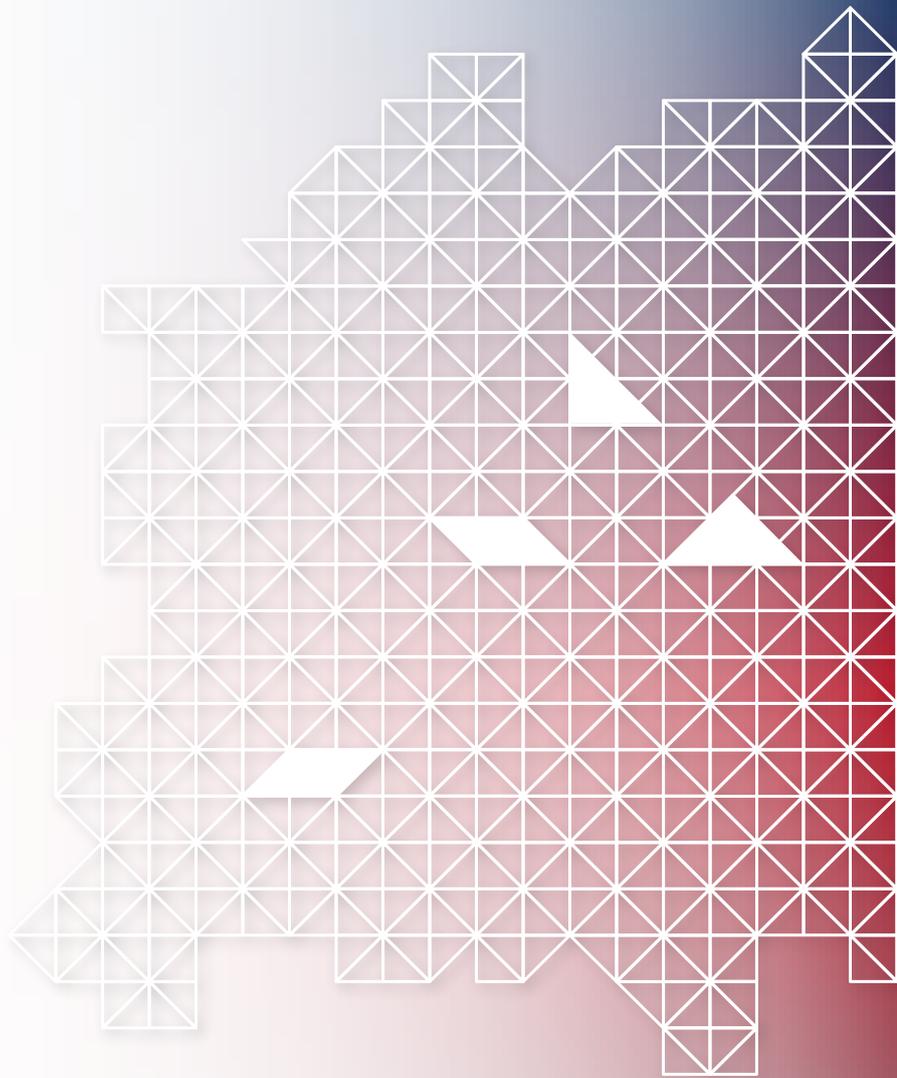


BERLIN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

**Beyond Boundaries: A Joint Agenda
for Berlin as an Open Knowledge
and Innovation Space**



BERLIN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

Beyond Boundaries: A Joint Agenda for Berlin as an Open Knowledge and Innovation Space

Excellence Strategy of the Federal and State Governments (2019–2026)

PRIVATE! FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY!

Universities of Excellence Funding Line – First self-assessment report for
the evaluation of the Berlin University Alliance, 2025

Exzellenzstrategie des Bundes und der Länder (2019–2026)

PERSÖNLICH! NUR FÜR DEN DIENSTGEBRAUCH!

Förderlinie Exzellenzuniversitäten – Erster Selbstbericht zur Evaluation der
Berlin University Alliance, 2025

Kooperationsplattform der Berlin University Alliance, KdÖR
Kleine Präsidentenstraße 1
10178 Berlin

www.berlin-university-alliance.de

BERLIN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

Beyond Boundaries: A Joint Agenda for Berlin as an Open Knowledge and Innovation Space

Freie Universität Berlin

Berlin, July 31, 2025

Prof. Dr. Günter M. Ziegler, President

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Berlin, July 31, 2025

Prof. Dr. Julia von Blumenthal, President

Technische Universität Berlin

Berlin, July 31, 2025

Prof. Dr. Geraldine Rauch, President

CONTENTS

GERMAN-LANGUAGE SUMMARY / DEUTSCHSPRACHIGE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG	8
---	----------

PART 1: PROGRESS ACHIEVED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FUNDING, RESULTS AND EFFECTS OF THE APPROVED INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY

1.a	Overall Assessment	12
1.b	Overview of the Alliance Strategy (2019-2026)	15
1.b.1	Research	16
1.b.1.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	16
1.b.1.2	Achievements and Effects	16
1.b.1.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	23
1.b.2	Teaching	24
1.b.2.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	24
1.b.2.2	Achievements and Effects	24
1.b.2.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	27
1.b.3	Transfer	28
1.b.3.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	28
1.b.3.2	Achievements and Effects	28
1.b.3.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	30
1.b.4	Research Infrastructures	32
1.b.4.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	32
1.b.4.2	Achievements and Effects	32
1.b.4.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	34
1.b.5	Early Career Support & Strategic Staff Development	35
1.b.5.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	35
1.b.5.2	Achievements and Effects	35
1.b.5.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	38



1.b.6	Equal Opportunities & Diversity	39
1.b.6.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	39
1.b.6.2	Achievements and Effects	39
1.b.6.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	43
1.b.7	Internationalization	44
1.b.7.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	44
1.b.7.2	Achievements and Effects	44
1.b.7.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	47
1.b.8	Governance	48
1.b.8.1	Strategic Goals and Measures	48
1.b.8.2	Achievements and Effects	49
1.b.8.3	Lessons Learned and Implications	51

PART 2: OUTLOOK

2.1	Common Vision and Mission	54
2.2	Setting the Research Agenda	54
2.3	Next-Phase Action Plan: Fields of Action and Cross-Cutting Themes	55
2.4	Governance and Management	62
2.5	Support from the State of Berlin	62

German-Language Summary

Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

Im Jahr 2018 haben die Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin und die Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin die Berlin University Alliance (BUA) gegründet, um komplementäre Stärken, Infrastrukturen und Expertise zur Steigerung der Forschungsrelevanz systematisch zu nutzen. Die BUA wurde gegründet, um einen langfristigen Rahmen für nachhaltige Zusammenarbeit über institutionelle Grenzen hinweg zu schaffen. Aufbauend auf der lebendigen akademischen, kulturellen und politischen Landschaft Berlins hat sich die Alliance zu einem integrierten Forschungs- und Innovationszentrum entwickelt.

Der Verbund vereint unter einer gemeinsamen Strategie für Spitzenforschung 1.700 Professuren, 104.000 Studierende, 16.000 Doktorand*innen und 11.000 akademische und künstlerische Mitarbeiter*innen. Diese Strategie umfasst fünf Hauptziele, die jeweils von den übergreifenden Themen Diversität, Gleichberechtigung, Inklusion, innovative Lehre und Lernen sowie strategische Internationalisierung untermauert sind:

- i) Förderung von Forschungsexzellenz zur Bewältigung globaler gesellschaftlicher Herausforderungen
- ii) Förderung eines auf Berlin ausgerichteten Netzwerks für Forschungs- und Wissensaustausch
- iii) Bündelung von Expertise über Forschungsqualität und -integrität
- iv) Etablierung eines integrierten Raums für Karrieren und Rekrutierung
- v) Schaffung eines berlinweiten Netzwerks von Forschungsdienstleistungen und -infrastrukturen

Die Forschungsstrategie der BUA geht weit über den Verbund hinaus und erstreckt sich auf die gesamte Berliner Forschungslandschaft. Der Fortschritt wird anhand von zwei Schlüsselindikatoren gemessen: dem Grad der internen sowie der externen Integration.

Sechs Jahre nach ihrer Gründung ist die BUA zu einem **Katalysator für Forschungsexzellenz und institutionelle Zusammenarbeit** geworden. Die Verbundpartnerinnen verfolgen eine **gemeinsame Forschungsstrategie**, haben **effektive und nachhaltige gemeinsame Strukturen** aufgebaut und eine **Forschungskultur** etabliert, die auf **Offenheit, Vielfalt und Vertrauen** basiert. Dies hat nachhaltige Wirkung in Forschung, Lehre und

Wissensaustausch entfaltet und die internationale Sichtbarkeit Berlins gesteigert.

Gemeinsam wurden mit den Schwerpunkten globale Gesundheit und sozialer Zusammenhalt Herausforderungen von globaler Bedeutung in den Mittelpunkt der Forschungsstrategie gestellt. Die kurz nach der Gründung der BUA eingetretene COVID-19-Pandemie machte den

Wert des Exzellenzverbundes in beispielloser Weise deutlich. Verbundübergreifend arbeiteten die Wissenschaftler*innen umgehend in interdisziplinären COVID-19-Projekten zusammen, um hochwirksame Antworten auf diese globale Krise zu geben. Die von der Charité geleiteten Teams veröffentlichten einige der weltweit am häufigsten zitierten COVID-19-Studien. Erkenntnisse von hoher gesellschaftlicher Relevanz wurden in den Sozialwissenschaften durch Rapid-Response-Projekte zu anti-asiatischem Rassismus, psychologischem Stress und Störungen in der städtischen Gesundheitsversorgung erzielt.

Gemeinsam wurden Synergieeffekte durch die Entwicklung von verbundweiten (Infra-) Strukturen geschaffen. Dazu gehören Hochleistungsrechner am Zuse Institut Berlin, strukturierte Karriereprogramme und strategische Partnerschaften, wie mit der University of Oxford.

Effektive Governance-Strukturen waren entscheidend für die Integration und strategische Kohärenz und haben ein hohes Maß an Vertrauen zwischen den Verbundpartnerinnengeschaffen. Die vom Land Berlin im Jahr 2020 per Gesetz eingerichtete Kooperationsplattform der BUA dient als Grundlage für gemeinsame Aktivitäten und bildet den rechtlichen Rahmen für die gemeinsame Nutzung von Ressourcen. Dies hat nachhaltige Rahmenbedingungen für die institutionelle Zusammenarbeit geschaffen und führende Wissenschaftler*innen sowohl lokal als auch international angezogen.

Gemeinsam haben wir eine neue Kultur der Zusammenarbeit aufgebaut, die sich auf das Berliner Forschungs- und Innovationsökosystem erstreckt und den Wissensaustausch mit verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Sektoren vorantreibt. Unser Geist der Zusammenarbeit

inspirierte die Gründung von Berlin Research 50 (BR50), einem eng verbundenen Netzwerk von über 50 außeruniversitären Forschungseinrichtungen.



- 01 **Gemeinsam stärkt die BUA die Wissenschaft und ihre Akteure – was selten so wichtig war wie derzeit.** Angesichts wachsender globaler Unsicherheiten und schrumpfender Ressourcen hat der Verbund die Bedeutung von struktureller Einheit, strategischer Fokussierung und langfristigem Denken bewiesen. In Zeiten globaler politischer Umwälzungen und zunehmender Bedrohungen der demokratischen Freiheit müssen
- 10 wir nun noch engere strategische Beziehungen knüpfen, unseren Austausch vertiefen und unseren Auftrag schärfen, um unser Potenzial zur Stärkung der demokratischen Resilienz voll auszuschöpfen.

1

**PROGRESS
ACHIEVED**

1.a

Overall Assessment

In 2018, Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin joined forces to establish the Berlin University Alliance (BUA). Our shared vision was to leverage complementary strengths, infrastructure, and expertise to increase research performance and relevance. BUA was more than a joint initiative; it was designed to create a long-term enabling framework for sustainable collaboration beyond boundaries. Building upon Berlin's vibrant academic, cultural, and political landscape, the Alliance has grown into an integrated research and innovation hub. BUA brings together 1,700 professors, 104,000 students, 16,000 doctoral researchers, and 11,000 academic and artistic staff members under a shared strategy for research excellence. This strategy has focused on five Objectives underpinned by the Cross-Cutting Themes Diversity and Gender Equality, Teaching and Learning, and Internationalization (see section 1.b and fig. 1):

- i) Driving research excellence to address societal challenges of global significance
- ii) Building a Berlin-centered network for research and knowledge exchange
- iii) Pooling expertise to enhance research quality and integrity
- iv) Creating an integrated space for careers and recruitment
- v) Establishing a Berlin-wide network of research services and infrastructures

Our strategy has also extended beyond the BUA partners to engage the broader Berlin research landscape. Progress is measured through two key performance indicators: the level of internal integration within the Alliance, and the degree of external integration across Berlin.

Since 2019, BUA has become a catalyst for research excellence and institutional collaboration. The partners operate under a unified research strategy, have established sustainable joint structures, and cultivated an academic culture rooted in openness, diversity, and trust. This has led to significant advancements in research, teaching and learning, and knowledge transfer, while strengthening Berlin's prominence on the global academic stage.

Together, we have pursued a joint research agenda to address societal challenges of global importance, with a focus on Global Health and Social Cohesion. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly highlighted the value of BUA, as the partners swiftly collaborated on interdisciplinary projects to respond to the crisis. Charité-led teams published highly cited studies, and we developed a pan-European health system database used by the World Health Organization and the European Commission. We also applied our expertise globally, modeling pandemic dynamics in Ghana to inform interventions in low-resource contexts. In the social sciences, rapid-response projects explored issues like anti-Asian racism and urban care disruptions, yielding insights with broad societal relevance. Furthermore, the sociopolitical *Cluster of Excellence Contestations of the Liberal Script* at FU Berlin has recently been extended for a further funding phase, addressing global challenges of democratic resilience.

Together, we have developed joint (infra) structures to implement our mission and leverage our complementary expertise. These include high-performance computing facilities at the Zuse Institute Berlin, structured career programs for researchers at all stages, and a *Joint Strategic Partnership* with the *University of Oxford*. Effective governance has been essential for integration and strategic coherence, fostering unprecedented trust and collaboration between institutions. In 2020, the State of Berlin established a dedicated legal entity for the Alliance – the *Collaboration Platform*, providing a legal framework for joint activities and sharing resources. This has created solid and efficient frameworks for institutional cooperation, attracting talent and experts to BUA institutions both locally and internationally.

Together, we have fostered a new culture of collaboration that extends throughout the Alliance and into Berlin's greater research and innovation ecosystem. Our spirit of collaboration has inspired the creation of Berlin Research 50 (BR50), a network of over 50 non-university research institutes across Berlin that is strongly interlinked with the BUA partners through joint professorships.

Together, we enhance the strategic capacity of the academic community – a capability that has never been more crucial than in the present moment. In a time of shrinking resources and global uncertainties, the Berlin University Alliance has demonstrated the power of unity, strategic focus, and long-term thinking.



01 While the process of cooperation and internal transformation continues, we have taken significant first steps. As global political challenges and threats to democratic freedom intensify, we will continue to deepen our collaboration, sharpen our mission, and fully embrace our potential to strengthen democratic resilience.



1.b

Overview of the Alliance Strategy (2019–2026)

To pursue our vision for an integrated research environment, the Alliance strategy comprised 24 measures to achieve five Objectives underpinned by three Cross-Cutting Themes (see fig. 1).

Steering Committees for each of the eight fields have overseen the implementation of 24 measures with a combined budget of €100 million (2019–2024). About 87% of the budget was used to implement these measures, while the remaining 13% was allocated to the four

partners for flexible use, allowing each to strengthen their own structures in support of the joint BUA strategy. Additional state funding of €20 million allocated via the Einstein Foundation Berlin has been used to strengthen transdisciplinary research projects (**Focusing on Grand Challenges**), gender equality and dual career programs (**Diversity and Gender Equality**), and the **Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership (Internationalization)** (see fig. 2).

The following sections begin with an overview of BUA measures implemented followed by a summary of results and effects, and conclude with challenges and lessons learned for the future.

FIG. 1 Overview of the Alliance Strategy (2019–2026)

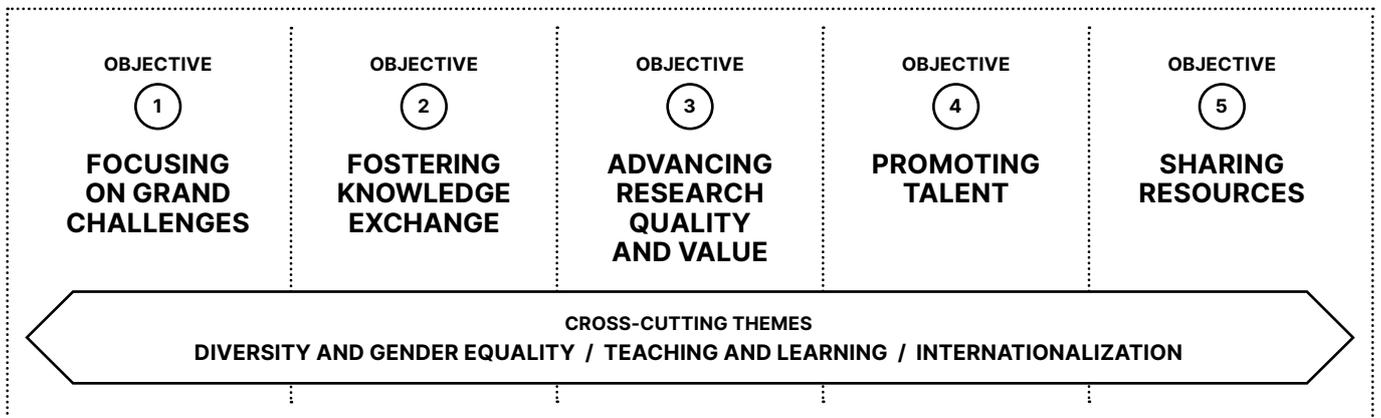
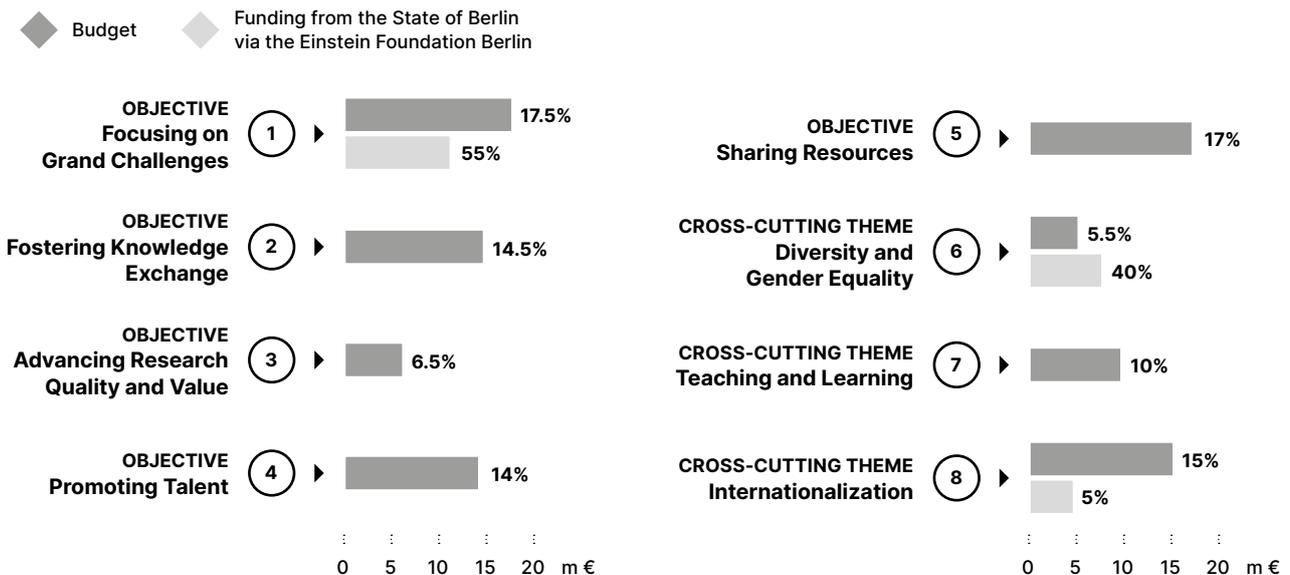


FIG. 2 Budget Distribution (2019–2024)



1.b.1

Research

1.b.1.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

The driving rationale of FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité in creating the Berlin University Alliance was to harness the enormous potential for the Berlin research landscape to address complex and large-scale societal issues of global importance (*Grand Challenges*). We committed to strengthening research collaboration, developing a strategy for joint research, enhancing research support, and shaping research culture toward openness and inclusivity.

To achieve this, we have implemented measures to cultivate research networks around *Grand Challenges* across the boundaries of disciplines and institutions, to recruit high-profile researchers to strategic Research Focal Areas (see fig. 5), and to foster a research culture grounded in the values of research quality and integrity.

Figures 3 and 4 show our strategic plans for the Objectives **Focusing on Grand Challenges** and **Advancing Research Quality and Value**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase.

1.b.1.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of research are:

- **Increase in research performance and prestigious third-party grants nationally and internationally, as manifested by double the number of ERC grant holders in 2023 compared to 2019, and a 16% overall increase in third-party funding**
- **Increased research collaboration, as manifested by a 55% increase in joint publications since 2018**
- **A research culture grounded in the values of openness, as manifested by a 25% increase in the share of open access publications since 2018**

FIG. 3 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Objective Focusing on Grand Challenges (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.1.0 Office for Grand Challenge Initiatives	Central service unit to administratively coordinate GCIs; supports internal and external networking to acquire external funding and consolidate successful research projects.	Increasing the sustainability of GCI platforms, structures, and themes; setting agendas.	
M.1.1 Exploration Projects	Serve project development within a GCI and provide flexible funds (seed funding) for up to three years.	Initiating GCI projects and networks; supporting inter- and transdisciplinary approaches; enabling cross-institutional collaboration; involving non-university researchers.	
M.1.2 Einstein Research Units	New program of the Einstein Foundation Berlin to fund cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary research units advancing GCIs.	Increasing the sustainability of GCI projects, structurally anchoring GCI projects and networks within the Alliance, developing novel inter- and transdisciplinary research foci.	
M.1.3 Einstein Strategic Professorships	Funding by the Einstein Foundation Berlin to support appointments of strategic importance in the Alliance.	Supporting recruitment of high-profile researchers; driving inter- and transdisciplinary research of the Alliance.	

