Research Ombudsman" Committee
in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (23 March 2022) -

Question

Shortly after Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine, the "German Research Ombudsman" Committee, a body established by the German Research Foundation (DFG), was asked to assess cooperation within collaborative publication projects which involve researchers working in Germany and Russia under the lens of good scientific practice (GSP).

The starting point

The starting point for the assessment is the statement entitled "[Solidarity with partners in Ukraine - consequences for science](#)" that was published on 25 February 2022 by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. We furthermore refer to the information recently provided by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) regarding the impact of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine (<https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/ukraine/>). As always in matters related to GSP, significance also attaches to the DFG's Code of Conduct entitled "[Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice](#)". The DFG's "[Recommendations for Dealing with Security-Related Research](#)" should be considered along with the Guidelines.

Notes

The "German Research Ombudsman" Committee would like to emphasise the following in terms of good scientific practice (GSP):

(1) Both in collaborative projects which have run smoothly in the past, and in collaborations in which conflicts have arisen on GSP, researchers are now faced with the question of whether to continue with publication projects that are currently underway, or whether these should

be suspended. It also needs to be clarified how ongoing publication projects are to be addressed which involve cooperation partners working in Russia.

(2) We see two possibilities for handling manuscripts that are currently in progress in conformity with the rules of GSP: Manuscripts could be either submitted as planned, or the publication project could be temporarily suspended until the situation has changed. Which of these courses of action is justifiable must be examined on a case-by-case basis.

(3) The stage which the project in question has reached, as well as the consequences that such suspension would have for the researchers involved, must be taken into account in this context. Particular attention should be paid towards ensuring that no disadvantages are caused to early career researchers, for example if publications have to be submitted in order to successfully conclude a qualification phase. This should especially be taken into account when considering how to proceed in individual cases.

(4) Scientific contributions made by researchers working in Russia must be correctly identified in publications. This also applies to data that have been generated in Russian institutions. Omitting to mention researchers despite the fact that they have made a scientifically-relevant contribution to a research project that is described in a manuscript would not be consistent with the rules of GSP.

(5) We recommend researchers cooperating with project partners in Russia to carefully monitor the situation as it develops, and to reach a differentiated evaluation. If the decision is made to suspend a planned or ongoing project, it should be made clear to the researchers working in Russia that the joint publication project has been postponed for the time being only, and thus has not necessarily been discontinued, and that there is a desire to continue and/or complete the joint project as soon as possible.

(6) More stringent standards apply to security-related research projects ("dual use"). It is recommended that all contacts in such projects be ended immediately without the prospect of engaging in future joint (publication) projects. It will have to be examined very carefully, with regard to these projects in particular, whether research can be resumed or publication projects can be planned or continued, as the case may be.

(7) These recommendations will apply until such time as the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany, or the DFG, reassesses the situation in Ukraine with regard to scientific cooperation between Germany and Russia.