PostdocNet
Max Planck

THE 7TH POSTDOCNET

GENERAL MEETING

2026

Empowering the Next Generation

Shaping the Future of the Max Planck Postdoc Community

The annual strategic forum of the Max Planck postdoctoral community, bringing together postdoctoral researchers and representatives, the Society's leadership, institutional representatives and partners from the national and international research ecosystem to exchange ideas, build collaborations and shape the future of the postdoctoral experience.

9–11 November 2026

Harnack-Haus, Berlin, Germany

CONNECT • LEARN • ACT

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ACT I — CONNECTING THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

Day 1 (09/11/2026): Connect

How does the wider research ecosystem shape the postdoctoral experience, and how can we build it together?

The General Meeting begins by looking beyond individual institutes to understand the broader landscape of research policy, funding, collaboration and representation. The afternoon turns these perspectives into concrete ideas and initiatives through collaborative Working Group discussions.

08:30–09:00 **Welcome**
Opening remarks, introductions, objectives and programme overview

09:00–12:30 ***Connecting the Research Ecosystem***

09:00–09:30 **Shaping the Future of Research Careers in Germany**
Helena Schulte to Bühne – Head of Division W14, Academic Career Development and Training
Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR)

09:30–10:00 **Navigating European Research Opportunities** *(Online)*
Katharina Spannhake – Advisor NCP ERC & MSCA
EU Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations (KoWi)

10:00–10:30 **Building Sustainable Research Careers: An International Perspective**
Dr Mikey Creane – Chair
International Consortium of Research Staff Associations (ICoRSA)

10:30–11:00 **Break**

11:00–12:30 **Creating an Attractive Research Environment: National, European and International Perspectives** *(Panel Discussion)*
How can we create a sustainable and attractive research environment for early-career researchers?
Representatives from ICoRSA, HAPN, LPN and PostdocNet

12:30–13:30 **Lunch**

13:30–15:30 ***Finding Synergies***

13:30–14:00 **Working Group Lightning Pitches**
Achievements, priorities and opportunities for participation

14:00–15:30 ***From Ideas to Initiatives*** *(Working Group Action Labs)*
Career Development • Communications • Mental Health • Survey • Open Science (with Larissa Leiminger, MaxIT, on Open Science Ambassadors and MPG initiatives)

15:30–16:00 **Break**

16:00–18:00 ***Looking Beyond the Postdoc***

16:00–16:30 **Navigating Academic Careers**
Maike Schade (*academics*), with PostdocNet alumni **Dr Karina Pombo-Garcia (BMS)** and **Dr Sinuhé Perea (CPTS)**

16:30–17:00 **Scientific Innovation in Practice**
Dr Chen Chen-Wacker (*E-BLOT Life Science*), with PostdocNet alumni **Dr Pablo Ruiz de Olano (HSS)**, **Dr Jacob Davidson (BMS)** and **Dr Olga Koshkina (CPTS)**

17:00–18:00 **Career Paths, Innovation and Impact: Dialogue Across Academia and Beyond** *(Panel Discussion)*
How can postdocs turn their expertise into diverse careers, innovation and impact within and beyond academia?
Dr Tim Schulte (Co-founder, *BrightSync*: academia–industry collaboration and knowledge transfer), alongside representatives from academia and industry, PostdocNet alumni and current members.

18:00–19:00 **Dinner**

19:00–20:30 ***Turning Ideas into Impact*** *(Community Innovation Forum)*
Presentation and discussion of the most promising ideas emerging from the Working Group Action Labs, identifying opportunities for collaboration and defining the next steps for implementation

20:30–22:00 **Community Reception**
Informal drinks and conversation

End of Act I

Outcome: New ideas, partnerships and collaborative initiatives.

ACT II — EMPOWERING RESEARCHERS

Day 2 (10/11/2026): Learn

How can every postdoc thrive throughout their journey at the Max Planck Society?

The second day is devoted entirely to the institutional perspective. Beginning with the President's vision for the future of the Society, participants explore the programmes, services and institutional structures available to researchers throughout their careers at the Max Planck Society. The day culminates in strategic dialogue between institutional representatives and the postdoctoral community, reflecting on how we can shape the future of the postdoctoral experience together.