01 These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on transforming research culture and on research strategy development.

Intensified collaboration over recent years has gone hand-in-hand with shared strategic development based on a strong governance structure (see section 1.b.8). With our measures in the area of research, we have strengthened performance, collaboration, and research value and integrity not just overall, but specifically in our Research Focal Areas¹ – twelve areas carried by individual outstanding researchers, key publications, and collaborative research projects, including the five Clusters of Excellence (see fig. 5 and Data Annex, tab. 11). Through our **Grand Challenge Initiatives** (see fig. 7), we have provided seed funding in specific Research Focal Areas to drive collaboration across the Alliance and beyond.

Increased Research Performance

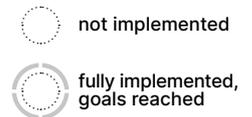
As of 2024, Berlin has become the most successful region in Germany for acquiring third-party funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG), and has taken a clear lead over Munich in securing the highest funding volumes from the DFG and Federal Government combined – a strong testament to the excellence of our research landscape². BUA researchers secured €716 million in DFG funding from 2020 to 2022 – an increase of 8.5% compared

60 to the previous period 2017–2019. FU Berlin leads Germany-wide for acquiring funding for the humanities, HU Berlin for the social and behavioral sciences, TU Berlin for mathematics, AI and specific engineering, and Charité for medicine/health from the DFG (see fig. 6). We are among the top four universities for DFG-funded research consortia (see Data Annex, tab. 10), with a record 34 Collaborative Research Centres in 2022.

70 We have also increased our acquisition of EU funding considerably – a desideratum that we committed to in 2019. We have increased EU funding revenues by an average of 20% annually (see Data Annex, tab. 2.1), doubled the number of Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe projects in which we are the coordinating institution, and more than doubled the number of ERC grantees at our institutions between 2019 and 2023 (see Data Annex, tab. 10).

We have demonstrably increased research performance in the area of Global Health, having established this field as a Research Focal Area (see fig. 5), and launched the **Grand Challenge Initiative Global Health** as a key instrument to test innovative forms of interdisciplinary collaboration beyond traditional third-party funding models. Five **Grand Challenge Initiatives** have brought together over 600 researchers in nearly 90 transdisciplinary projects with 130 non-academic partners, crossing boundaries between disciplines, institutions, and networks. They have also generated around 650 publications, a strong

FIG. 4 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Objective Advancing Research Quality and Value (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.3.0 Center for Open and Responsible Research (CORE)	Coordinates Implementation process for value-based research governance.	Fostering research quality and regaining trust in science.	
M.3.1 Research and Reflection on Research Quality (R3Q)	Provides a nucleus for meta-research.	Developing evidence-based incentives and parameters based on meta-research.	
M.3.2 Berlin Open X Initiative	Develops and supports research openness.	Establishing a culture for and promoting value of open science.	

¹ Originally "Core Research Areas" in the initial Universities of Excellence funding call by the German Science and Humanities Council 2018. In the extension call, the term "Research Focal Areas" is used. For clarity, we use the updated term throughout this report.

² German Research Foundation Funding Atlas. (2024) German Research Foundation: <https://foerderatlas.dfg.de> (Accessed 15 July 2025). [German only]

01 public presence through events and media contributions, and around €50 million in third-party funding – doubling the return on BUA funds invested. The **Grand Challenge Initiative Global Health** exemplifies the diverse formats developed particularly well (see fig. 7).

60 Through the **Grand Challenge Initiative Global Health**, we have funded six cutting-edge projects with a total volume of approximately €7.2 million, providing a substantial foundation for innovative, cross-institutional research. Complementing this, our joint **Berlin Center for Global Engagement** has supported international,

FIG. 5 The Alliance's Research Focal Areas (2025)

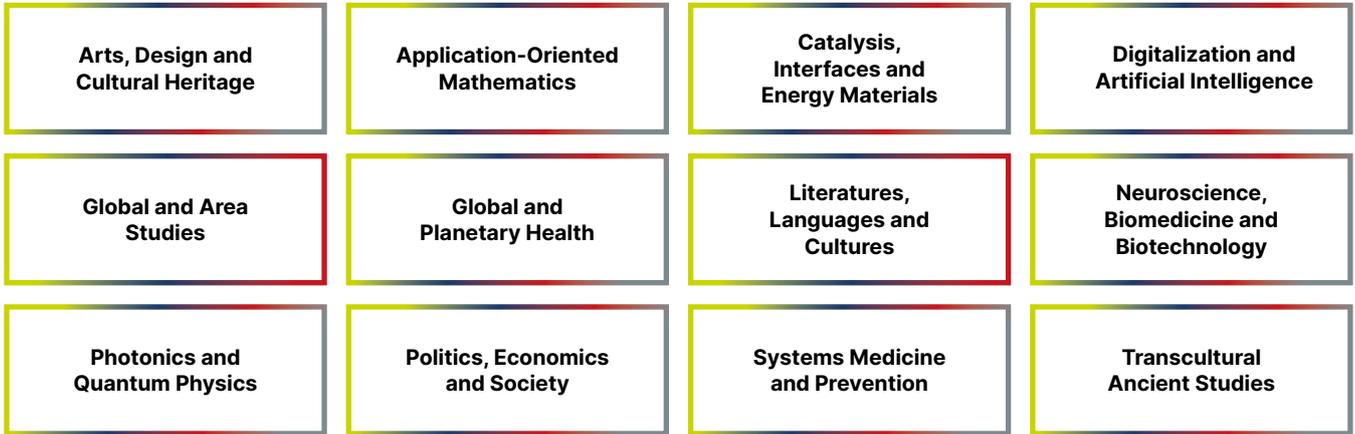
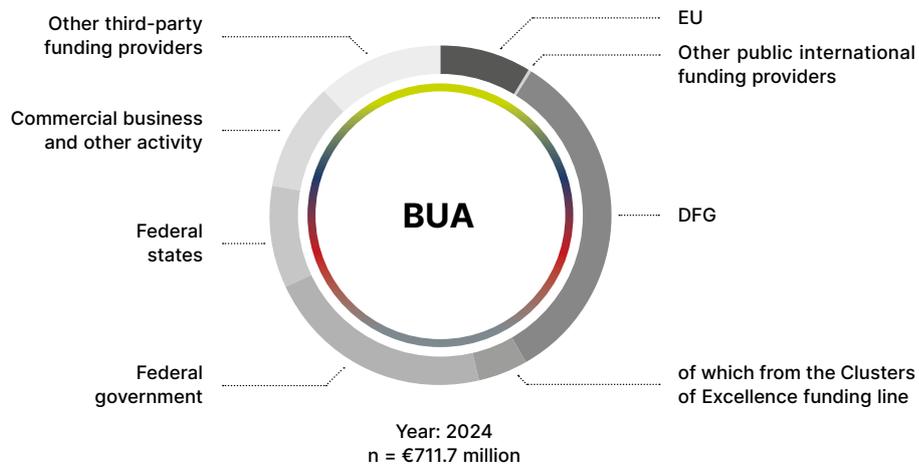
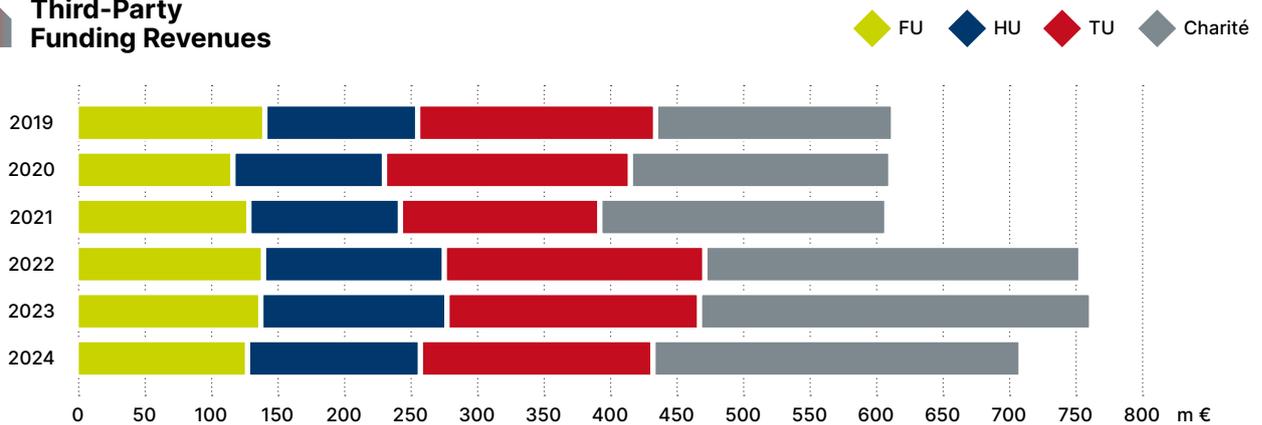


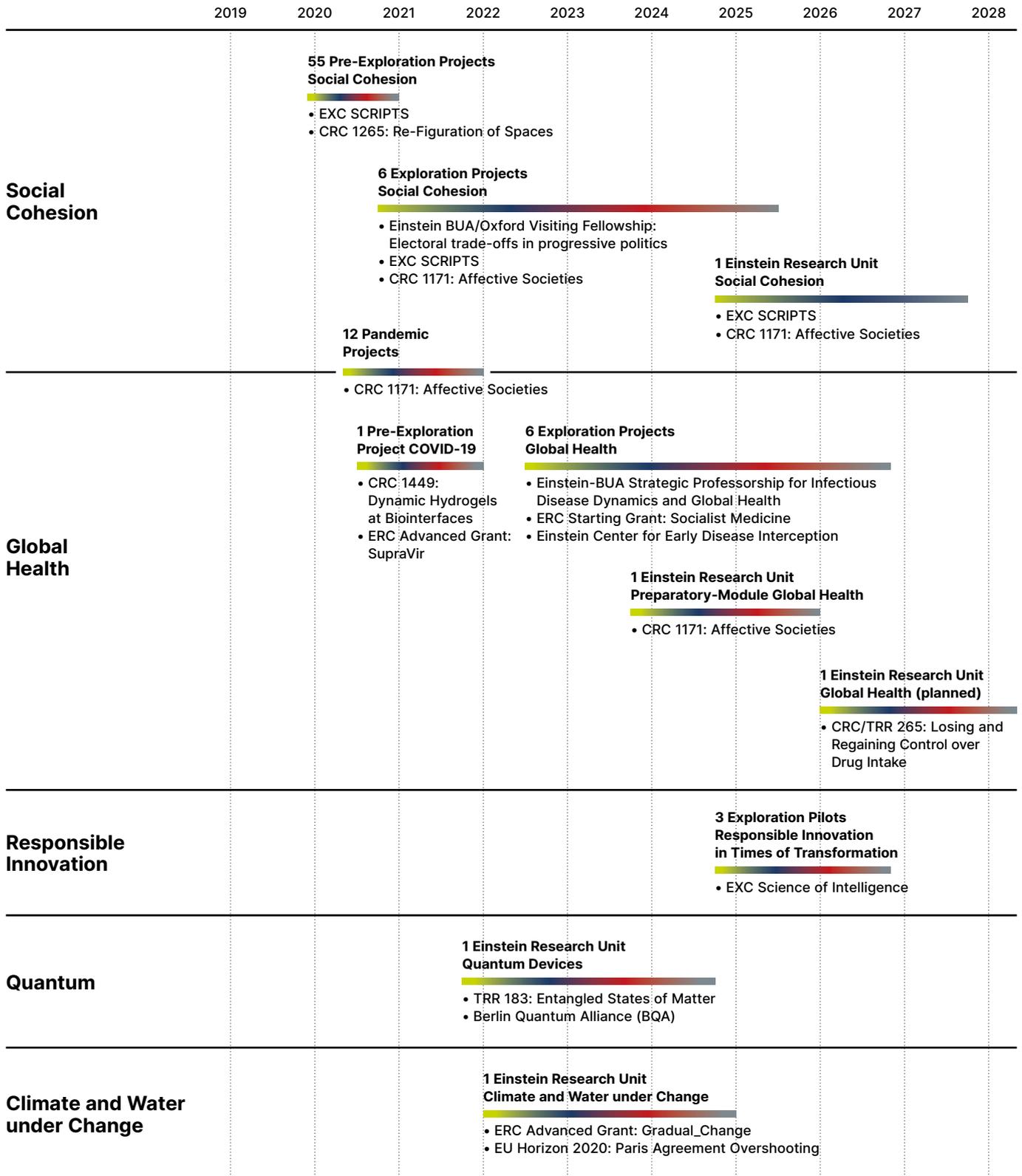
FIG. 6 Third-Party Funding Revenues



01 transdisciplinary Global Health research through dedicated Signature Projects (see section 1.b.7). Since 2024, BUA also offers a joint *PhD program in Global Health* at Charité

60 hosted by the BUA partners, the University of Potsdam, Robert-Koch-Institute and the Berlin Social Science Center. Moreover, we have appointed a strategic *Joint Berlin Professor*

FIG. 7 The Five Grand Challenge Initiatives



EXC = Clusters of Excellence | CRC = Collaborative Research Centres | TRR = CRC/Transregio | ERC = European Research Council

01 (Prof. Chiara Romagnani, Medical Immunology, Charité/FU Berlin) and a prestigious **Einstein-
BUA Strategic Professor** (Prof. Stefan Flasche, Professor for Infectious Disease Dynamics and Global Health) at Charité. We established these professorships to recruit top-tier researchers via joint appointments between the BUA partners (see section 1.b.5 and fig. 3 and 19), and we will continue to align our appointment strategies more closely in the future in order to make full use of new legal frameworks (see section 2.4).

In the area of human medicine and health sciences, we have recorded a remarkable increase in third-party funding revenues – from €162 million per year (2016–2018) to €285 million per year (2022–2024) (see Data Annex, tab. 2.2). Recent externally funded projects include the Research Training Group NatRisk-Change (FU Berlin, TU Berlin, University of Potsdam), which addresses natural hazards and risks in a changing world. The **Einstein Research Unit Climate and Water under Change** has been awarded €6 million from the Einstein Foundation Berlin to explore critical interfaces between environmental change and health, and a new **Einstein Research Unit Technologies in Global Health** is currently under review. The proposed initiative focuses on global health technologies in the fields of mental health, vaccinology, and anti-microbial resistance and their transdisciplinary development and implementation in Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana in collaboration with international partners such as the University of Ghana and the Africa Academy for Public Health.

On the international stage, the **Berlin-Nairobi Global HEART Program** jointly run by Charité and TU Berlin and three further recently acquired German-African projects on global health research by Charité further exemplify the Alliance's global engagement in capacity-building and health research partnerships. These research advancements highlight BUA's strategic focus on addressing complex global challenges through international knowledge exchange – a strength showcased by the Berlin-based World Health Summit, now a leading global health conference that draws international attention to Berlin each year.

Increased research collaboration

A defining achievement of the Berlin University Alliance is our intensification of collaborative research activity – both within the Alliance and across the wider Berlin research ecosystem. Between 2018 and 2024, joint publications among Alliance researchers have increased by 55%,

60 reflecting a clear shift toward a more collaborative research culture³. This trend is mirrored in our success with German Research Foundation-funded Collaborative Research Centres. As of July 2025, we are currently home to 34 such Centres (see Data Annex, tab. 10). Of these, 14 are collaborations between principal investigators (PIs) from at least two BUA institutions, six between PIs from three BUA institutions, and four involve PIs from all four BUA institutions.

Our Clusters of Excellence also illustrate the collaborative BUA spirit: Enhanced collaboration within the Alliance and the Berlin research ecosystem at large has led to successes in the Excellence Strategy funding line Clusters of Excellence (see fig. 8). Most of our successful proposals were joint submissions between the BUA partners and non-university research institutes, such as **MATH+** (FU, HU, TU, WIAS, ZIB – see fig. 9) and **NeuroCure** (Charité, FU, HU, BIH, DIfE, DZNE, FMP, MDC, MPUSP – see fig. 9), demonstrating the scientific and strategic advantage of Alliance-wide cooperation. Indeed, over 44% of BUA researchers now collaborate with non-university research institutes.⁴ This is testimony to a research culture that is not only collaborative, but also open – fully in line with the cultural transformation that we have been striving for.

A research culture grounded in the values of openness

As laid out in the Berlin University Alliance **Mission Statement for Open Science**, we define “Open Science” according to the values of inclusion and collaboration, transparency and accessibility, and reusability and validated progress⁵. Through our **Center for Open and Responsible Research**, we developed the Mission Statement in order to strengthen open research practices and research integrity. To enhance the understanding and application of open science practices, our **Center for Open and Responsible Research** has also funded a series of complementary Research Quality and Open-Science Initiatives, and a series of follow-up Implementation Projects.

110 An initiative to promote an open research culture has been the establishment of an in-house Diamond Open Access publishers – **Berlin Universities Publishing** – which provides further key shared research infrastructure. **Berlin Universities Publishing** is operated by the university libraries of FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité. It has published 16 academic books, three publication series, and two multi-volume monographs to date.

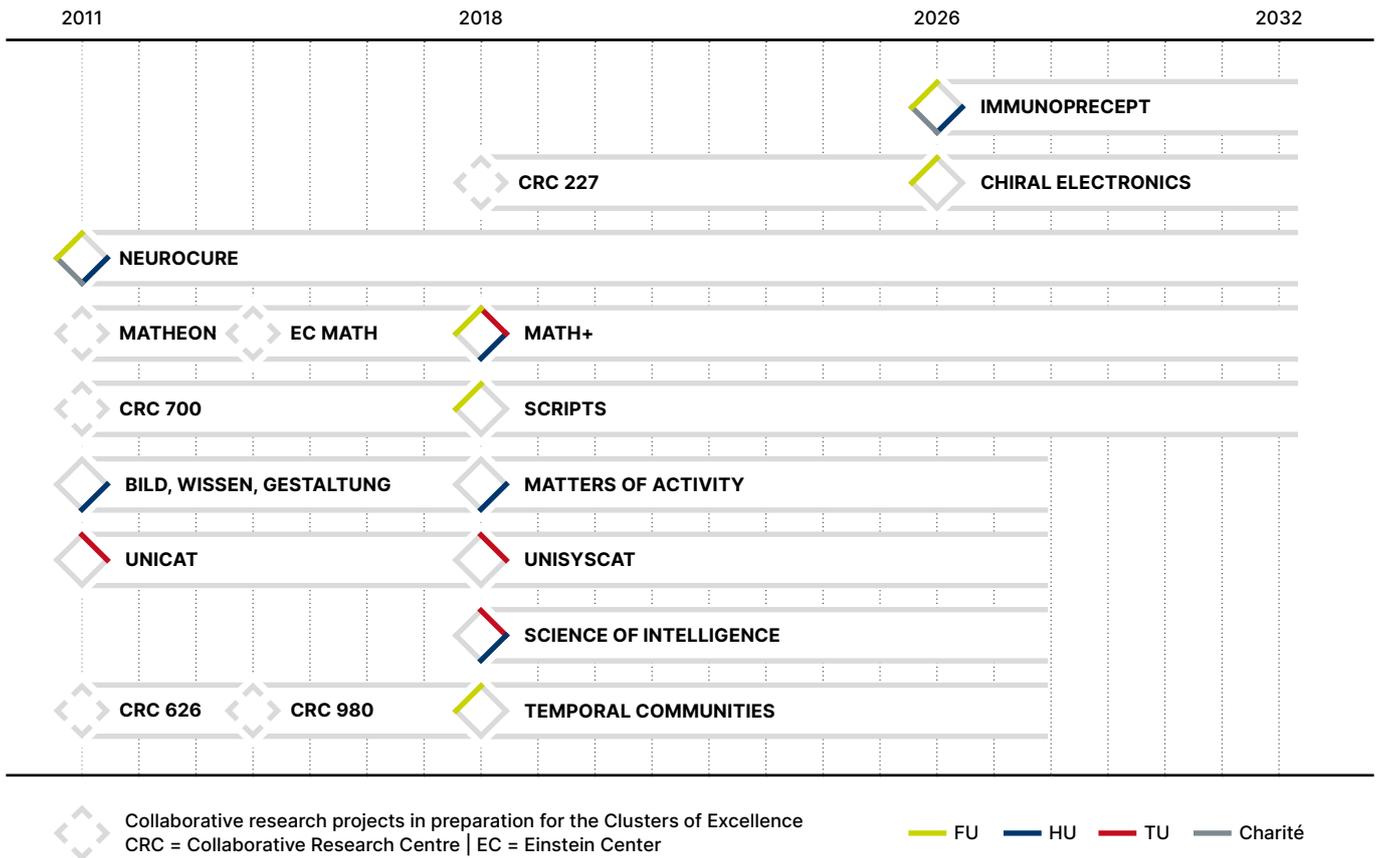
³ DZHW. (2025) Bibliometric Monitoring Study for the Berlin University Alliance, p.22 [Not published].

⁴ Ambrasat, J.; Lütke, D.; Yankova, Y. (2024) Research Cultures and Research Quality in the Berlin Research Area, Fig. 67: <https://doi.org/10.18452/31165> (Accessed 15 July 2025).

