

New Collaborative Research Centre and continued funding for two CRCs at the University of Cologne

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New Collaborative Research Centre in lymphoma and inflammation research / existing CRCs 'Predictability in Evolution' and 'Future Rural Africa' enter the next funding period

The University of Cologne has acquired a new Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) from the German Research Foundation (DFG). Two existing CRCs were extended. The new CRC 1530 is entitled 'Elucidation and targeting of pathogenic mechanisms in B cell malignancies'. It will draw on the strengths of an existing group of scientists from the fields of lymphoma and inflammation research with highly complementary skills and knowledge. The CRC will be funded with 10.9 million euros over the course of 4 years. The speaker of the new Collaborative Research Centre is the oncologist Professor Dr Michael Hallek, Director of Department I for Internal Medicine and of the Centre for Integrated Oncology.

The collaboration of the scientists focuses on synergies in the discovery of new pathomechanisms and therapeutic strategies. The aim of the consortium is to significantly improve the cure rate of patients with prognostically unfavourable B-cell neoplasms, a cancer of the lymphatic system, over the next 12 years through innovative therapies based on the understanding of mechanisms. This will be achieved by efficiently interrupting oncogenic signalling pathways of the lymphoma cell and specifically modulating the lymphoma microenvironment.

Professor Dr Michael Hallek said: 'We are very pleased. This CRC is an award for a great team of scientists from our university and our partners from Göttingen, Frankfurt, Essen, and Heidelberg. The research alliance will produce essential findings on lymphoma that will be used directly to better treat patients with this cancer.'

In addition, two other Collaborative Research Centres at the University of Cologne are entering the next funding phase:

CRC 'Predictability in Evolution':

CRC 1310 'Predictability in Evolution' addresses the question of whether and how paths and outcomes of future evolutionary processes can be predicted. The researchers are working on this question in rapidly evolving systems: microbial populations in the laboratory, viruses and immune systems, and cancer cell populations. They are developing predictive approaches for the evolution of drug resistance in pathogens and for immune responses in their hosts. Applications include the development of antibiotics, the optimization of vaccines against influenza and Sars-Cov-2, and therapies to treat HIV and cancer.

In addition to the University of Cologne, as applicant institution, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Friedrich Schiller University and the Leibniz Institute on Aging in Jena, Wageningen University (Netherlands), École Normale Supérieure Paris (France) and Instituto Gulbenkian de Ciência (Portugal) are involved. The speaker of the Collaborative Research Centre is the physicist Professor Dr Michael Lässig at the University of Cologne. 'We are very pleased about this vote. The combination of expertise in our CRC is unique in the world, and it enables a rapid transfer of new findings on evolution,' Lässig remarked on the extension of the Collaborative Research Centre.

CRC 'Future Rural Africa':

Collaborative Research Centre / Transregio (CRC-TRR) 228 'Future Rural Africa' will enter its second funding phase in 2022 for four more years with 9.5 million euros.

In CRC-TRR 228, researchers from the Universities of Cologne and Bonn, the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC) and the German Development Institute (DIE) are investigating how the future is being shaped in rural Africa. The focus is on changes in land use and socio-ecological transformation processes in rural areas of East and South Africa. CRC-TRR 228 combines expertise from the natural sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences.

'In the first funding phase, we focused on two apparently contradictory but mutually dependent processes: on the one hand, agricultural intensification and, on the other, efforts to place land areas under nature conservation. This focus will be expanded in the second funding phase to include the process of "infrastructurization". The term refers to the planning and construction of large-scale infrastructures, which is seen as a further driver of land use change and socio-ecological transformation processes in rural Africa,' said CRC spokesperson Professor Dr Michael Bollig.

CRC-TRR 228 promotes cooperation with scientists and scientific institutions in Africa. Embedded in the institutional strategy of the University of Cologne and supported by the Global South Studies Center, it strives to consolidate the Cologne/Bonn area as a leading centre of innovative research in the emerging field of future development studies and socio-ecological research in Africa.

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