09:00–09:45 ***The Future of the Max Planck Society: Research Excellence, Talent and Community*** *(Online)*
Prof Dr Patrick Cramer – President of the Max Planck Society
Opening Keynote

09:45–10:00 Moderated Discussion

10:00–10:30 **Break**

10:30–11:30 ***Empowering Researchers Through Digital Services***
Dr Sandra Vengadasalam – Deputy General Manager of the Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL)
Digital services supporting researchers across the Society

11:30–12:30 ***Reporting Points at the Max Planck Society: Scope and Procedures***
Dr Julia Lutz-Seitz – Head of the Staff Unit Internal Investigations
Scope, procedures and access to institutional reporting mechanisms

12:30–12:40 ***Health Insurance and Services to the Max Planck Society***
Angelina Nowikow – Teknische Krankenkasse

12:40–13:30 **Lunch**

13:30–15:00 ***Supporting Research Careers at the Max Planck Society*** *(Online)*
Kerstin Dübner-Gee – Head of the Department of Human Resources Development and Opportunities
Researcher development programmes and strategic career support

Connecting Researchers Across the Max Planck Society
Ilka Schießler-Gäbler – Head of Unit IV b: Programmes and Networks
Programmes, networks and opportunities for collaboration

Starting Strong at the Max Planck Society: Preboarding, Welcome and Researcher Integration
Andrea Köster – Dual Career & Welcome / Human Resources Development & Opportunities
Researcher integration and talent development, Dual Career & Welcome at the Max Planck Society

15:00–15:30 **Break**

15:30–16:30 ***A Welcome Culture at the Max Planck Society*** *(Strategic Dialogue)*
How can we create a consistent and inclusive welcome experience for researchers across the Max Planck Society?
Representatives of the Administrative Headquarters, International Officers and PostdocNet

16:30–17:00 **Break**

17:00–18:00 ***Shaping the Future of the Max Planck Postdoc Community*** *(Panel Discussion)*
How can the Max Planck Society and its postdoctoral community work together to strengthen the postdoctoral experience? Representatives of the Administrative Headquarters, MPDL and PostdocNet

18:00–19:00 **Dinner**

19:00–22:00 ***Building Lasting Connections***
Informal networking and continued discussions

End of Act II

Outcome: A deeper understanding of the programmes, services and vision supporting postdoctoral researchers at the Max Planck Society.

ACT III — SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Day 3 (11/11/2026): Act

How can we transform our shared vision into lasting impact?

The final act is dedicated to leadership and action. Building on the ideas, discussions and commitments emerging throughout the meeting, participants elect the next Steering Group, define PostdocNet's strategic priorities, and commit to concrete initiatives for the coming year.

08:30–10:00	**Statutes and Bylaws Revision** Discussion and vote of the new Statutes and Bylaws
10:00–10:30	**Break**
10:30–10:45	**Leadership & Governance** Introduction to the Steering Group election procedure
10:45–11:30	**Candidate Pitches & Community Discussion** Candidates present their vision for PostdocNet, followed by Q&A
11:30–12:30	**Steering Group Elections**
12:30–13:30	**Lunch**
13:30–15:30	**PostdocNet Roadmap 2027** Drawing on the discussions and outcomes from the previous days, participants define: • Strategic priorities • Policy initiatives • Cross-WG collaborations • Community engagement • Advocacy priorities • Roadmap, responsibilities and timeline
15:30–16:00	**Closing Session – *From Vision to Action*** Reflection on the three acts of the General Meeting: I. What opportunities have we discovered? II. What support and perspectives have we gained? III. What commitments are we making? Closing remarks
16:00	**Departure**

End of Act III

Outcome: A shared roadmap for the future of PostdocNet.

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GENERAL MEETING 2026

9–11 November

ORGANISING TEAM

Ana Clemente · Miriam Kretschmer · Robert Middeke-Conlin
Angela Albi · Yuchen Bai · Mimi Cheng · Qi Ding
Ilka Schießler-Gäbler · Neele Meyer

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VENUE

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