⁵ The Mission Statement for Open Science at the Berlin University Alliance. (n.d.) Berlin University Alliance: <https://www.berlin-university-alliance.de/en/commitments/research-quality/open-science/Leitbild-fuer-OS/index.html> (Accessed 15 July 2025).



FIG. 8 Clusters of Excellence (2011–2032)



It also publishes six journals on an ongoing basis, including the Open Gender Journal and the Global Media Journal – German Edition, and will soon be adding more to its repertoire. **Berlin Universities Publishing** has secured funding from the German Research Foundation as part of a national service point for Diamond Open Access, also showcasing the success of our strategy to create a shared and cost-efficient infrastructure through targeted seed funding (see section 1.b.4).

Finally, we have launched the **Berlin Science Survey**⁶ – a trend study that monitors and assesses changes over time in research culture, and informs policy and decision-making. The **Berlin Science Survey** confirms progress in transforming research culture in general, and open science practices in particular. It shows an increased adoption of open practices since 2022, particularly in sharing data (2022: 33%; 2024: 47%), code and materials (2022: 35%; 2024: 44%), and open peer review (2022: 25%; 2024: 30%)⁷, alongside a 25% increase in the share of open access publications since 2018 (see fig. 10)⁸.

The **Berlin Science Survey** has identified institutional challenges to fostering a positive research culture. The findings confirm that inadequate assessment systems in science are seen as a major obstacle for the integrity and quality of research. In response, the BUA partners participate in the EU reform initiative **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** as an alliance. Through **CoARA**, we have pledged to identify opportunities for reform together and have positioned ourselves as a strategic alliance in EU policy circles, contributing to EU working groups and workshops via our Center for Open and Responsible Research. To this end, we have also set up a dedicated **Research Group: Matters of Research Assessment and its Implementation** – to analyze our research assessment practices and develop recommendations for refining professorial recruitment, for tenure-track promotion, and for the assessment of research alliances. The activities have spurred a positive development of the Berlin research environment, as reflected in researcher assessments in the **Berlin Science Survey** (see fig. 11).

⁶ Ambrasat, J.; Lüdtke, D.; Yankova, Y. (2024) Research Cultures and Research Quality in the Berlin Research Area: <https://doi.org/10.18452/31165> (Accessed 15 July 2025).
⁷ *ibid.*, Fig. 63.

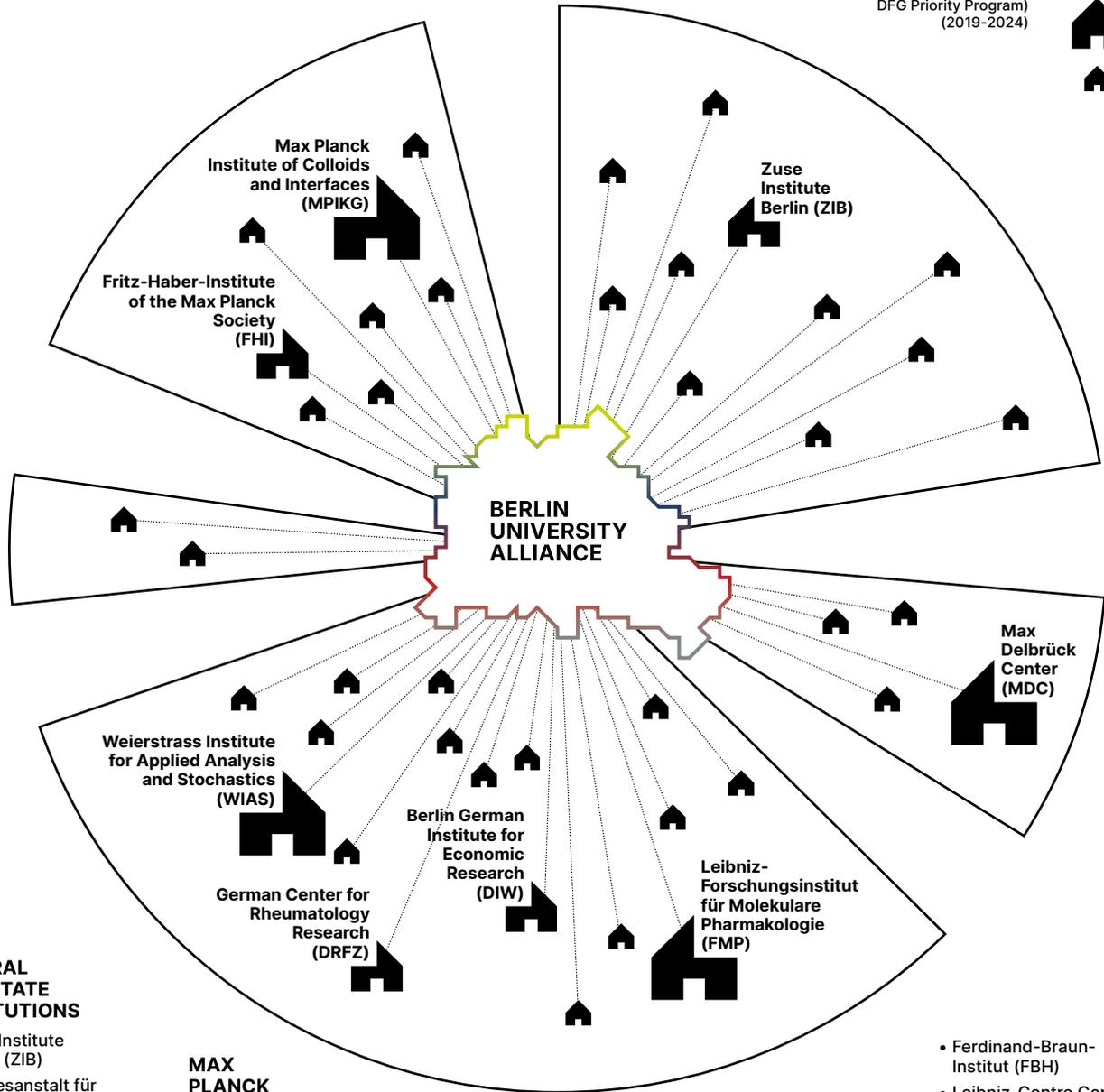
⁸ DZHW. (2025) Bibliometric Monitoring Study for the Berlin University Alliance [Not published].



FIG. 9 Regional Collaboration with Non-University Research Institutes in Large Collaborative Projects

Number of collaborations in large collaborative projects (Collaborative Research Centres, CRC/Transregio, Clusters of Excellence, Research Training Group, DFG Research Unit, DFG Priority Program) (2019-2024)

 ≥ 10
 ≥ 5
 ≥ 1



FEDERAL AND STATE INSTITUTIONS

- Zuse Institute Berlin (ZIB)
- Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung (BAM)
- Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB)
- Robert Koch Institute (RKI)
- German Aerospace Center (DLR)
- Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK)
- Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum
- German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)
- German Archaeological Institute (DAI)
- Berlin Heritage Authority
- Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg (SPSG)

MAX PLANCK SOCIETY

- Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces (MPIKG)
- Fritz-Haber-Institute of the Max Planck Society (FHI)
- Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics (MPIWG)
- Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG)
- Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology (MPIIB)
- Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens (MPUSP)
- Max Planck Institute for Human Development (MPIB)
- Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics

THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN RESEARCH CENTERS

- Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC)
- Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences (GFZ)
- Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin (HZB)
- German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE)

FRAUNHOFER-GESELLSCHAFT

- Fraunhofer Fokus
- Fraunhofer Institute for Telecommunications (HHI)

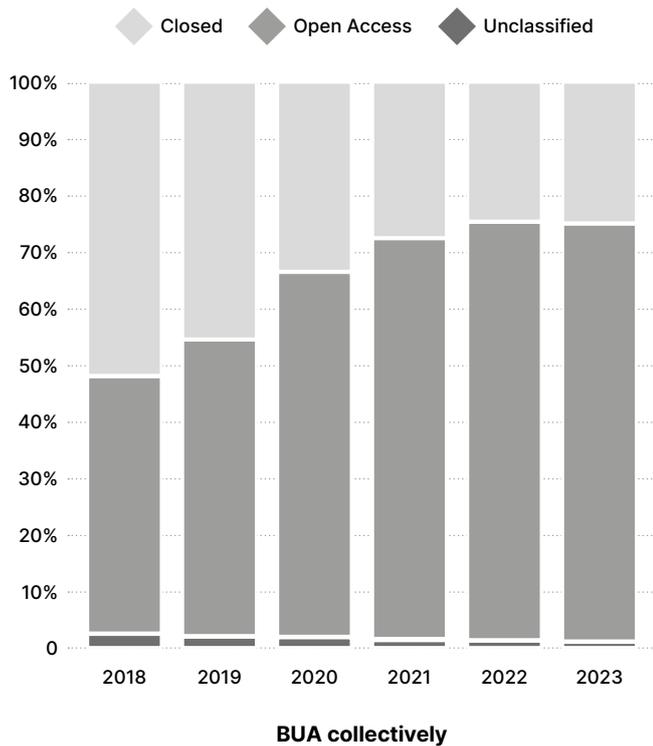
LEIBNIZ ASSOCIATION

- Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP)
- Weierstrass Institute for Applied Analysis and Stochastics (WIAS)
- German Center for Rheumatology Research (DRFZ)
- German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin)
- Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB)
- Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)
- German Institute of Human Nutrition Potsdam-Rehbruecke (DIfE)

- Ferdinand-Braun-Institut (FBH)
- Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics (ZAS)
- Max Born Institute for Nonlinear Optics and Short Pulse Spectroscopy
- Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)
- Leibniz-Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS)
- Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung (ZfL)
- Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF)
- Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO)
- Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (MfN)
- Paul-Drude-Institut für Festkörperelektronik (PDI)



FIG. 10 Percentage of Publications by Open Access Status



Source: DZHW. (2025) Bibliometric Monitoring Study for the Berlin University Alliance, p.14 [Not published]

1.b.1.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

The Berlin University Alliance has made substantial progress toward the goals it set for itself. Despite great achievements in joint research strategy development and intensifying collaboration, however, further headway is needed to realize an integrated research ecosystem that spans the broader Berlin ecosystem and supports sustainable, transdisciplinary research centers with societal relevance beyond the Clusters of Excellence.

In the next funding phase, it will be essential to expand strategic research cooperation beyond the Alliance and focus on the Berlin knowledge and innovation ecosystem as a whole. To this end, we have prepared a **Memorandum of Understanding with Berlin Research 50**, marking a decisive step toward an open Berlin-wide research environment. Together, we have identified strategic **Profile Lines** for Berlin's future research agenda, which will guide research collaboration and external funding acquisition beyond the boundaries of BUA (see section 2.2).

60 While seed-funding for **Einstein Research Units** under the **Grand Challenge Initiatives** has produced promising collaborations, these have proven too small to reliably generate major third-party funding. In the next funding phase, we will thus refine our research funding instruments toward targeted support for emerging collaborative research networks with a clear trajectory toward competitive external funding. These new seed-funding lines will support the development of our new Berlin-wide research strategy, increasing strategic coherence and scalability. Our most recent **Grand Challenge Initiative: Responsible Innovation in Times of Transition** serves as a pilot for this new model. Despite advancements in innovation potential, research quality, cooperation, and open science, researchers see a need for improved material/institutional framework conditions (see fig. 11).

FIG. 11 Researcher Assessment of the Berlin Research Area

How would you rate the Berlin Research Area with regard to the Following Aspects?



Source: Ambrasat, J.; Lüdtkke, D.; Yankova, Y. (2024) Research Cultures and Research Quality in the Berlin Research Area: <https://doi.org/10.18452/31165> (Accessed 15 July 2025)

110 In the future, we will thus invest substantially in joint research infrastructure (see section 2.3), and upgrade cross-institutional privileges and rights for researchers working on Alliance projects, including access to infrastructure, funding mechanisms, and support services (see sections 1.b.8 and 2.4). This marks a significant innovation in fostering cross-institutional engagement and the unique BUA open knowledge space.

1.b.2

Teaching

1.b.2.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

In 2018, joint courses and programs for bachelor's and master's students across FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité were challenging to implement and limited in number, student engagement in ongoing research was not an integral component of university culture across all disciplines, and the potential of joint efforts in digital innovation in teaching and learning remained untapped. In order to change this, the Berlin University Alliance developed strategic plans for the Cross-Cutting Theme **Teaching and Learning**. These plans and their implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase are shown in figure 12.

1.b.2.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of teaching and learning are:

- **Enriching the learning experience with interdisciplinary research programs and involving 2,500 highly research-minded students in ongoing research projects**
- **Expanding available joint taught courses that address BUA's strategic goals – such as Global Health, Entrepreneurship in Green Chemistry, and Gender & Diversity**
- **Enhancing digital innovation through 1,200 digital examination places for on-site examinations that took on special significance in times of societal crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine**

These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on creating effective joint (infra)structures.

Richer student learning experiences through stronger research-orientation

In order to strengthen links between research and teaching, the Berlin University Alliance has established the **Student Research Opportunities Program^x**. The program enables bachelor's and master's students to participate in top-level research projects across the Alliance, including Clusters of Excellence and Collaborative Research Centres. Two formats have put students at the heart of research: **X-Student Research Groups** connect students with early-career researchers to contribute to doctoral and postdoctoral research projects.

X-Tutorials provide talented budding researchers with a scholarship to lead their own research projects mentored by an established researcher – the first student research scholarship in Germany. Participants are invited to share their work and practice their science communication skills at BUA's annual **Berlin Conference for Student Research**. The program is credit-bearing and open to all students of the Alliance institutions. The impact of the **Student Research Opportunities Program^x** has been remarkable. Almost 700 proposals were submitted, leading to 270 projects and providing over 2,500 students with the opportunity to engage in ongoing research to date. This includes projects connected to the **Cluster of Excellence MATH+** and the Collaborative Research Centre **Intervening Arts**. A key appeal of the program lies in its cross-institutional and transdisciplinary opportunities: One third of students have crossed institutional boundaries to join projects beyond their home university, and around one third to involve external research institutes and non-academic partners from the Berlin research ecosystem – for example the exhibition project **Non-normative relationships wanted!** in cooperation with the Humboldt Forum.

Program evaluations show that 97% of the participating students surveyed report high motivation, while 80% note greater research self-efficacy, and interest in research (see fig. 13). The overwhelmingly positive response to the **Student Research and Opportunities Program^x** has helped to spread the value of research-based learning throughout the BUA institutions, strengthening the partners' individual strategies to more closely integrate research and teaching.

New opportunities for cross-institutional teaching and learning

Leveraging their complementary strengths, the BUA partners have expanded joint teaching and learning opportunities that address common strategic goals. As of 2024, BUA students can choose from 113 **BUA Modules** such as Gender & Diversity, Global Health, and Digitalization that address societal challenges in an interdisciplinary setting. With specific **BUA Certificate Programs**, we have also created innovative interdisciplinary tracks that allow students to place an individual focus on areas like Ethics, Gender and Diversity in Science and Technology Studies, and Entrepreneurship in Green Chemistry. All courses are fully credited across institutions, giving students greater flexibility and a richer academic experience.



FIG. 12 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Cross-Cutting Theme Teaching and Learning (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.7.1 Berlin University Alliance Joint Courses and Programs	Extension and mutual opening of existing joint courses and development of new joint programs (master's degrees, digital teaching, knowledge exchange, research quality).	Allowing students maximum benefit from the Alliance's activities; training students in highly relevant fields of research.	
M.7.2 Berlin Student Research Opportunities Program* (StuROP*)	A joint program based on existing research-based courses at the partner institutions; development of new joint courses with a focus on research crossing disciplinary boundaries (e.g., concerning Grand Challenges).	Strengthening the link between top-level research and teaching; preparing students for research careers.	

20 We have overcome major administrative hurdles to provide access to high-quality joint courses by streamlining related administrative processes, including recognition of credits across institutional boundaries. A particular achievement concerns the opening of Charité taught courses to auditing students despite major regulatory restrictions, which is true testimony to BUA's commitment to deeper collaboration and broader access to expertise.

30 To recognize outstanding cross-institutional study programs, we have also established a **recognition award for BUA Joint Degree Programs** that draw on expertise from several BUA institutions (e.g., M.Sc. Polymer Science) and embody our strategic mission: tackling major societal challenges through research-driven, international, and interdisciplinary education. We will be launching a new **Model Joint Degree Program Medical Data Science (B.Sc.)** in 2026 as a blueprint for future **BUA Joint Degrees**. Drawing on the complementary strengths of all four partners, the model interdisciplinary program was selected based on a competitive call for proposals. It will serve to inspire further joint degree programs by providing orientation for development, implementation, and administration.

Digital innovation in teaching and learning

50 Launched in 2020, the **E-Assessment Alliance** constitutes the Berlin University Alliance's first joint endeavor in the digitalization of teaching and learning. Through the **E-Assessment Alliance**, we have built a robust framework to develop and implement electronic assessments, addressing technical, pedagogical, and legal aspects while optimizing shared infrastructure. We now provide over 1,200 examination places together.

80 The efficient and productive infrastructure has facilitated over 460,000 assessments across 6,600 sessions, and enabled large-scale remote examinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also diversified our portfolio of digital assessment scenarios to include face-to-face exams, supervised remote exams, and term papers, thus making an important contribution to the didactic development of future-proof forms of assessment. Based on joint standards, all BUA partners now offer digital assessment systems that enjoy high acceptance: 71% of surveyed lecturers find them useful, and over 80% are satisfied with the services provided.

90 The added value of the **E-Assessment Alliance** also lies in the synergetic use and demand-driven development of shared infrastructure. It has been a strong partner for the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, enabling more than 4,000 Ukrainian refugee students to take their university entrance exams from Berlin since 2022 (see fig. 14). It has also made a significant contribution to the BUA partners' other endeavors in the field of digitalization and teaching, including, for example, the Hybrid Teaching Network or the joint project **IMPACT**, in which FU Berlin and HU Berlin are working on AI-based assessment with Trusted Learning Analytics.

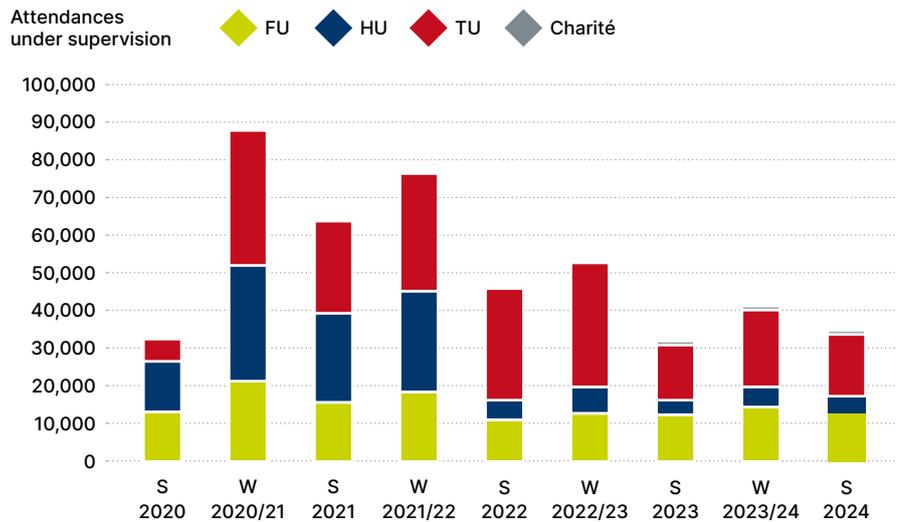
110 Furthermore, the **E-Assessment Alliance** has promoted interdisciplinary exchange on digital assessment through publications and symposia across Germany. For example, in cooperation with Campus Innovation (Multimedia Kontor Hamburg), it organized nationwide conferences on topics including *Designing digital exams efficiently and fairly*, and *Digital distance testing – between equal opportunities and data protection*.

FIG. 13 Key Features of the Student Research Opportunities Program^x

KEY FEATURE	FACTS AND FIGURES		EXAMPLES	
Transdisciplinarity and collaboration in Berlin	108 projects addressing societal challenges		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy in crisis: Parliaments and the Coronavirus Pandemic • The Social Dimension of the Climate Crisis: Poverty, Wealth, and Sustainable Transformation 	
	71 projects addressing urban policy issues in Berlin		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrolingualism in Berlin: Decline or Change of Mother Tongue • Misuse of Living Space in the Growing City 	
	15 projects cooperating with non-university research institutes in Berlin		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling Hydrogen in the Future Energy System (in collaboration with the German Institute for Economic Research) • The Physics of Water-Rich Asteroids (in collaboration with the German Aerospace Center) 	
	60 projects cooperating with non-academic partners in Berlin (e.g., associations, NGOs, memorials, museums)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminist Feeling: A Literary-Sociological Research Project in cooperation with the Feminist Archive FFBIZ • German as a Second Language and Language Education in the Learning School (in cooperation with three community schools in Berlin) 	
Variety of output arising from student research	94 scientific contributions (e.g., papers, conference contributions, symposia)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper: Cai, N., & Bideau, P. (2024). Active Event Alignment for Monocular Distance Estimation. arXiv preprint arXiv:2410.22280. • Symposium: (re)searching urbanity in 2022 and 2023 in the initiative of several X-Tutorials and other student research projects. 	
	85 contributions for the general public (e.g., exhibitions, brochures, websites, video/audio pieces, artwork)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop-up exhibition at the Humboldt Forum Non-normative relationships wanted! • Audiowalk: (Gender) Storytelling. An audio walk from Ostbahnhof to Landsberger Allee on the gender history of Friedrichshain during the Nazi era. 	
Feedback and skill development	Students	97% report high motivation to learn	EXEMPLARY STUDENT VOICE: "I have learned so much in this course, more than in any other before, and I have learned that I am also suited for research and science, which I would never have thought before."	
		85% have increased interest in research		
	Lecturers	95% have improved their teaching skills related to research-based learning	77% have increased research self-efficacy	EXEMPLARY LECTURER VOICE: "The students brought new and interesting approaches to my research, and their motivation was contagious."
		89% have improved skills in leading research groups	81% gained new perspectives on their own research	



FIG. 14 Total Numbers of Digital Examinations supported by the E-Assessment Alliance



The number of examinations during the winter term (W) is higher than the number of examinations during the summer term (S), in principle.

20 1.b.2.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

The **Student Research Opportunities Program^x** has proven that interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research on societal issues has a high appeal for students and is effective for student skill development. At the same time, we strive to increase the number of students who benefit from the program, and to expand opportunities for students to engage with high-profile research projects, e.g., Clusters of Excellence and Collaborative Research Centres. Consequently, we will expand our portfolio of research-based learning formats in the future in close cooperation with our leading research centers, as well as with other stakeholders from across the integrated Berlin knowledge and innovation environment (see section 2.3).

40 In the initial funding proposal, we envisaged a broad mutual opening of our study programs. Despite making progress here and overcoming administrative hurdles, the number of joint courses and programs established remains below our expectations. **Joint modules and degree programs** initiated in the first funding phase will serve as models for establishing and implementing further programs in the coming years.

50 With the **E-Assessment Alliance**, we have demonstrated our ability to develop effective, user-oriented digital infrastructure for teaching and learning. Building on this success, we will now significantly expand and diversify the use of joint innovative digital tools and teaching methods, focusing in particular on artificial intelligence, inclusiveness, and the advancement of digital teaching skills (see section 2.3).

1.b.3

Transfer

1.b.3.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

In 2018, FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité had begun to expand the way we understood “knowledge transfer” away from a mono-directional mindset. We committed to driving multidirectional knowledge exchange with multiple sectors through formats to support transdisciplinary research collaboration. Figure 15 shows the Berlin University Alliance’s strategic plans for the Objective **Fostering Knowledge Exchange**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase.

1.b.3.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of knowledge transfer are:

- **Fostering wide-reaching public awareness of research findings through new forms of science communication, co-creation and exchange formats like the current Water Knowledge program – reaching 25 million contacts**
- **Adding value to research by supporting researchers to engage with partners from other sectors, such as the Federal Foreign Office, reaching over 7,000 participants through formats to promote transdisciplinary research**
- **Driving collaboration to valorize knowledge within the Berlin innovation space, ultimately culminating in UNITE – a BUA-led innovation and startup alliance of over 40 Berlin-Brandenburg partners from science, industry, and society**

These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on transforming research culture toward open, inter-sectoral knowledge exchange.

Fostering wide-reaching public awareness of research findings

The BUA partners have established regular large-scale exchange formats to promote transparency, trust, and mutual understanding between science and society. We have presented key research results to the Berlin public in a wide-reaching communication campaign that presented Berlin as Germany’s **OPEN LAB – for the great transformations of our time**.

60 Focusing on our Clusters of Excellence and Grand Challenges, the campaign encompassed popular **Open Space** events at appealing locations throughout Berlin, and an extensive poster campaign that has reached 25 million viewing contacts to date. In total, we have reached over 10,000 people through our participative knowledge exchange events.

70 We have carried out **science communication activities** for our Clusters of Excellence and **Grand Challenge Initiatives** in collaboration with major players from the cultural and media sectors. We have utilized high-impact platforms like the Berlin Science Week, the international Falling Walls Conference, and the Table Forum Grand Challenges – which serves as a precursor to the **BUA Grand Challenge Conference** in March 2026. A key structure for embedding our activities in Berlin’s vibrant cultural scene has been the Humboldt Lab. Our inaugural exhibition at the Humboldt Lab – **After Nature** – presented research from our Clusters of Excellence and attracted over 315,000 people.

The new project **WaterKnowledge** marks the next stage in our development of knowledge exchange. It encompasses the exhibition **OnWater** in the Humboldt Lab, and the **Einstein Research Unit Climate and Water under Change**. **WaterKnowledge** crosses boundaries to exemplify a multidirectional and transdisciplinary approach to research, engaging all four BUA partners and a wide range of academic and non-academic perspectives – including stakeholders such as the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

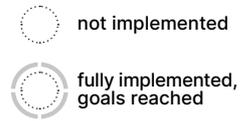
In six **Experimental Science Communication Labs**, researchers engaged with over 18,000 members of the public and collaborated with over 75 non-academic partners in dedicated public engagement projects. From the **Cluster of Excellence MATH+**, for example, the **Schule@DecisionTheatreLab** brought together scientists and school classes to explore applied mathematics and decision-making in a fun and interactive format.

Adding value to research by harnessing the opportunities of Berlin for knowledge exchange

110 The BUA partners have taken important steps to more systematically harness the unique opportunities of the capital as a testing ground for new exchange formats. In the policy arena, we have established ourselves as a trusted source of evidence-based advice. In total, we have engaged nearly 200 stakeholders in long-term, high-profile policy collaborations.



FIG. 15 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Objective Fostering Knowledge Exchange (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.2.0 Expertise and Knowledge Exchange Office	Platform for policymaking and external services; one-stop office for inquiries from the public.	Increasing knowledge exchange activities in all disciplines.	
M.2.1 Science Communication	A triad of innovative Measures focusing on (1) interactive events, (2) new media, and (3) professional communication training for researchers.	Creating public awareness of academic research, professionalizing science communication.	
M.2.2 Research Forums later renamed as "BUA Laboratory for Transdisciplinary Research (TD-Lab)"	Transdisciplinary working groups consisting of researchers and experts from non-academic contexts who jointly explore a thematic field related to top-level research, e.g., within Grand Challenge Initiatives.	Framing transdisciplinary collaboration; adding value to research.	

30 Joint events with the German Federal Foreign Office have brought researchers and policymakers together to address pressing global issues such as the climate–peace–security nexus, and have helped to institutionalize science-policy exchange.

40 Furthermore, we have developed a central structure to support participatory and transdisciplinary research. The **Laboratory for Transdisciplinary Research (TD-Lab)** has supported researchers to generate impact by engaging with societal partners. It has designed collaborative formats and offered training courses, third-party funding guidance, funding for transdisciplinary work packages, and evaluation tools that enable researchers to compare and apply different knowledge exchange approaches. The **TD-Lab** has expanded researchers' methodological toolkits and improved their ability to engage societal partners effectively. 98% of respondents reported that they had acquired new skills and knowledge through the **TD-Lab**⁹. It has also specifically supported **Grand Challenge Initiative** projects to develop a multidirectional approach. The **Solidarity Kiosk** initiative that grew out of the **Grand Challenge Initiative Social Cohesion** in collaboration with community-based nonprofit organizations is a good example of how we have generated tangible social impact for marginalized groups locally.

90 Our knowledge exchange programs have reached a total of 7,000 participants across 200 events. Our joint pursuit of a transdisciplinary research culture has also started a transformation within the individual BUA institutions, which have introduced innovations to strengthen their individual transdisciplinary competencies. For example, TU Berlin established a Science and Society Department in 2021 to develop and coordinate its knowledge exchange strategy. Furthermore, founded in 2015, the Berlin Institute of Health is home to Charité's most important form of knowledge exchange – translational medicine. Formerly an associated institute, Charité opted for its full institutional integration in 2021.

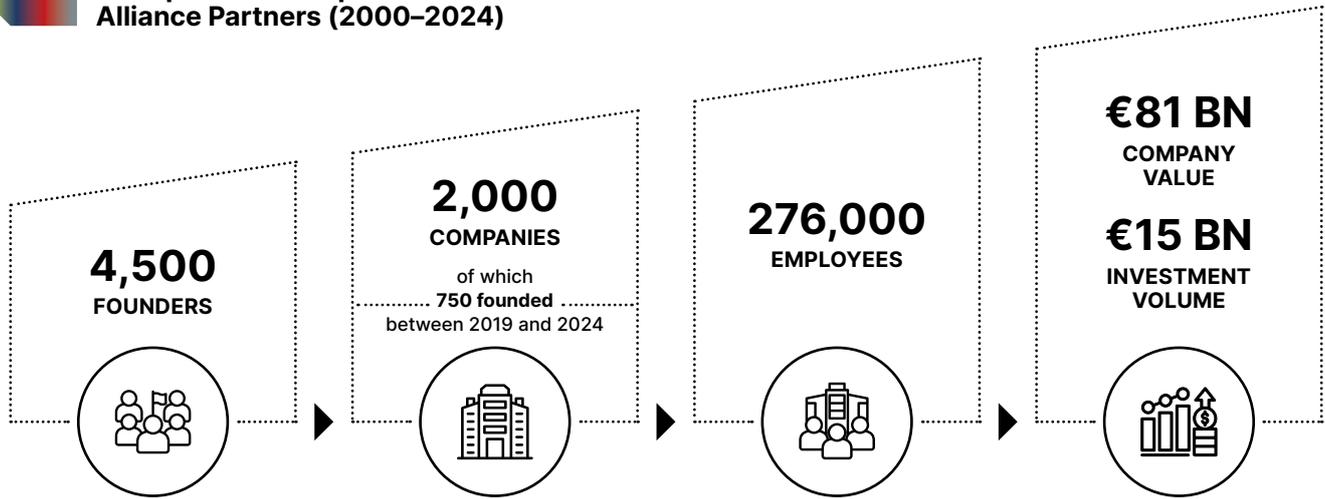
Driving collaboration in the valorization of knowledge within the Berlin innovation space

110 Berlin is widely recognized as a leading European startup ecosystem, with its universities playing a key role (see fig. 16). Since 2019, the BUA partners have improved framework conditions for founders. In 2019, the transfer and startup units of the BUA institutions joined forces to initiate **Science & Startups**, a joint startup service that brings together academia, incubators, accelerators, and investors, and offers a cross-institutional incubation process to help researchers turn their results into viable innovations.

⁹ Gaasch, N. (2024) Werkstattbericht Themenwerkstatt Urban Health. Berlin University Alliance, p. 44–46: <https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-19193> (Accessed 15 July 2025); Hahn, W. (2023) Werkstattbericht Trialogue Social Cohesion. Berlin University Alliance, p. 15–19: <https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-19190> (Accessed 15 July 2025); Kryst, M. et al. (2024)

Werkstattbericht Jugendbeteiligung für wissenschaftliches Agendasetting. Berlin University Alliance, p. 23–31: <https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-19120> (Accessed 15 July 2025); Opitz, I. and Podann, A. (2022) Spotlights on Knowledge Exchange. Berlin University Alliance: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15965> (Accessed 15 July 2025).

FIG. 16 Entrepreneurial Impact of the Alliance Partners (2000–2024)



Today, **Science & Startups** also runs the **AI Entrepreneurship Center K.I.E.Z.** and programs dedicated to quantum technologies, green chemistry, as well as 5G/6G. **K.I.E.Z.** alone has supported over 100 startups, created more than 450 jobs, and attracted €31 million in additional capital. **Science & Startups** currently ranks 19th in the Financial Times, Statista, and Sifted list of Europe’s top 150 startup hubs – 6th in Germany – making it a leading university-affiliated hub in Europe.¹⁰ Aignostics GmbH, a spin-off from Charité and TU Berlin, is a prime example of excellent knowledge transfer. Initially supported by the Berlin Institute of Health’s Digital Health Accelerator until 2020, the company has raised over €55 million in venture capital, and was featured in Newsweek’s ranking of the World’s Best Digital Health Companies 2024.¹¹

Another important step toward strengthening the valorization of excellent research results is the **innovate! lab gGmbH**. Founded in 2025 as the first subsidiary company of the **BUA Collaboration Platform**, it aims at valorizing results from cutting-edge research consortia. The **innovate! lab** will focus on green chemistry and material sciences, building on important Alliance projects such as the **Cluster of Excellence UniSysCat**. We have also introduced standardized, entrepreneur-friendly licensing terms to facilitate spin-offs in the medical life sciences. For example, Charité has developed a framework aligned with international models that has been nationally endorsed by the German Society for Knowledge and Technology Transfer, reinforcing Berlin’s role as an innovation hub.

Beyond the Alliance itself, the BUA partners have leveraged collaboration within the wider Berlin ecosystem – most notably in a successful joint bid for a national startup factory, **UNITE gGmbH**. Launched in 2025, **UNITE** will deepen collaboration and foster entrepreneurship across a network of 40 higher-education institutions and regional partners from business, industry, and civil society. This development is driven by the ideal preconditions for Berlin-Brandenburg to become a European deep-tech hotspot. Berlin’s outstanding startup support gives it a national lead in social entrepreneurship¹² and greentech¹³, and the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Biotech Innovation Index recognized Berlin as the strongest startup hub in Germany in the field of biotechnology¹⁴. Research institutions benefit from the efficient implementation and digitalization of their startup support units, from access to meaningful data to enhanced visibility. **UNITE** thus makes a strategic contribution to the further development of the regional innovation system and to Berlin’s position in the field of deeptech startups, both nationally and internationally.

1.b.3.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

The Berlin University Alliance has made important progress in advancing multidirectional exchange between science and society. Our activities have demonstrated how academic research can meaningfully engage with societal needs, particularly when supported by structured formats and institutional backing. In the next funding phase, we aim to deepen and scale this cultural transformation. At the same time, several key challenges have emerged that will shape our priorities going forward.

¹⁰ Europe’s Leading Start-Up Hubs. (2025) Financial Times: <https://rankings.ft.com/incubator-accelerator-programmes-europe/ranking/europes-leading-start-up-hubs> (Accessed 15 July 2025).
¹¹ World’s Best Digital Health Companies 2024. (n.d.) Newsweek: <https://rankings.newsweek.com/worlds-best-digital-health-companies-2024> (Accessed 15 July 2025).

¹² Deutscher Social Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2024) Bertelsmann Stiftung: <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/deutscher-social-entrepreneurship-monitor-2024> (Accessed 15 July 2025) [German only].
¹³ GreenTech Monitor 2025. (n.d.) Startup Verband: <https://startupverband.de/research/greentech-startup-monitor> (Accessed 15 July 2025) [German only].

01 One difficulty has been achieving broad reach across the spectrum of BUA's high-profile research projects. While some Clusters of Excellence have actively participated, involving all research areas has proven more difficult. Another challenge lies in diversifying collaboration partners. Many exchange formats still operate within familiar networks, engaging a limited circle of institutions and stakeholders. At the same time, current
10 societal transformations demand more inclusive, reciprocal, and innovative forms of engagement – especially with civil society, cultural institutions, and local communities.

To address these gaps, we will institutionalize support structures to expand transdisciplinary practices and diversify both the researchers and external stakeholders involved. This will include in particular targeting top-level, cutting-edge
40 research more directly through our services, and providing particular tailored support for knowledge valorization. The integration of startup services into the joint service **Science & Startups** and the founding of **UNITE** will create new momentum for research-based innovation and entrepreneurship in Berlin's dynamic ecosystem (see section 2.3).

¹⁴ De Véricourt, F. and Demir, M. (2025) Assessing Deep-Tech Innovation Hubs in Germany: The Case of Biotechnology, Bertelsmann Stiftung: <https://cluster.alawang.com/storage/esmt/web/cn/file/2025/02/e8eac941bd495342b5bbe0f24c848ba3.pdf> (Accessed 15 July 2025).

1.b.4

Research Infrastructures

1.b.4.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

Berlin provides an excellent, competitive, and diverse scientific environment. This is reflected in its multiple cutting-edge technical research facilities, scientific collections, internationally renowned museums, collections and libraries, IT infrastructure, and research communities. Nonetheless, FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité identified several key areas for integration and improvement when it set out in 2019. These included: the lack of systematic visibility of and access to available research infrastructure, multiple lines of parallel development and planning across the partners without joint strategies for acquiring, operating, and funding major research instruments, and substantial differences in administrative, operational, and financial frameworks for infrastructure across the partner institutions.

The Berlin University Alliance has thus implemented strategic measures to promote sharing resources and infrastructure across institutions by making resources and infrastructure visible, accessible, and interoperable, and to acquire more research instrumentation together. Figure 17 shows our strategic plans for the Objective **Sharing Resources**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase.

FIG. 17 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Objective Sharing Resources (2018)

MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.5.0 Shared Resources Center (SOURCE)	Coordination of resource-sharing activities, selection, and implementation processes, and evaluation of usage.	Providing point of access to shared resources and services in the Alliance.	
M.5.1 Research Infrastructure-related Community Building	Access to and joint usage of top-level research infrastructure and community-centric services.	Fostering interdisciplinary research communities around cutting-edge research infrastructure; increasing economic ability; improving competitiveness for research funds and applications for major research instrumentation in the framework of Art. 91b GG.	

Given the heterogeneity of the Berlin research environment, the implementation has spanned several sequential stages: (i) assessment of the status quo; (ii) piloting of representative projects and identification of roadblocks; (iii) large scale rollout to integrate more facilities into an integrated ecosystem; (iv) sustainable maintenance of structures with continuous evaluation and strategic adaption to account for future changes in the priorities of different research technologies (see fig. 18).

1.b.4.2 Achievements and Effects

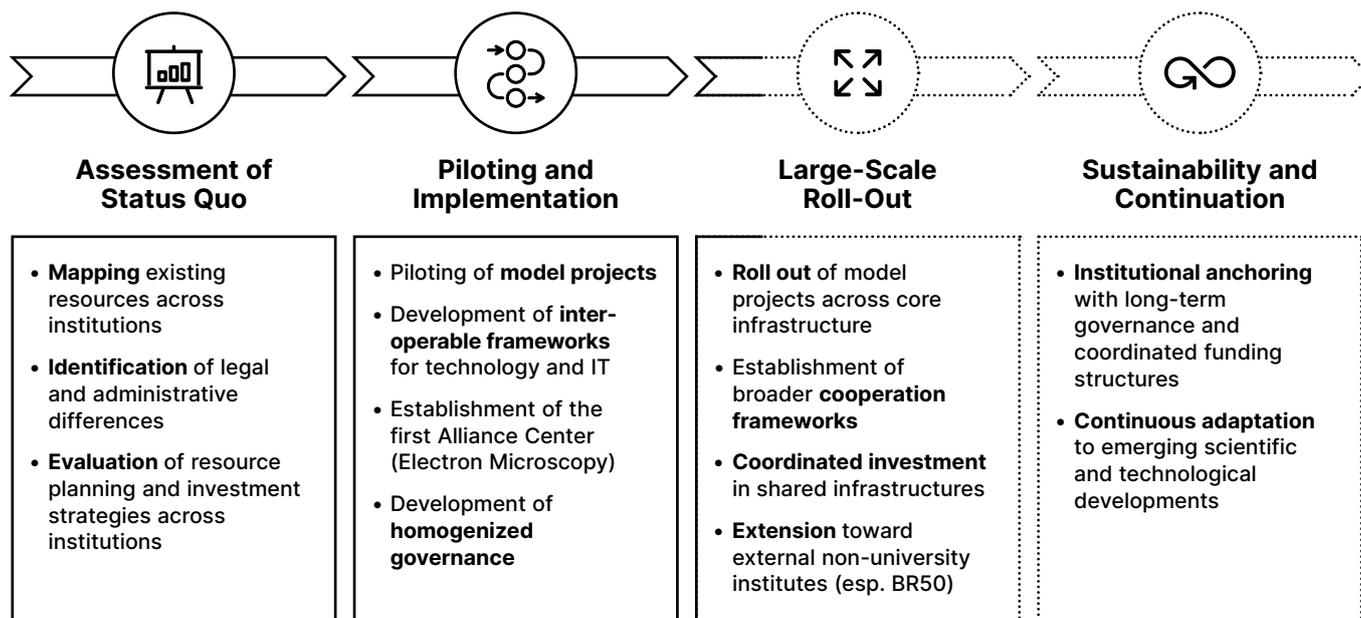
Nearing the end of the first funding phase, most projects have successfully completed assessment and piloting, and are in the phase of large-scale rollout. The main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance regarding research infrastructures are:

- **Creating a top-tier shared research infrastructure that makes over 1,500 services and instruments accessible – and where applicable, directly bookable – via the newly introduced Shared Services Catalogue and OpenRIS platforms**
- **Building the foundations for an integrated high-performance computing, data, and AI infrastructure in cooperation with the Zuse Institute Berlin, including a new regional Joint Data Center**
- **Introducing an Alliance Center model to foster interdisciplinary, technology-oriented research communities, with the pilot Alliance Center for Electron Microscopy leading to a 76% increase in cross-institutional usage of electron microscopy facilities**

 not implemented  fully implemented, goals reached

FIG. 18 Sequential Stages of Implementation Plan

— fully implemented
 in process



These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on creating effective joint (infra)structures.

Top-tier shared research infrastructure

30 The BUA partners have conducted a series of coordinated activities to enhance the cooperative research technology structure across the Alliance. We implemented two dedicated web-based platforms to make our existing research technology visible, accessible, bookable, and usable for the wider community. The newly established **Shared Services Catalogue** provides a comprehensive list of available research
 40 technology. It currently lists over 1,500 resources and has been interlinked with **OpenIRIS**, a platform for managing and streamlining access to larger-scale high-end infrastructure across all institutions.

A key challenge was to integrate and standardize the highly heterogenous administrative frameworks of our institutions and to reduce administrative barriers to achieve an interoperable
 50 research infrastructure. We are currently implementing a policy that guarantees all researchers equal access to scientific service facilities at internal rates to maximize shared use.

Through the **Digital Network for University Collections**, we have systematized and integrated over 100 university collections in Berlin, linking museums and academic institutions to create a

unique hub for knowledge resources and enhancing visibility and accessibility through a new web platform that currently documents nearly 700,000 objects. A central office supports the digitization process, strengthening BUA's expertise in areas like provenance research and interdisciplinary collaboration, and ultimately reinforcing Berlin's status as a leading center for academic collections.

90 Since 2019, we have provided coordination and assistance to consortia in applying for and implementing research facilities in the *New Research Buildings* funding line (Art. 91b GG Program of the Federal and State Governments). Facilitating these cross-institutional expert
 100 communities has strengthened cooperation in key research areas, leading to funding for three new research buildings: the **Simulated Human Facility** – a joint project between TU Berlin and Charité; the **Optobiology Center** – a collaboration between HU Berlin and Charité scheduled for completion in 2028; and the **Berlin Centre for the Biology of Health** – a joint initiative between Charité and FU Berlin expected to open in 2027 and supporting the newly funded **Cluster of Excellence ImmunoPrecept**. Notably, this BUA initiative also encouraged the State of Berlin to fund the refurbishment of remaining parts of the building to realize a collaboration between Charité and the Fraunhofer Society in the field of immunological disorders, thus establishing a strong regional inter-institutional hub in that field.

01 An integrated high-performance computing and data space

The BUA partners have undertaken important steps to align our institutional IT strategies and move toward a synergistic IT infrastructure. To achieve this, we have established a cooperation with the Zuse Institute Berlin to create the **Berlin Data Space and Computation Hub** – a joint infrastructure for high-performance computing and storage, providing researchers with an integrated BUA data space, as well as computing tools, and AI research infrastructure.

To support this collaboration, we have established common framework conditions including the use of identity management systems and an **Easy Access Portal** for high-performance computing. In addition, the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin für Materialien und Energie, Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine, Zuse Institute Berlin, and the Berlin University Alliance have collaborated to build a regionally anchored, internationally competitive data center. Furthermore, the BUA project **Collaboratively Advancing Research Data Support** has identified community needs and developed recommendations for sustainable and efficient research data services. In the future, the **Berlin Data Space and Computation Hub** will serve as the digital backbone for research data infrastructure, optimizing efficiency and accessibility for the Berlin University Alliance and Berlin Research 50 institutions (see section 2.3).

An Alliance Center model to foster interdisciplinary, technology-oriented research communities

The BUA partners are committed to ensuring that research communities throughout Berlin can work together and conduct cutting-edge research with minimal institutional barriers. To foster interdisciplinary network building, we have piloted an **Alliance Center** – a new framework to integrate expertise, infrastructure, and methodologies in specific fields from across the Alliance. The **Alliance Center for Electron Microscopy** brings together researchers from medicine, biology, materials science, physics, and chemistry, and offers training programs, events, and targeted support for early-career researchers. Since 2018, the share of cross-institutional usage of its facilities has increased by 76%, indicating that researchers are now more likely to access the infrastructure that best suits their scientific needs, regardless of institutional affiliation. The **Alliance Center for Electron Microscopy** will serve as a role model for other infrastructure-related communities in the next funding phase (see section 2.3).

60 1.b.4.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

One of the most important lessons from the first funding phase was the need for a phased and adaptive implementation strategy (see fig. 18). Early in the process, we first conducted a comprehensive assessment of the status quo, which revealed the diverse institutional starting conditions across BUA. This analysis demonstrated that a stepwise implementation process was essential, as immediate full integration was not possible given the differences in administrative, financial, and legal frameworks.

To move forward, we launched a series of pilots and identification of roadblocks. This allowed us to identify integration challenges and establish integrated operation models that achieve administrative harmonization, cost sharing, and interoperable access – establishing the necessary foundations for sustainable integration.

Building on these results, we have begun the next phase of large-scale rollout, which will take us into the next funding phase. This focuses on the Alliance-wide expansion and institutional anchoring of successful models. The **Collaboration Platform** will enable us to scale legally robust and cost-efficient administrative processes across facilities. At the same time, we will extend shared infrastructure frameworks beyond BUA boundaries via strategic partnerships with external institutions. We have already formalized this commitment in a **Memorandum of Understanding with Berlin Research 50**, which lays the foundations for shared infrastructure access and coordination across the entire Berlin knowledge and innovation space from 2027 onward.

These efforts will be guided by a commitment to sustainability and strategic adaptation, ensuring that infrastructure investments translate into lasting and scalable research capacity – both within the Alliance and across the broader Berlin research landscape.



1.b.5

Early Career Support & Strategic Staff Development

1.b.5.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

10 Since 2019, the Berlin University Alliance has systematically strengthened and integrated opportunities at FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité for professional qualification and career development. This has been achieved through an extensive portfolio of measures for our four target groups: first stage researchers¹⁵ (doctoral phase – R1), recognized researchers (postdoctoral phase – R2), established researchers (experienced researchers who can independently develop their own research, attract funding, and lead a research group – R3), and leading researchers (professors, senior principal investigators – R4). Figure 19 shows our strategic plans for the Objective **Promoting Talent**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase. BUA's **Promoting Talent** programs have all received a remarkably high satisfaction rating across all target groups, with 95% rating them as either "very good" or "good."

30 Significantly, we decided early on to redirect resources away from the planned funding schemes to support individual researchers and into structural measures in order to ensure more sustainable benefits for the target groups. The differing models of organization and governance of these structural measures illustrate well the versatile range of options for implementing joint structures that an alliance of four large institutions brings (see fig. 20). Each option entails varying levels of harmonization and integration. We have carefully assessed which option fits best to each of our measures, striking a balance between institutional diversity and the benefits of coordinated action across the Alliance.

60 1.b.5.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of early career support and strategic staff development are:

- **The Graduate Studies Support Program has become a widely utilized joint program, with over 12,000 attendances by doctoral candidates**
- **The Postdoc Academy is Berlin's first structured program for postdoctoral researchers, and has provided individual mentoring and support to nearly 1,500 postdocs**
- **The Berlin Leadership Academy has strengthened leadership competence and culture among established and leading researchers through workshops with steadily growing demand, reaching almost 700 participants in 2024**

These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on establishing joint (infra)structure and on transforming research culture.

A widely utilized joint support program for doctoral candidates

90 The 16,000 doctoral candidates across the Berlin University Alliance represent about 75% of all researchers, making them the largest target group of our early career programs (see Data Annex, tab. 7). In order to create a harmonized environment for doctoral training, we have established a joint support program for doctoral researchers. The **Graduate Studies Support Program** is an expertise-driven framework to advance skills in five core modules covering central challenges of doctoral research: (i) Starting a Doctorate, (ii) Good Science, (iii) Academic Writing and Publishing, (iv) Mental Health, and (v) Career. It brings together and utilizes the complementary expertise and programs of the individual early career support structures of FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité, enabling doctoral candidates to benefit from their specific competencies. In alignment with the BUA strategy, Charité also 110 founded a new Graduate Center in January 2025, completing BUA's set of sustainable structures for doctoral support.

An external interim evaluation of the **Graduate Studies Support Program** in 2023 called it "groundbreaking nationally". As a result of evaluator recommendations for further development, we have recently expanded its portfolio with courses dedicated to responsible

¹⁵ Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework for attracting and retaining talent in research, innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe. (2023) Official Journal of the European Union, C/2023/1640, Annex I, Table 1: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj> (Accessed 15 July 2025).

01 research practices for doctoral candidates and supervisors in cooperation with the **Center for Open and Responsible Research** (see section 1.b.1). In addition, two joint initiatives focusing on doctoral living and working conditions have helped to strengthen support systems for this target group within the BUA institutions. We now participate together in the National

60 Academics Panel Study, which uses qualitative and quantitative data to gain deeper insights into doctoral candidates' working and living conditions. Secondly, our **Berlin Leadership Academy** (see below) has surveyed supervisors across the Alliance to assess supervision culture, which has led to the development of joint monitoring standards for doctoral supervision.

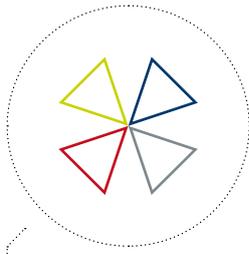
FIG. 19 Berlin University Alliance Measures and its Adjustments for the Objective Promoting Talent (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION (PLAN)	ADJUSTMENT / DEVELOPMENT	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.4.1 R1 Graduate Studies Support Program	Support program for all doctoral candidates within the Alliance.		
M.4.2 Postdoctoral Career Development			
M.4.2 R2 Career Development Awards	Funding for research stays (up to 6 months) within the Alliance or at a partner institution.	The program was replaced by structural projects after two cycles (2021-22).	
M.4.2 R3 Berlin Junior Research Groups	Junior research groups consisting of at least two Alliance partners.	The project was replaced by the Postdoc Academy with wider institutional integration.	
M.4.3 R4 Joint Berlin Professorships* <small>*addressed in section 1.b.1</small>	Joint appointments of well-funded tenure-track professorships (W2) for highly qualified researchers; internationally competitive appointments.		
M.4.4 R3-R4 Recruitment Services	Monitoring recruitment activities within the Alliance, optimizing standards for recruitment and appointment processes; developing new tools.	Not implemented, replaced by the Tenure Track Peer Mentoring Program.	
M.4.4 R4 Dual Career Funds	Dual career funds to support top appointments to professorships.	Decentralized implementation and expansion with structural measures in the area of Diversity and Gender Equality.	
M.4.5 R4 Berlin Leadership Academy	Leadership Academy for professors and senior administrative staff.		



FIG. 20 Increasing Degree of Harmonization and Institutional Integration



Decentralized Cooperation

Graduate Studies Support Program (R1)

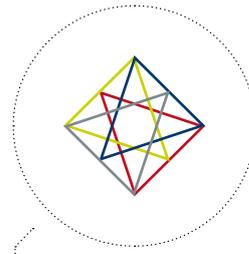
- Intensive cooperation and collaboration
- Mutual opening of curricula
- Collaboration in administration
- Creation of an additional program



Institutional Integration

Berlin Leadership Academy (R3-4)

- Expertise from the institutions is networked and merged
- Integration of existing facilities and programs
- A joint institution is woven together



Innovative Structural Development

Postdoc Academy (R2)

- Establishment of a joint Postdoc Academy at the institutional level of the Alliance
- Maximum integration of in-house expertise through jointly designed new programs and formats
- Skillful interplay between decentralized content development and centralized administration

A pioneering support structure for postdoctoral researchers

The Berlin University Alliance established the **Postdoc Academy** in 2023 as a dedicated joint structure to support postdoctoral researchers and help them to make informed career decisions.

30 The **Postdoc Academy** encompasses the **Postdoc School** with workshop and coaching programs, and an annual **Postdoc Career Fair** for perspectives on career paths beyond academia, including opportunities in industry, startups, and non-university research institutes. The Academy's **Job Shadowing Program** provides postdocs with real-world insights through observing leaders in science management and other sectors.

The **Postdocs at Risk** initiative offers specialized support for postdoctoral researchers in need. Finally, **Spot ON** is the **Postdoc Academy's** own multimedia series with podcasts, videos, and short-form content designed specifically for the target group.

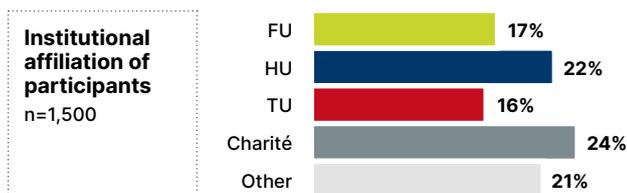
90 The **Postdoc Academy** has swiftly become a standout program in Berlin's research landscape, particularly through its growing integration with the Clusters of Excellence and the non-university research network Berlin Research 50. The **Postdoc Academy's** demand and popularity was clear from the start, with courses being fully booked shortly after going online (see fig. 21).

FIG. 21 Postdoc Academy Facts and Figures

Measures

- Postdoc School
- Job Shadowing
- Spot ON
- Postdoc Career Fair
- Online Competence Tool
- Networking Events
- Postdocs at Risk
- Serious Transfer Game
- Information Platform

Events, workshops and projects



Feedback

- 91%** overall satisfaction with the Postdoc Academy's offers
- 89%** of participants recommend the Postdoc Academy

Outcome

- 83%** feel more informed about career development
- 70%** have a changed perception of career opportunities
- 74%** gained new ideas for their next career steps

01 **Strengthened leadership competence and culture among established and leading researchers**

The BUA partners have established the *Berlin Leadership Academy* to professionalize leadership development at the highest academic and administrative management levels, strengthen a shared understanding of leadership within the BUA institutions, and to enhance networks and career development opportunities. In an environment permeated by societal, economic, and professional challenges including the abuse of power, we hold strong leadership skills to be essential.

The demand for the *Berlin Leadership Academy* has steadily increased, reaching almost 700 members of the target groups in 2024 – who have also consistently rated the programs as highly useful and recommendable. The *Berlin Leadership Academy* has run five integrated programs:

1. Leadership for Excellence
2. Leadership Program for Female Professors
3. Enhancing Leader and Follower Strengths
4. Effective and Efficient Decision-Making
5. Female Leaders in Science Management

30 Finally, we have set up a dedicated support program for R4 researchers. The *Peer-Mentoring Program for Tenure-Track Professors* complements existing support structures within the institutions and has attracted more than half of BUA tenure-track professors to date. Due to this popular demand, it will be integrated into the *Berlin Leadership Academy* program in the future.

1.b.5.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

40 The Berlin University Alliance has made significant progress toward establishing an integrated career space in Berlin during the first funding phase, strengthening the foundation for excellent research. As a result of active progress monitoring, we changed course on multiple plans in order to ensure that we achieve our strategic goals.

50 We had initially planned to combine individual fellowships at R1, R2, and R3 levels with broad structural measures. However, we soon realized that – regardless of their popularity and success in themselves – the effect of individual programs was limited. It became clear that we could not provide added value to government funding for junior research groups or established fellowship programs through further BUA funding schemes along the same lines – an important lesson for our

60 next phase Action Plan 2027 (see section 2.3). We therefore redirected our resources into structural measures intended to have broad effects for target groups, such as the now highly successful *Graduate Studies Support Program, Postdoc Academy, and Berlin Leadership Academy*.

70 The planned measure *Recruitment Services* was not implemented due to specific needs of the individual BUA institutions. We found that the BUA partners could achieve better results in the recruitment of top-tier researchers by implementing their own recruitment support structures, rather than creating new centralized ones.

In Germany, as in many other countries, academic careers continue to be marked by significant precarity, with few permanent positions available for a large number of early-career researchers – a challenge that the Alliance identified in 2018 that remains unresolved. While we have made progress by establishing supportive structures, the next step will be to concentrate on developing compatible career paths within the Berlin research and innovation ecosystem to provide more and more plannable and secure career opportunities. To support this goal, we will turn our attention to developing Berlin-wide career tracks in the future (see section 2.3).



1.b.6

Equal Opportunities & Diversity

1.b.6.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

Diversity is central to the way FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité understand excellence, and to the Berlin University Alliance’s founding ethos. The BUA partners regard diverse perspectives and equal opportunities as fundamental to research quality and integrity. We have implemented measures to shape an institutional culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (“fixing the institution”), anchor diversity as a core scholarly concern in research and teaching (“fixing the knowledge”), and come closer to achieving gender equality and diversity across all career levels and academic fields (“fixing the numbers”)¹⁶. Figure 22 shows our strategic plans for the Cross-Cutting Theme **Diversity and Gender Equality**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase.

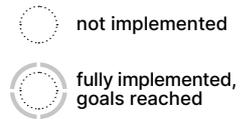
1.b.6.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of equal opportunities and diversity are:

- **Organizational transformation toward an inclusive Alliance, with a joint diversity competence center that drives new policies and measures based on cross-institutional exchange, empirical evidence, and international standards**
- **Promoting diversity studies as an integral dimension of research and teaching, as cultivated by the Audre Lorde Visiting Professorship for Intersectional Diversity Studies in collaboration with the Berlin Center for Global Engagement**
- **Continued advancements in equal opportunities, as manifested by further increases in the number of female professors in general, and a higher ratio of female to male tenure-track appointments**

These exemplary achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on transforming research culture.

FIG. 22 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Cross-Cutting Theme Diversity and Gender Equality (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.6.1 Diversity and Gender Equality Network (DiGENet)	Policy network to identify discriminatory, exclusionary structures and processes, and develop and implement effective countermeasures, supported by three new institutional metaresearch projects.	Establishing internationally competitive diversity-related standards within the Alliance; understanding institutional and systemic barriers to equal opportunities, derive and implement effective measures and policy recommendations.	
M.6.2 Professionalization of Women in Research and Teaching	Extension of the ProFiL program for female academics on the path to a full professorship.	Academic career development for women with diverse backgrounds; increasing diversity of participants; further internationalization and diversity orientation.	

¹⁶ See Schiebinger, L. (2011) "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Achieving Gendered Innovations in Science, Medicine, and Engineering." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 36(2), p. 154-167: https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/ISR_07_Schiebinger.pdf (Accessed 15 July 2025).

FIG. 23 Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Structures and Policies within the Alliance

	STRATEGY PAPERS	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES	SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES	UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAININGS
FU Berlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Statement Diversity • Diversity Action Plan* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Antidiscrimination Office*, Diversity and Antidiscrimination Commission*, Diversity Representative* • Person of Trust to address antisemitism on campus* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guideline on dealing with sexualized Harassment, Discrimination and Violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender- and Diversity-sensitive Teaching Workshops • Workshops how to recognize and combat antisemitism on campus*
HU Berlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Statement and Statutes on Antidiscrimination and Diversity* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging* • Antisemitism Officer* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutes for the Protection against Sexual Harassment, sexualized Discrimination, Violence and Stalking* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity-sensitive Teaching Workshops*; • Diversity-competent Leadership Workshops*
TU Berlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity Strategy* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and Complaints Office for a Non-Discriminatory University* • Antisemitism Officer* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive on protection against sexual discrimination, harassment and violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online training*; • Gender bias courses for members of professorial appointment committees*
Charité	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Statement Diversity • Diversity Strategy* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charité Steering Committee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* • Antisemitism Officer* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guideline for the prevention and protection against sexual harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Courses*
Alliance-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in the Berlin University Alliance* 			

*established since the founding of BUA.

Fixing the institution: organizational transformation toward an inclusive Alliance

The BUA partners have fostered structural change to create a more inclusive environment for researchers, students, and staff. The introduction of new diversity structures and policies (see fig. 23) has been supported by the **Diversity and Gender Equality Network (DiGENet)** – a unique platform for sharing diversity expertise that brings together 300 academics, administrators, and practitioners from BUA and beyond. **DiGENet** has driven evidence-based policies and measures through working groups, increased policy awareness through networking events, and has recently drafted a joint **Mission Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in the Berlin University Alliance**.

50

To align our activities with international standards and enhance the development of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, **DiGENet** has invited international experts e.g., Londa Schiebinger (Stanford University) and Kelly Hannah-Moffat (University of Toronto) to Berlin to collaborate with practitioners and leadership. It has also supported the **Clusters of Excellence SCRIPTS and NeuroCure** to develop their diversity strategies.

110

DiGENet has enabled BUA to gather extensive data on issues of inequality and discrimination to inform needs-based countermeasures. As legal frameworks prevent us from recording most diversity data, a dedicated **DiGENet** working group has developed the **Diversity Minimal Item Set**¹⁷ (see fig. 24) as a tool for routine data collection,

¹⁷ Stadler, G. et al. (2023) "Diversified innovations in the health sciences: Proposal for a Diversity Minimal Item Set (DiMIS)," *Sustainable Chemistry and Pharmacy*, 33, 101072: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scp.2023.101072> (Accessed 15 July 2025).



01 which is now widely used across the Alliance (e.g., *Berlin Science Survey*, *Postdoc Academy*, *Student Research Opportunities Program*^x), and beyond (e.g., Munich Municipal Authorities).

Furthermore, four *DiGENet Junior Research Groups* have contributed to bridging data gaps with empirical research into:

- 10 (i) Attitudes toward diversity, objectivity, and meritocracy (HU Berlin)
- (ii) Collaborative, knowledge-based design of diversity policies (TU Berlin)
- (iii) History of institutional responses to sexual harassment (FU Berlin)
- (iv) Interventions for underrepresented groups (Charité)

20 For example, the Charité junior research group study *Charité Stärken* (forthcoming) has found that a third of researchers and students surveyed suffer from a mental or chronic illness, and almost 75% of those are first-generation academics. The findings and corresponding recommendations of the research groups recently served as a starting point for dialogue with the BUA leadership at a dedicated network event.

30 The close collaboration fostered by BUA has enabled the partners to implement concerted responses to shared challenges. We have all introduced support structures for individuals affected by antisemitism, racism, and discrimination, and these also foster regular exchange on current challenges and best practices within Berlin and beyond (see fig. 23). We have also prioritized support for displaced researchers and students.

60 Building on the long-standing involvement of FU, HU, and TU Berlin in the international Scholars at Risk initiative, we have all launched support services for displaced academics and students, funded by additional resources from the State of Berlin. In addition, the BUA *Postdoc Academy* (see section 1.b.5) offers tailored career support for postdocs at risk – a group facing unique professional challenges.

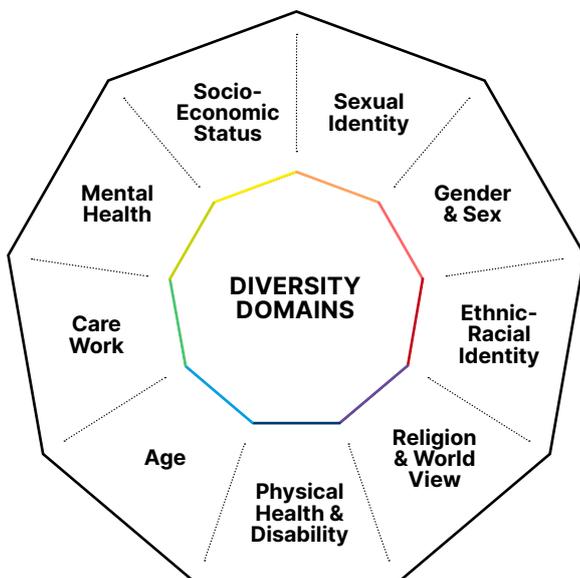
70 **Fixing the knowledge: diversity and inclusion as integral dimensions of research and teaching**

The BUA partners recognize the essential role of diversity studies for advancing research quality. Building on our leading position in gender studies in Germany, we have promoted diversity studies as a key dimension of research, knowledge exchange, and teaching. This is reflected in Berlin’s new *Einstein Center Population Diversity* (2024), and the Department of Age-Appropriate Human Machine Systems at TU Berlin (2023). Diversity research is also central to the *Grand Challenge Initiatives Social Cohesion* and *Global Health*, as reflected in projects like *Transforming Solidarities: Practices and Infrastructures in Migration Society*.

90 The *Diversity and Gender Equality Network* has fostered interdisciplinary and international collaboration. In collaboration with the *Berlin Center for Global Engagement* (see section 1.b.7), it has hosted leading *Audre Lorde Visiting Professors for Intersectional Diversity Studies*, enriching research and teaching through perspectives from the “Global South”. For example, Professor Angela Dziedzom Akorsu (University of Cape Coast, Ghana) strengthened existing research collaborations and established 100 new ones with the *Cluster of Excellence SCRIPTS*, and Professor Jaya Dantaz (Curtin University, Australia) led a workshop highlighting the connection between diversity and medicine at the World Health Summit 2024.

As part of our commitment to Open Science (see section 1.b.1), our joint repository *GenderOpen* is the first open access gender studies repository worldwide. It serves as a collaborative research infrastructure and facilitates the dissemination and long-term accessibility of gender studies scholarship. It enjoys strong user engagement, averaging 56,000 page views and almost 3,000 downloads per month in 2024. By acquiring German Research Foundation funding as a Specialized Information Service for the future, *GenderOpen* has secured its role in the academic landscape.

FIG. 24 Diversity Minimal Item Set

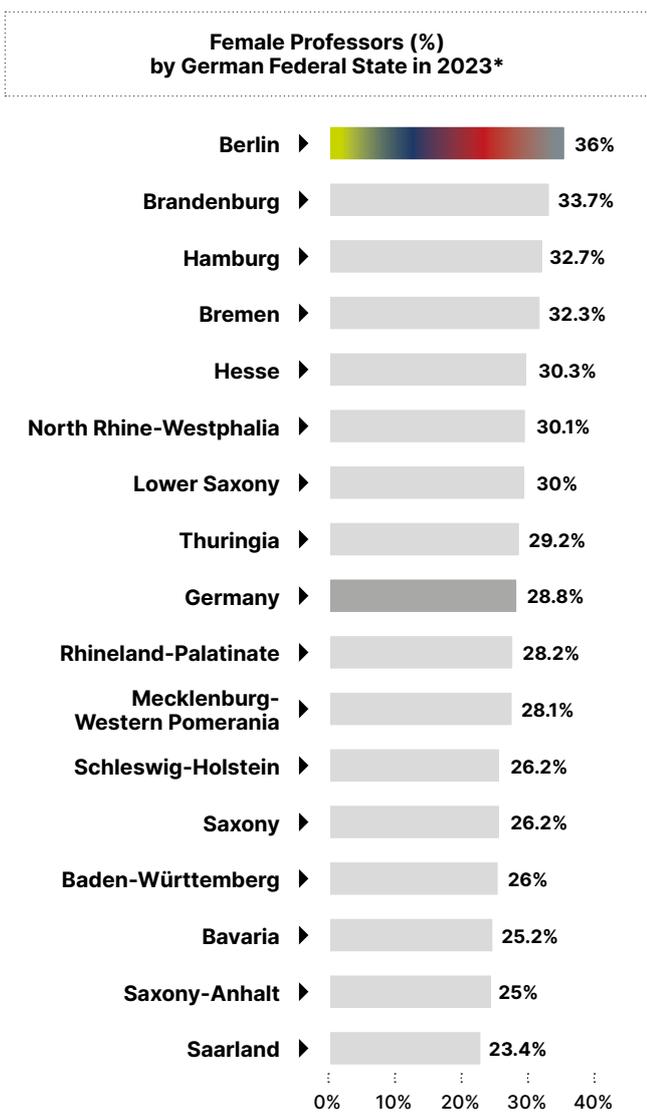


01 To incorporate interdisciplinary diversity and gender studies into teaching and learning, we have launched a joint **Certificate Program Gender & Diversity in Science and Technology Studies**. To further support young research talent on the path toward careers in diversity and gender studies, almost 20% of the 270 **Student Research Opportunities Program**^x projects (see section 1.b.2) have included diversity studies, such as the **X-Tutorial Forms of Belonging: The Making of Transnational Identities Across Afro-Asian Diasporas in Berlin**.

Fixing the numbers: joint progress toward equal opportunities

To ensure a diversity of perspectives, BUA has continued to make progress toward gender equality across all career stages and academic subjects, consolidating Berlin's leading national position¹⁸ (see fig. 25).

FIG. 25 Berlin as National Leader in Gender Equality

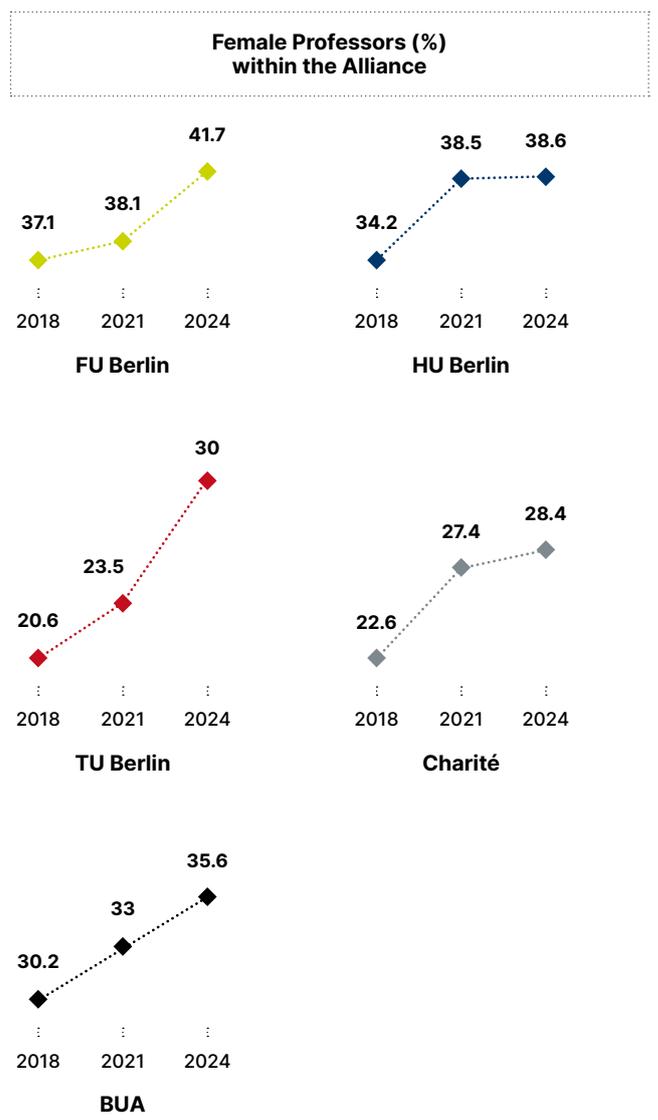


^xSource: Statistisches Bundesamt © Statista 2025 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/197898/umfrage/frauenanteil-in-der-professoren-schaft-nach-bundeslaendern/>

60 As of 2024, all four BUA partners have increased the proportion of female professors by 5–9% compared to 2018 (see fig. 26 and Data Annex, tab. 3.1). Progress is especially notable in STEM disciplines, where some faculties have nearly doubled the share of female professors since 2018 (see Data Annex, tab. 3.2). Our progress here is also reflected in professorial appointments, where women make up an average of 49% (see Data Annex, tab. 4), and in tenure-track positions, where women now account for 55% on average, and a remarkable 70% at Charité.

70 These results also show the impact of targeted, joint gender equality initiatives such as the **ProFiL Mentoring Program** for female academics on the way to a professorship. BUA has significantly expanded the program since 2019, providing 30 additional places and an English-language track for participants with an international background.

FIG. 26 BUA Moving Toward Gender Equality



¹⁸ Löther, A. (2025) Ranking of Higher Education Institutions by Gender Equality Aspects 2025. GESIS - Leibniz Institut für Sozialwissenschaften, p. 19: <https://doi.org/10.21241/ssar.103043> (Accessed 15 July 2025).



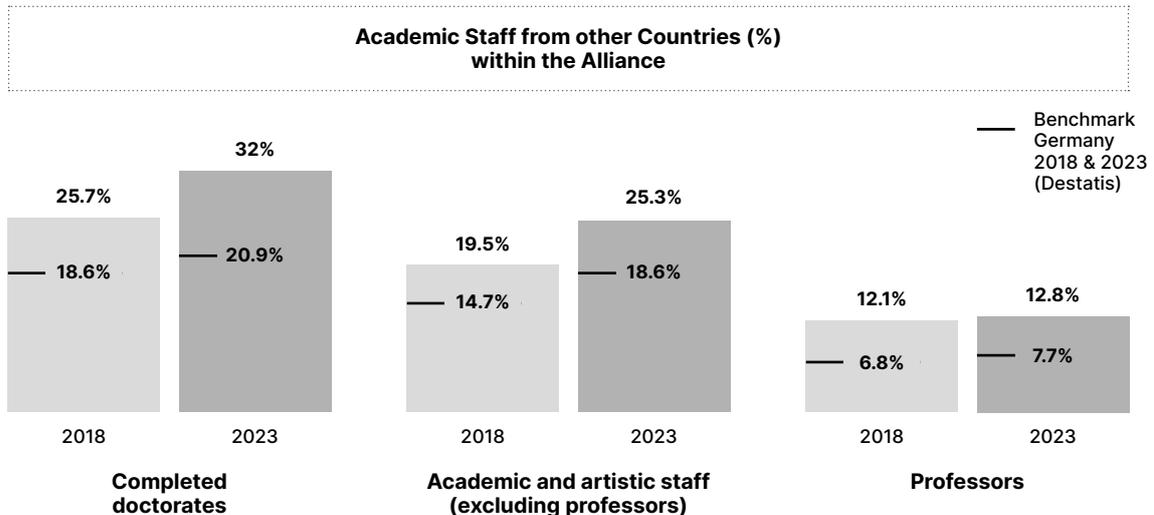
01 Participant feedback has been consistently positive. Additionally, the **Berlin Leadership Academy** has offered tailored leadership training for female professors and research managers, with participants rating the programs highly (average score 4.4 out of 5 in 2023; see section 1.b.5). FU, HU, and TU Berlin have secured competitive federal funds in the Women Professors Program 2030 (“Professorinnenprogramm 2030”) of the Federal and State Governments, which is testimony to our continued excellence in the area of equal opportunities.

The effects of our measures toward inclusive organizational transformation are also evident in increasing numbers of academics with international backgrounds at all career stages. In addition, the proportion of professors with an international background is nearly double the national average (see fig. 27 and Data Annex, tab. 3.1, 6 & 9). Furthermore, additional funding by the State of Berlin for dual career services and diversity-oriented institutional development has strengthened our efforts to attract and retain top-tier talent in strategically important research areas.

60 1.b.6.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

The Berlin University Alliance has successfully built on existing strengths in gender equality and laid the groundwork for an inclusive Alliance by cultivating a Berlin-wide community of diversity experts, collecting robust data for innovative policy development, and creating essential and effective anti-discrimination structures. Diversity studies are now well anchored in the BUA institutions via dedicated professorships and research centers. In the next funding phase, we will refine the **Diversity and Gender Equality Network** to leverage the innovative potential of this expert community in a way that more systematically cuts across all BUA fields of action (see section 2.3). We will also continue our concerted efforts to achieve gender equality when filling vacant professorships in the course of ongoing generational overturn (see Data Annex, tab. 5), continuing the **ProFiL Mentoring Program** via the new **Berlin Universities Career Academy** (see section 2.3), while also harnessing new opportunities provided by Women Professors Program 2030 funding from the Federal and State governments.

FIG. 27 Internationalization Rising on all Career Levels



1.b.7

Internationalization

1.b.7.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité have long maintained strong international profiles, pursued ambitious internationalization strategies, and attracted international scholars and students to Berlin – as reflected in their top-ranking scores for German Academic Exchange Service funding and for Alexander von Humboldt Foundation fellowships. However, in 2018, synergy potential remained underutilized. This concerned in particular the synergetic use of strategic partnerships to amplify global research impact, jointly unlocking opportunities for collaboration with emerging scientific regions in the so-called “Global South”, increasing international third-party funding revenues, and boosting the recruitment of leading international scholars.

Building on prior achievements, the Berlin University Alliance committed to creating joint structures and instruments to exploit this potential.

Our joint measures have focused on what is only possible together. They do not render our individual strategies obsolete, but complement them. Figure 28 shows our strategic plans for the Cross-Cutting Theme **Internationalization**, and the implementation status toward the end of the first funding phase.

1.b.7.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of internationalization are:

- **Establishing world-class research collaborations through strategic institutional partnerships with the University of Oxford, the National University of Singapore, and the University of Melbourne – resulting in an increase in joint output**
- **Creating a new hub of global and regional expertise on the “Global South” as a new pillar of the joint BUA internationalization strategy – broadening academic and societal engagement in times of multiple global challenges**

FIG. 28 Berlin University Alliance Measures for the Cross-Cutting Theme Internationalization (2018)



MEASURE	DESCRIPTION	GOALS	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION
M.8.1 Berlin Center for Global Engagement (BCGE)	Initiate new research connections with partners in emerging science regions, create a Berlin-wide platform for global expertise, and act as an advisory unit for the Alliance in science diplomacy.	Increasing number of research partnerships and successful projects with the Global South; enhancing the Alliance’s reputation as a hub of global and region-specific expertise, positioning the Alliance globally as a center for science diplomacy and academic freedom.	
M.8.2 Joint Partnership Strategy	A network of joint strategic partnerships with leading universities worldwide.	Providing world-class research opportunities through collaborative formats, increasing number and impact of international co-publications; supporting the strategic quality of the Alliance through benchmarking with top research institutions.	
M.8.3 Global Advancement Strategy	Engagement with the EU through a joint liaison office in Brussels and with major foundations, multilateral organizations, and public funding organizations in countries outside of Germany.	Increasing the number of successful research applications; engaging strategically with the European framework for research and learning.	

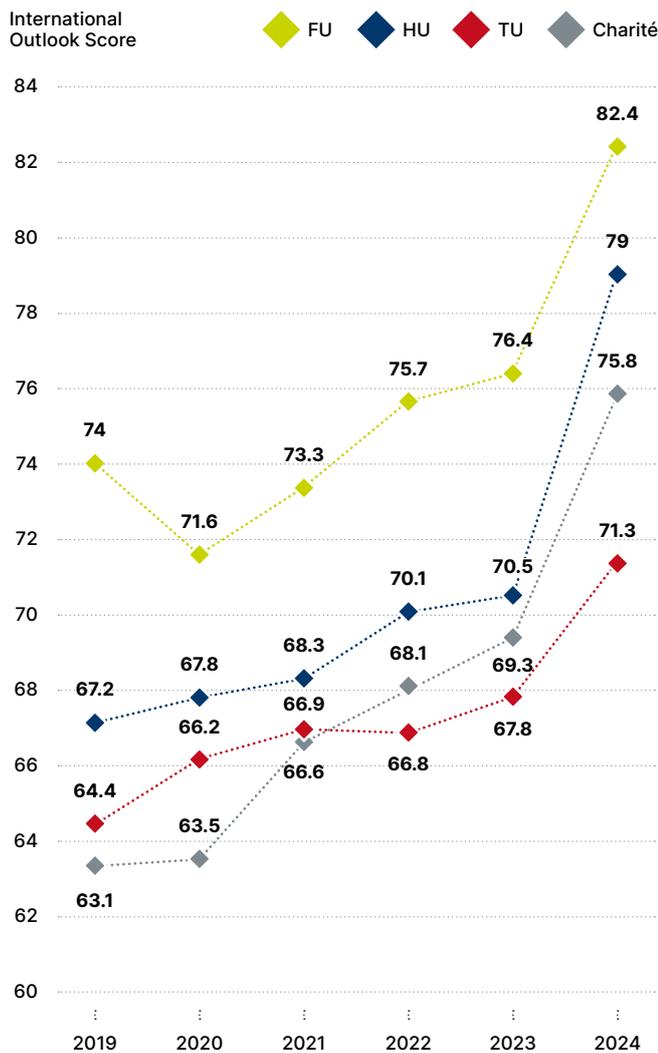


- 01 • **Strengthening researchers' diplomatic capacity through the BUA Forum on Diplomatic Resilience and sustained dialogue with international policy partners in times of global uncertainty**

These achievements demonstrate in particular the impact of the Alliance on research strategy development and on establishing effective joint (infra)structures.

Our joint internationalization strategy has increased international research collaboration, funding, and visibility. Providing starting grants for joint initiatives has resulted in over 2,000 joint publications with our international partners and the acquisition of third-party funding adding up to a 62% return on the budget invested. We have also continued to strengthen our reputation internationally, as documented in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2024 – to name just one example (see fig. 29).

FIG. 29 International Outlook of the BUA Institutions, THE World University Ranking 2019–2024



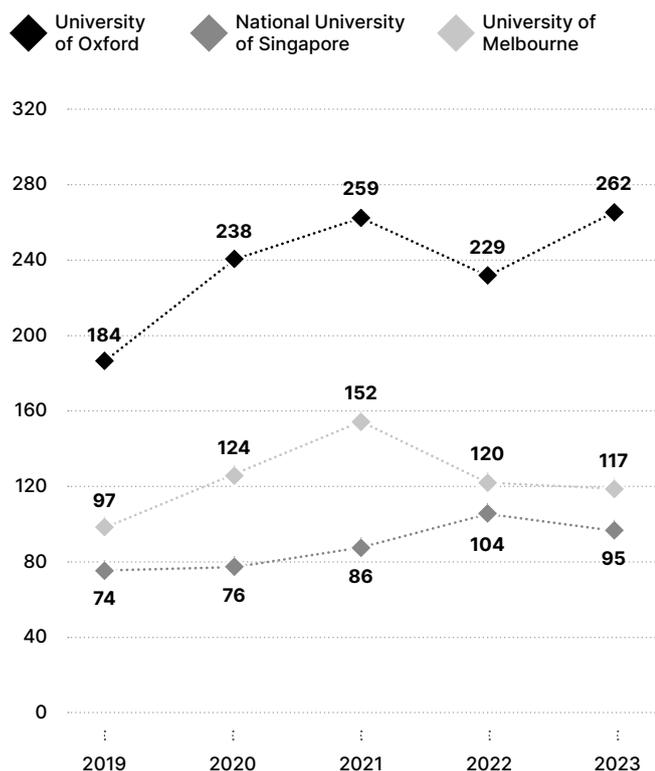
60 World-class global research opportunities

In addition to the BUA institutions' individual strategic partnerships, the Alliance pursues a **Joint Partnership Strategy**. The **Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership** is an essential means of fostering cutting-edge research in order to address major societal challenges. The intensive partnership has resulted in an increased number of high-ranking co-publications (see fig. 30), demonstrating its value in providing world-class research opportunities. By securing substantial budgets from prominent UK, German, and EU funders across 14 projects (see Data Annex, tab. 10), the **Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership** has shown extraordinary success in attracting external funds for its research initiatives. The prerequisite for this success was providing substantial funding to support over 100 projects across a wide range of disciplines that engaged over 1,300 scientists from Berlin and Oxford.

Within the **Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership**, the **Einstein BUA/Oxford Visiting Fellowship** program in cooperation with the Einstein Foundation Berlin has advanced excellence in Research Focal Areas, early-career development, and knowledge transfer. Each of the prestigious visiting fellows from the University of Oxford has led a **Joint Research Group** involving pre- and postdoctoral researchers. These groups have collaborated on high-profile Alliance projects such as the **Clusters of Excellence NeuroCure** and **Temporal Communities**, offering early-career scholars outstanding opportunities for interdisciplinary and international research engagement. In an exemplary innovation initiative, TU Berlin, the University of Oxford, and Siemens AG have launched a **Trilateral Seed Funding Program** to drive EU Horizon projects in the field of digitalization.

In the **Grand Challenge Initiative Global Health**, our **Joint Strategic Partnership** with the **National University of Singapore (NUS)** has catalyzed deeper collaboration, including a key initiative between the Berlin Institute of Health and Enterprise Singapore focused on healthcare startups. This growing cooperation is reflected in the rising number of joint publications between BUA and NUS researchers, particularly in the field of Health (see fig. 30). An interdisciplinary team from both institutions has also undertaken a joint **Exploration Project Ageing Well in the Urban Environment** (see fig. 7). Building on the success of this initiative, Charité has secured €7 million in funding for a Horizon Europe research consortium running from 2025 to 2029.

FIG. 30 Number of Co-Publications with International Partners by Institution and Year



30 A hub of global and regional expertise on the “Global South”

The *Berlin Center for Global Engagement (BCGE)* is BUA’s joint platform for fostering research cooperation with institutions in the so-called “Global South.” By promoting innovative collaborations and networks in emerging scientific regions, the *BCGE* has helped to establish equitable partnerships. It has supported a wide range of projects aligned with BUA *Grand Challenge Initiatives* and funded mobility for 175 researchers from the target regions to strengthen international collaboration. These efforts have significantly contributed to the inclusion of scholars and perspectives from the “Global South” in Research Focal Areas, and have led to joint funding applications including African partners – such as the proposed *Einstein Research Unit Technologies in Global Health* (see section 1.b.1). The cross-cutting activities of the *BCGE* have furthermore supported the recruitment of high-profile international scholars for the *Audre Lorde Visiting Professorship*, bringing global perspectives to diversity-related research (see section 1.b.6).

High-impact BUA activities during the COVID-19 pandemic supported in part by the *Berlin Center for Global Engagement* have inspired the

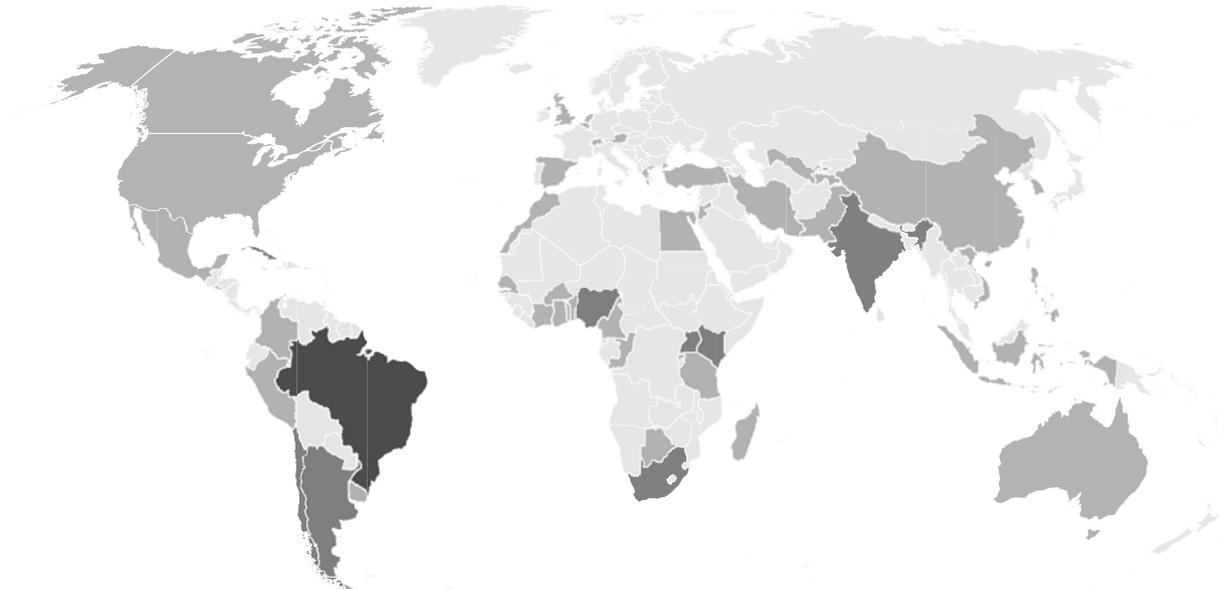
60 establishment of the World Health Organization Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin – a key component of the World Health Organization’s efforts to improve global health preparedness. The *BCGE* has also supported the acquisition of two German Academic Exchange Service Global Centers for Berlin, including the *German-West African Centre for Global Health and Pandemic Prevention* between TU Berlin, Charité, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana. Moreover, the *BCGE* has driven BUA’s overall engagement with the African Research Universities Alliance and the Association of African Universities. Signing the *Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations*¹⁹ in 2024 was a key demonstration of our commitment to equitable research collaboration with the “Global South”, particularly in African countries (see fig. 31).

80 An ecosystem of responsible internationalization

With the help of the *BUA Forum on Diplomatic Resilience*, the BUA partners have not only built a strong network on research security and the challenges of international collaboration, but have also actively worked to strengthen the diplomatic competencies of our researchers. This is of particular importance for navigating complex geopolitical conditions and fostering resilient, ethically sound international partnerships. Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, the Forum has mapped and networked all relevant administrative units that support safer research practices (e.g., export control officers, departments for research and data security, travel risk management, and commissions on ethics and security-relevant research). It has identified existing mechanisms and structural gaps in BUA’s research security landscape through a participatory process involving researchers and area studies experts in particular, including those from the China Centre at TU Berlin and the new China Competence Training Center at HU Berlin. Beyond these internal efforts, the Forum has also run the *Science Meets Embassies* program, in which embassies are regularly invited to the Berlin University Alliance to discuss global research challenges and exchange on matters of mutual concern. These initiatives collectively enhance the ability of scholars at all career stages to engage in informed, confident, and responsible international cooperation.

¹⁹ The Africa Charter. (n.d.) Perivoli Africa Research Centre: <https://parc.bristol.ac.uk/africa-charter/> (Accessed 15 July 2025).





1.b.7.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

During the first funding phase, the Alliance adjusted the **Global Advancement Strategy** and made the strategic decision to discontinue our **BUA Brussels Office** to avoid resource duplication and focus on other internationalization priorities. Although the office supported EU training and visibility, existing research support structures at the BUA institutions and participation in European Universities alliances (Una Europa, Circle U., ENHANCE) have since delivered the intended benefits of better EU funding access, stronger policy influence, and greater visibility, making continued investment unnecessary.

Our **Joint Strategic Partnerships** have yielded strong results in funding, publications, and innovation. Going forward, we aim to better integrate them into our joint research agenda and align them more closely with our innovation strategy to maximize impact (see section 2.3).

The **Berlin Center for Global Engagement** has proven the value of regionally focused, interdisciplinary hubs. Building on this, we will expand efforts in Central and Eastern Europe, an area where we already have strong interdisciplinary expertise (see section 2.3).

Despite progress in internationalization – including a 33% rise in international academic and artistic staff – top-tier international professorial appointments remain below expectations (see Data Annex, tab. 4), partly due to lengthy procedures.

To address this, we will introduce a new **Excellence Professorships** mechanism in the future (see section 2.2) and invest in strengthening our “welcome” and belonging cultures. We are currently preparing a joint welcome portal – the **Global Scholars’ Gateway Berlin** – in cooperation with federal and state programs to better serve international talent.

1.b.8

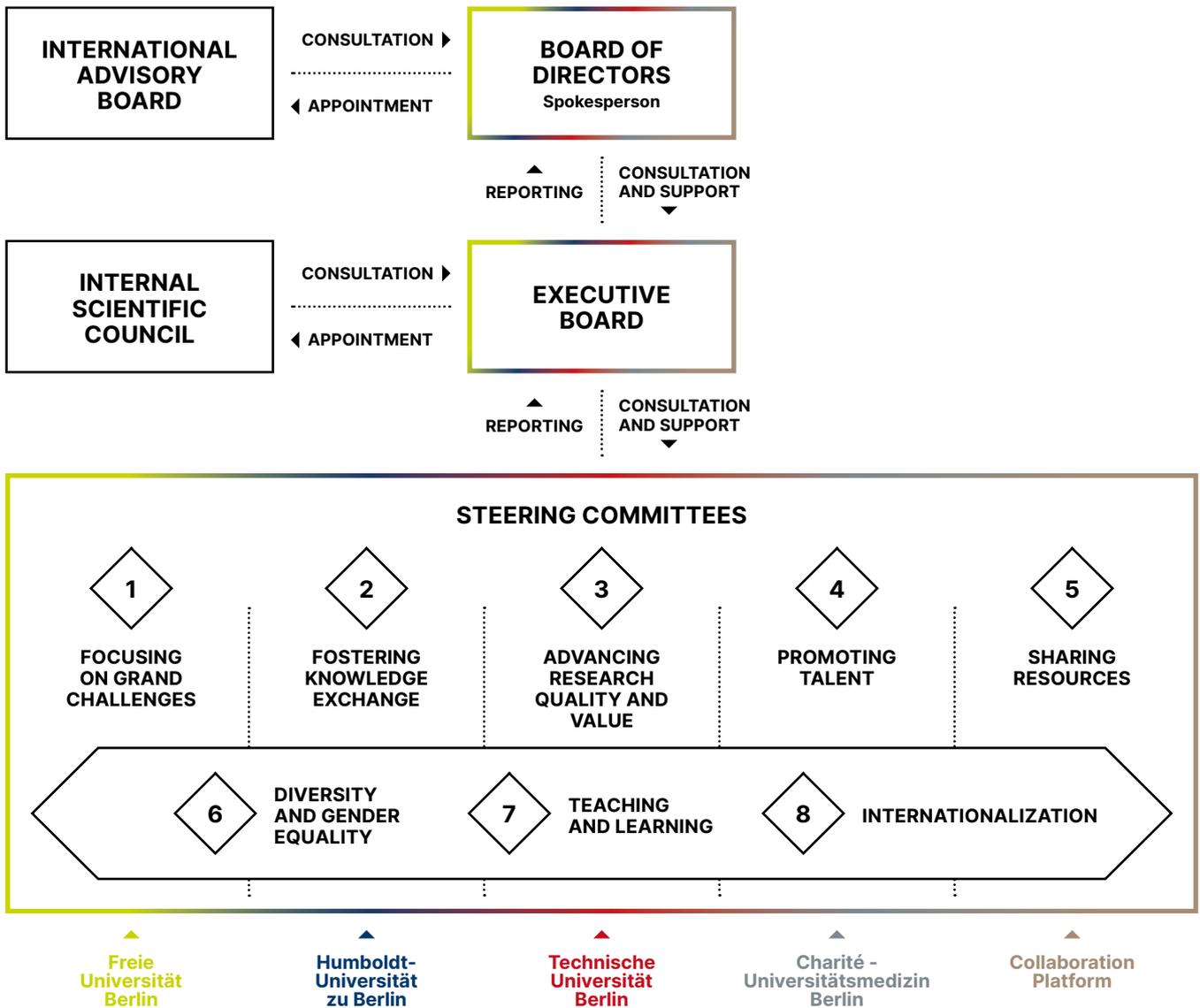
Governance

1.b.8.1 Strategic Goals and Measures

The Berlin University Alliance is a new type of consortium without legal or administrative blueprints. As Germany's sole Consortium of Excellence, FU, HU, TU Berlin, and Charité began with an ambitious premise: to fundamentally reimagine how institutional cooperation could be governed.

The *Crossing Boundaries* proposal put forward a new governance paradigm that respected institutional autonomy while enabling interconnected and responsive structures. Today, our governance and management structures continue to follow the three principles of governance that we established at the outset: (1) constant renewal through innovative structures, (2) form follows function, (3) research perspective is key. Largely true to our original plans, BUA is today governed by a **Board of Directors** and an additional **Executive Board**. Researcher-led **Steering Committees** guide the implementation and development of measures within each field of action, supported by a central **Head Office** for coordination and administration run by a **Managing Director**. Strategic guidance comes from an **Internal Scientific Council** and an **International Advisory Board**, which provide expert academic and global perspectives (see fig. 32).

FIG. 32 Organizational Structure of the Alliance



01 1.b.8.2 Achievements and Effects

Nearing the end of the first funding phase, the main achievements of the Berlin University Alliance in the area of governance are:

- **A new culture of trust-based cooperation at leadership level through joint strategic leadership and decision-making**
- 10 • **Effective governance and management structures that drive collaboration across research, teaching and knowledge exchange**
- **A sustainable enabling structure in the form of the Berlin University Alliance Cooperation Platform as a dedicated joint legal entity**

A new culture of trust-based cooperation at leadership level

20 A major achievement of the Berlin University Alliance has been regular strategic exchange via a transparent and accountable governance framework that facilitates joint strategic leadership and decision-making. The framework follows a three-tier decision-making model consisting of the **Board of Directors**, the **Executive Board**, and **Steering Committees**, and is complemented by an **Internal Scientific Council** and an **International Advisory Board** for scientific and external strategic guidance (see fig. 32). All governing bodies operate under a unified **Code of Conduct**, ensuring ethical consistency and collective responsibility across all decision-making processes. A **BUA Governance Framework** paper documents the roles, workflows, and accountabilities of each structure in detail, offering clarity and continuity.

40 The two central governing bodies – the **Board of Directors** and **Executive Board** – have played a pivotal role in fostering trust-based collaboration. The **Board of Directors** is composed of the presidents of the four partner institutions, and has carried strategic responsibility from the outset. The **Executive Board** is made up of the vice presidents for research from FU, HU, and TU Berlin, and the dean of Charité, and was established in 2020 to coordinate the implementation of Alliance measures during the initial operational phase. Meeting monthly alongside the **Managing Director**, it has become a matter of routine that the Alliance partners consult and coordinate on strategic institutional decisions of importance within the two leadership boards. One example is the joint approach to the 2024/25 Cluster of Excellence proposals, where coordinated consultation at **Executive Board** level allowed the **Board of Directors** to agree on shared priorities – an outcome that would have been

60 unthinkable in earlier times of inter-institutional funding rivalry.

Today, this spirit of cooperation also extends to external negotiations, including joint negotiations with the State of Berlin on shared funding priorities, marking a significant departure from the formerly fragmented landscape of Berlin's academic governance (see Data Annex, tab. 17 and 18).

70 As we aspired to in our original vision, our cooperative governance framework has also had a broader integrative effect on Berlin's research landscape. Findings from the **Berlin Science Survey** (see section 1.b.1) show growing researcher satisfaction with the academic environment, with 95.5% of researchers engaging in collaborative research – 41.4% of those within the Berlin university sector. Additionally, 70% of respondents rate cooperation within the Berlin research area as "rather good" or "very good." These developments underscore BUA's role as a catalyst for trust, coordination, and shared ambition – not only within its own structures, but across the Berlin research environment.

Effective governance and management structures that drive collaboration

90 The Berlin University Alliance has established effective governance and management structures that drive collaboration in research, teaching, and knowledge exchange. These structures are based on the principles of constant renewal and research-led governance. Notably, around 90% of BUA projects involve all four partner institutions, highlighting the effectiveness of our governance and management structures for inter-institutional collaboration.

100 Our governance and management structures enable us to operate across three distinct categories of collaborative projects and structures: (1) Existing projects at the partner institutions that are connected via the Alliance while remaining structurally anchored at their respective universities, for example the **Graduate Studies Support Program** (see section 1.b.5). (2) Projects jointly initiated or jointly further developed and opened to all partners, but managed and hosted by one partner on behalf of the Alliance, for example the **Student Research Opportunities Program**^x at HU Berlin (see section 1.b.2). (3) Newly developed joint projects that are implemented via the **BUA Collaboration Platform**, including the **Postdoc Academy** (see section 1.b.5), and the **innovate! Lab** (see section 1.b.3).

01 A major strength is the active involvement of both senior researchers and administrators in the eight expert **Steering Committees**, which ensure balanced input from the BUA institutions on all major initiatives. The **Steering Committees** have also played a central role in shaping and supporting the Alliance's governance by embedding researcher-led perspectives into all major projects and programs, and ensuring that
10 decisions are grounded in the practical realities and priorities of the research community. Complementing the **Steering Committees** is the **Internal Scientific Council** – an advisory body made up of leading BUA scholars including spokespersons from Clusters of Excellence, Collaborative Research Centres, and ERC grantees. The **Internal Scientific Council** provides strategic guidance to ensure that major initiatives in all areas align with our research priorities.

20 An organic outcome of BUA has been the emergence of additional **cross-institutional working groups** addressing administrative areas such as legal affairs, human resources, and financial oversight. Formed in response to practical needs, these groups have evolved into collaborative learning structures that foster cross-university dialogue and support joint problem-solving.

30 Managing a strategic multi-stakeholder consortium requires consistent and reliable operations. The **BUA Head Office** and **Managing Director** play a key role here, coordinating BUA program portfolios and overseeing core functions such as finance, quality assurance, reporting, and communications. To remain agile and sustainable, we have implemented robust **quality assurance and progress monitoring systems**. These include semiannual status evaluation by the governing
40 boards, regular consultation with the **International Advisory Board**, and external evaluations for specific projects. The central quality assurance mechanism is a **project portfolio management system** encompassing key information and performance indicators for all Alliance projects and regular data collection. Governance and quality control have had a substantial impact on our project portfolio. We have discontinued measures, adapted measures, and initiated new ones, including, for example, the discontinuation
50 of the **Global Advancement Strategy** (see section 1.b.7), and the replacement of individual funding schemes for postdoctoral researchers by the **Postdoc Academy** (see section 1.b.5).

60 Sustainable enabling structures exemplified by the BUA Collaboration Platform

A landmark achievement in the institutional development of the Berlin University Alliance has been the creation of the **BUA Collaboration Platform** as a joint legal entity under public law. The **Collaboration Platform** is a shared service and coordination structure designed as
70 a subsidiary equally owned by the four partner institutions and based on the principal "form follows function". Established by legislation enacted by the State of Berlin in October 2020, this unprecedented step reflects the long-term political commitment to our Alliance and its central role in Berlin's higher education landscape.

The **Collaboration Platform** represents a new model for structured inter-institutional collaboration,
80 increasing operational efficiency and offering novel modes of joint activity. It serves as the organizational home of the **BUA Head Office**, supports our governing bodies, and ensures coherent implementation of our measures across institutional boundaries. It is also positioned to serve as an incubator for new collaborative ventures. In March 2025, it launched its first legal subsidiary: the **innovate! lab gGmbH**, funded with €5 million by the Joachim Herz Foundation
90 (see section 1.b.3). This subsidiary is a glimpse of how the **Collaboration Platform** can serve as a flexible legal and organizational base for future shared initiatives.

A major **Collaboration Platform** innovation is the introduction of **Affiliate Status**, which guarantees equal access to the infrastructures and services of all four partner institutions for researchers officially involved in Alliance projects – including
100 Clusters of Excellence – regardless of their home institution. We will pilot this in 2026 for our **Joint Berlin Professors**, thereby institutionalizing a deeper level of academic integration. Moreover, individuals from beyond the BUA institutions engaged in BUA projects will also be eligible for **Affiliate Status** in future, expanding the Platform's collaborative reach. To maximize this potential, the State of Berlin is currently amending the **Collaboration Platform Act** to facilitate greater flexibility in its use from 2026 onward, e.g., for recruiting **Excellence Professors** (see section
110 2.2).



01 1.b.8.3 Lessons Learned and Implications

The governance structures of the Berlin University Alliance have proven to be a strong foundation for inter-institutional cooperation and align closely with our overarching strategy. As we move into the next funding phase, we will carefully adapt these structures in light of strategic priorities and lessons drawn from the first phase. A key insight has been that the deep trust developed between partners allows for greater flexibility and reduced formal complexity. We will accordingly discontinue the **Executive Board**, which has played an important role in initiating BUA and in operationalizing the **Steering Committees** in particular, but now rather contributes to over-bureaucratization. Moving forward, we will streamline decision-making at the leadership level, giving stronger powers to the **Steering Committees** and the **Managing Director** to enhance efficiency and coherence.

In addition, we will strengthen the integration between the **Collaboration Platform** and the broader governance network, including committees. One key measure will be to expand the role of the **Collaboration Platform Advisory Board**, and to make greater use of its expertise for content-related and strategic advice (see section 2.4).

While the simplification of our governance is a core objective, we also recognize that several goals remain to be fully realized. Formalizing institutional cooperation with Berlin Research 50 is a high priority for the upcoming phase. Furthermore, we will develop the **Collaboration Platform** more fully as an intermediary administrative unit, particularly for coordinating joint research initiatives such as the **Berlin Quantum Alliance**. Drawing on positive experiences during our strategic development, we are also committed to expanding student involvement in our governance; particularly in areas related to teaching and learning, academic development, and career pathways.

2



OUTLOOK

2.

Outlook

2.1 Common Vision and Mission

Mounting global disruptions, from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change to the rise of artificial intelligence and pressure on democracy, impact political and economic systems and challenge how knowledge is produced, communicated, and used. Expectations for science to offer solutions are growing, while its integrity and relevance are increasingly questioned. These disruptions prompt the Berlin University Alliance (BUA) to fundamentally rethink its role and purpose in society.

These complex demands require outstanding interdisciplinary research alliances, institutional cooperation, and intersectoral collaboration. While challenges remain, BUA has demonstrated that institutional collaboration achieves more than individual institutions alone. Over the past six years, we have created structures that foster collaboration across Freie Universität, Humboldt-Universität, Technische Universität, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, while also expanding collaboration with non-university research institutes and non-academic partners in Berlin. Building on our combined tradition of disciplinary and interdisciplinary excellence, we have supported research networks, cultivated knowledge exchange, spurred innovation in teaching, facilitated infrastructure sharing, and promoted research quality and integrity. In doing so, we have evolved beyond a support structure for the BUA institutions into a platform that strengthens the Berlin research landscape's strategic capacities, performance, and visibility.

Expanding on these achievements, we will intensify efforts to advance outstanding research, teaching, and knowledge exchange to new levels of impact in the next phase. We will drive a transformation of academic culture that emphasizes responsiveness to societal needs and democratic values of freedom, integrity, openness, and inclusion as essential components of excellence. As both an enabling structure within an outstanding research community and a bridge to society, BUA is uniquely positioned to strengthen democratic resilience within academia and across society. A key part of this mission will be to reinforce the resilience of the academic system with our partners locally and globally, recognizing that a strong and independent academic sector grounded in excellence is vital to maintaining democratic resilience.

60 In sum, our vision statement for 2033 is as follows:

Berlin is a leading space for knowledge and innovation in Europe, with the Berlin University Alliance as its core driving force. Together, we create sustainable and inclusive structures that set the research agenda and draw on strong regional and international networks to amplify our impact. We are committed to strengthening the resilience of democratic societies by fostering exchange between cutting-edge research and industry, culture, politics, and the general public.

2.2 Setting the Research Agenda

The strength of the Berlin research and innovation landscape lies in its unique wealth of excellent institutions. To capitalize on this, the Berlin University Alliance has been in continuous strategic dialogue with a broad ecosystem of stake-holders, encompassing the Berlin Research 50 network of non-university research institutes (BR50) (largely members of the Fraunhofer Society, Helmholtz Association, Leibniz Association, and Max Planck Society), government institutions, industry partners, and prominent knowledge exchange platforms like the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin Science Week, and the Falling Walls Science Summit.

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will deepen cooperation with non-university research partners in order to set the agenda for an open knowledge and innovation space. A key element of this will be to formalize a joint strategy with BR50. As a first step, we have established the *Berlin Research Board* – a forum bringing together representatives from BUA, BR50, the Einstein Foundation Berlin, Fraunhofer, Helmholtz, Leibniz, and Max Planck Institutes, the State of Berlin, and academies of sciences. The Board will help us to shape a shared research agenda for Berlin, based on the understanding that closer alignment with our research partners is key to harnessing the full potential of the integrated research and innovation space and strengthening our collective impact.

110 As of July 2025, we have initiated a *Memorandum of Understanding with BR50* committing to strategic collaboration along five *Profile Lines* (see fig. 33). These reflect and consolidate BUA's twelve Research Focal Areas (see fig. 5), and provide a shared framework for joint research priorities (see fig. 34).



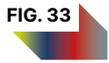
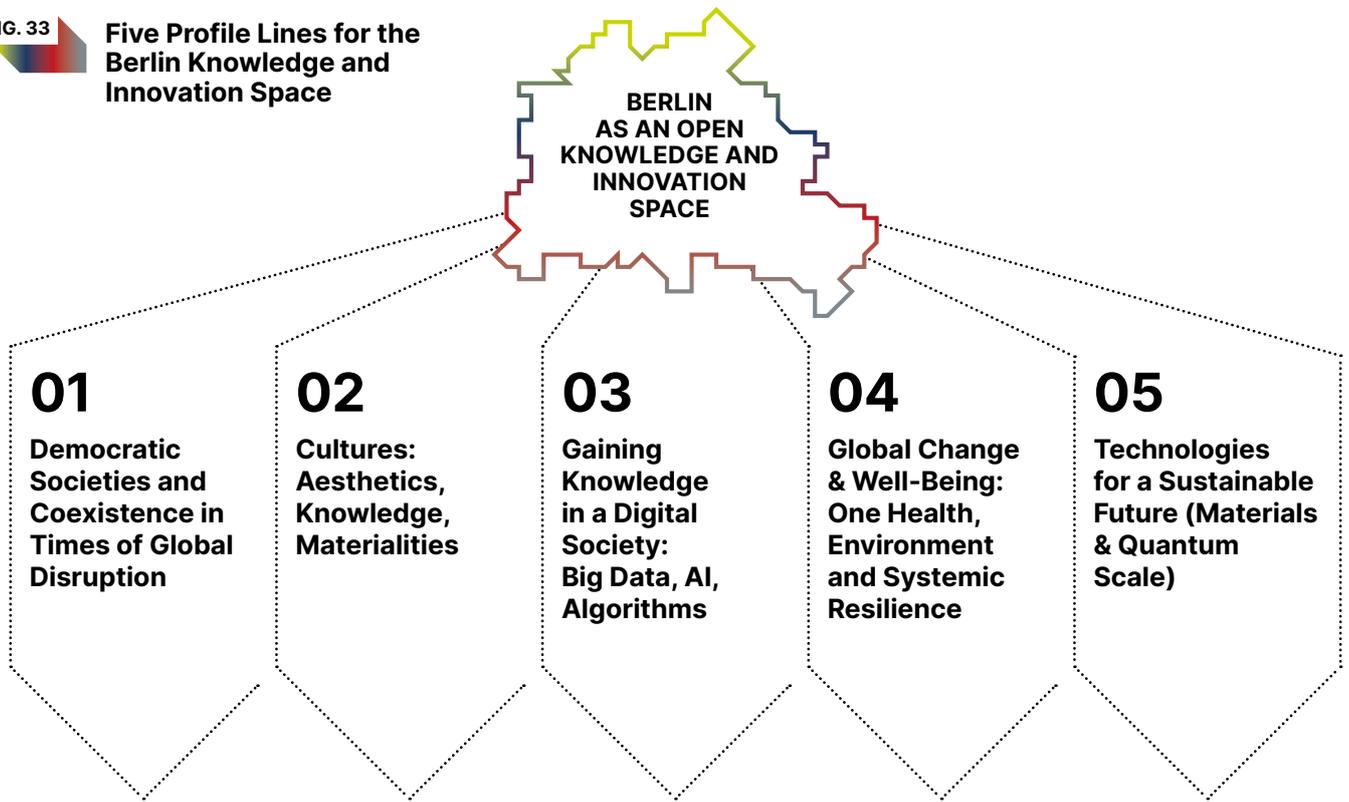


FIG. 33 Five Profile Lines for the Berlin Knowledge and Innovation Space



To drive advancements along our *Profile Lines*, we will set up a **Pump Priming Fund** with the Einstein Foundation Berlin. The fund will support BUA-driven research initiatives across the Berlin ecosystem in order to cultivate major third-party funded projects such as German Research Council Collaborative Research Centres and European Research Council Grants, and prepare new Cluster of Excellence initiatives. Recent amendments to the Berlin Higher Education Act open up new opportunities to strengthen such projects through the introduction of **Excellence Professorships**, enabling faster appointment procedures in strategically important areas. Combined with the **Affiliate Status** mechanism (see section 1.b.8), this will provide greater flexibility and momentum for developing and sustaining long-term research excellence.

2.3 Next-Phase Action Plan: Fields of Action and Cross-Cutting Themes

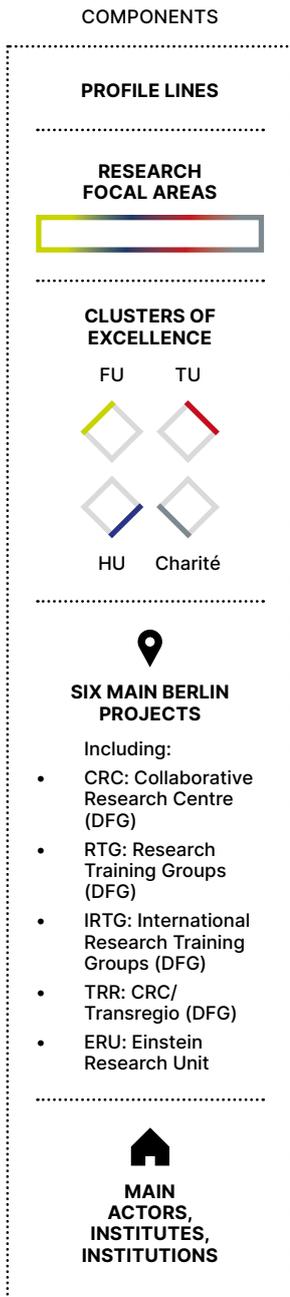
In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will continue to advance cooperation through a new joint Action Plan focusing on strategy, structures, and culture. Our Action Plan encompasses 22 measures organized across six Fields of Action and guided by three Cross-Cutting Themes (see fig. 35).

The six Fields of Action build on our existing Objectives. established priorities, **Transforming Learning Cultures** and **International Engagement**

will evolve from Cross-Cutting Themes into full Fields of Action.

The established Cross-Cutting Theme of **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion** and **Belonging** will be joined by two new ones – **Sustainability** and **Artificial Intelligence** – each of which will be embedded across structural measures. This integrated approach reflects a key lesson learned that reducing siloed work and aligning budgets enables more coherent development across the Alliance (see fig. 36). Approximately half of the next-phase measures build on those from the first funding phase, while the other half comprises new actions. All measures aim to foster research excellence and impact, drive cultural transformation prioritizing democratic values of integrity, openness, and inclusion, and further strengthen Berlin’s position as a leading European research space for addressing complex global challenges (see fig. 36).

FIG. 34 Main Components within the Profile Lines



01

Democratic Societies and Coexistence in Times of Global Disruption

Global and Area Studies

Politics, Economics and Society



SCRIPTS



- CRC 1171: Affective Societies
- IRTG 2445: Temporalities of Future
- BUA Grand Challenge Initiative Social Cohesion
- ERU Coping with Affective Polarization
- Einstein Center Population Diversity
- Maria Sibylla Merican Center: Conviviality (Sao Paulo)



- Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)
- Centre für East European and International Studies (ZOIS)
- Forum Transregionale Studien
- German Institute for Economic Research (DIW)
- Hertie School
- Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO)
- Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG)
- Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC)
- Oxford Centre for Democratic Resilience (DPIR)
- Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK)

02

Cultures: Aesthetics, Knowledge, Materialities

Arts, Design and Cultural Heritage

Literatures, Languages and Cultures

Transcultural Ancient Studies



TEMPORAL COMMUNITIES



- CRC 1512: Intervening Arts
- RTG 2248: Global Intellectual History
- Einstein Center Chronoi
- Berliner Antike-Kolleg
- Competence Centre for Data Literacy QUADRIGA
- Research data initiatives NFD14objects and NFD14cultures



- Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW)
- German Archaeological Institute (DAI)
- Leibniz Center for Literary and Cultural Research (ZfL)
- Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG)
- Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK)

03

Gaining Knowledge in a Digital Society: Big Data, AI, Algorithms

Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence

Application-oriented Mathematics



MATH+



SCIENCE OF INTELLIGENCE



- CRC 1404: Foundations for Large-Scale Scientific Data Analysis Workflows (FONDA)
- Einstein Center Digital Future (ECDF)
- Berlin Institute for the Foundations of Learning and Data (BIFOLD)
- BMBF Research Campus Mathematical Optimization and Data Analysis Laboratories (Modal)
- MIP.labor: Research Communication Think Tank for Mathematics, Computer Science, and Physics
- 6G Research and Innovation Cluster 6G-RIC



- Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems (FOKUS)
- Weierstrass Institute for Applied Analysis and Stochastics (WIAS)
- Weizenbaum Institute (WI)
- Zuse Institut Berlin (ZIB)

04

Global Change & Well-Being: One Health, Environment and Systemic Resilience

Global and Planetary Health

Systems Medicine and Prevention

Neuroscience, Biomedicine and Biotechnology



NEUROCURE



IMMUNOPRECEPT



- CRC/TRR 412: Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease
- CRC/TRR 418: Foundations of Circadian Medicine
- RTG 3096: One Health approach to soil-transmitted helminths
- RTG 3R: Assessment of behaviour and stress responses to understand and improve veterinary infectious diseases models
- BUA Grand Challenge Initiative Global Health
- ERU Climate and Water under Change (CliWaC)



- Berlin Institute of Health at Charité (BIH)
- German Rheumatology Research Center (DRFZ)
- Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP)
- Leibniz Research Network Biodiversity
- Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association (MDC)
- Max Planck Institute of Infection Biology (MPIIB)
- Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics (MPIMG)
- Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens (MPUSP)
- Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (MfN)
- Umweltbundesamt (UBA)

05

Technologies for a Sustainable Future (Materials & Quantum Scale)

Catalysis, Interfaces and Energy Materials

Photonics and Quantum Physics



MATTERS OF ACTIVITY



UNISYSCAT



CENTER FOR CHIRAL ELECTRONICS

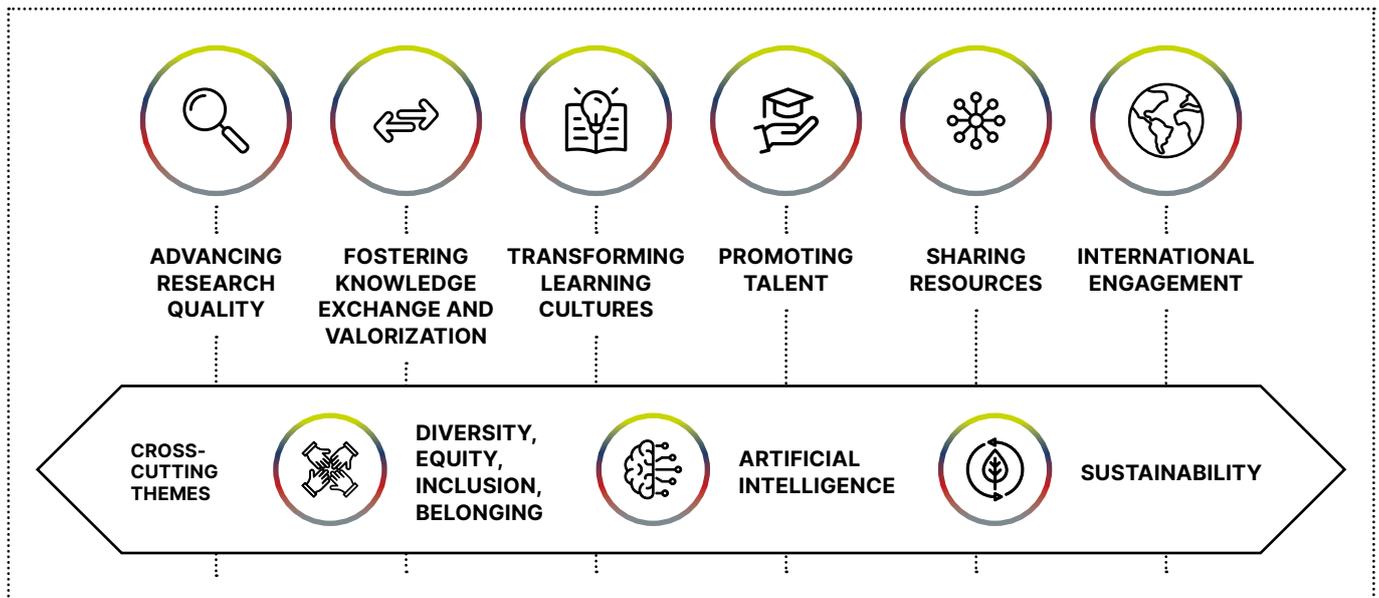


- CRC 1349: Fluorine-Specific Interactions
- CRC 1444: Directed Cellular Self-Organisation for Advancing Bone Regeneration
- CRC 1449: Dynamic Hydrogels at Biointerfaces
- CRC 1772: Heterostructures of Molecules and 2D Materials
- ERU Quantum & Berlin Quantum Alliance
- innovate! lab gGmbH for sustainable innovation in chemistry



- Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung (BAM)
- Ferdinand-Braun-Institut, Leibniz-Institut für Höchstfrequenztechnik (FBH)
- Fritz-Haber-Institute of the Max Planck Society (FHI)
- Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences (GFZ)
- Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin (HZB)
- Institut für angewandte Photonik e.V. (IAP)
- Max Born Institute for Nonlinear Optics and Short Pulse Spectroscopy (MBI)
- Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces (MPIKG)
- Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB)

FIG. 35 Next-Phase Action Plan:
Fields of Action and Cross-Cutting Themes



Field of Action 1: Advancing Research Quality

In the next funding phase, we will continue to establish the Berlin University Alliance as a leading international example of an open and responsible research ecosystem. Building on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.1), we will drive forward our *Open Science Mission*. As a key building block, the *Open Science Ambassadors* program will promote knowledge and application of Open Science. Our newly established Diamond Open Access publishing unit, *Berlin Universities Publishing*, will advance its services and impact. During the first funding phase, the Alliance signed the *Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)* agreement. During the second funding phase, we will further implement our *CoARA* strategy and make it a lived practice in our institutions. To achieve a new quality of agenda-setting from a greater diversity of perspectives, we will establish a new *Strategy Group on Research Quality* consisting of regional, national, and international experts that will use foresight to identify topics and suggest corresponding actions. These topics will be accompanied by research on science studies and meta-research to guide the activities implemented.

Finally, we will continue to monitor the progress and quality of the Berlin knowledge and innovation space using the *Berlin Science Survey*, an *Open Science Dashboard*, and an *Observatory*. We will use these tools to identify areas that require particular attention in order to implement the *Open Science Mission Statement* effectively.

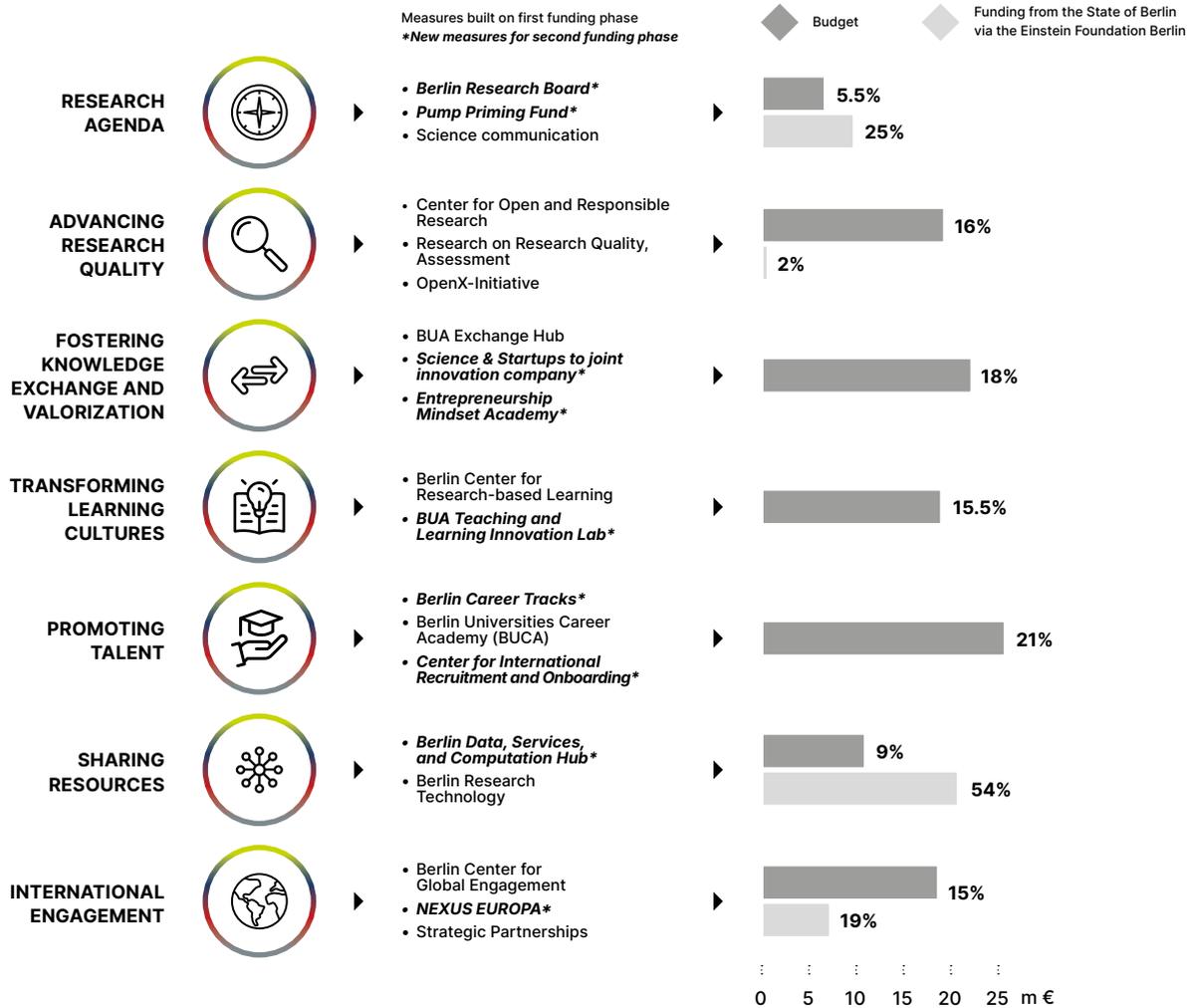
We will use also the *Berlin Science Survey* to focus more closely on technology transfer and entrepreneurship activities.

Field of Action 2: Fostering Knowledge Exchange and Valorization

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will focus on shaping societal and technological transformation. Building on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.3), a new *BUA Exchange Hub* will connect leading researchers and high-profile projects with external stakeholders across science, society, politics, arts, culture, industry, and business to initiate new research networks and access new funds. To measure this cultural transformation, we will monitor exemplary research output involving non-academic collaborators and the effects of the *BUA Exchange Hub* for target groups. Indicators will include the number of practice-oriented outputs incorporating academic perspectives, the number of research outputs incorporating non-academic perspectives, and individual impact stories.



FIG. 36 Research Agenda and Fields of Action: Measures and Budget Distribution (2027–2033)



In the next funding phase, we will invest in the Berlin innovation and startup ecosystem to provide more attractive entrepreneurial opportunities for cutting-edge research. The externally funded *innovate! lab* and *UNITE*, both initiatives under the Alliance umbrella, will amplify this effort. By expanding *Science & Startups* into a joint innovation company, we will take our startup consulting services to the next level. Additionally, we will establish an *Entrepreneurial Mindset Academy* as part of the *Teaching and Learning Innovation Lab* (see Field of Action 3). To track our success, we aim to reach at least 10% of all BUA students and will monitor how many launch their own ventures.

Field of Action 3: Transforming Learning Cultures

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will focus on driving future-oriented research, innovation, and transformation competencies for students. Building on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section

1.b.2), we will develop teaching and learning from a Cross-Cutting Theme into a main Field of Action.

We will expand the successful *Student Research Opportunities Program*^x as part of a new *Berlin Center for Research-based Learning* dedicated to promoting bachelor's and master's research on major societal challenges. This will continue established *Student Research Groups and Tutorials*, while introducing new *Research Tandems* and *Co-curricular Research Placements* to strengthen collaboration with Berlin's wider ecosystem. We will develop these formats in collaboration with our Clusters of Excellence, external research institutes, and non-academic partners. Through the new *Center for Research-based Learning*, we aim to increase student participation in the *Student Research Opportunities Program*^x by at least 50%, address our Cross-Cutting Themes through at least one third of projects, and will monitor the diversity of the student population reached and the program's perceived relevance and effects.

01 **In the next funding phase, we will establish a joint *Teaching and Learning Innovation Lab* to promote innovation in teaching.** The *Lab* will provide collaborative platforms for students and teachers to develop future skills and new teaching formats, focusing on key societal issues such as sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion, and AI. Formats will build on existing joint degrees, certificate programs, and modules, while also
10 generating new courses.

In the next funding phase, further development of the *E-Assessment Alliance* will continue to improve the quality and efficiency of digitally-supported assessments. We will use AI-supported functions to further develop innovative assessment scenarios, fostering transformative skills, improving individual learning outcomes, and facilitating examination design. To promote
20 equal opportunities, the *E-Assessment Alliance* will advance barrier-free, location-independent examination formats, enhancing accessibility and flexibility for students with special needs and multiple responsibilities.

Field of Action 4: Promoting Talent

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will focus on attracting the brightest minds from across the globe through a new and unique integrated career space for Berlin. Central to this will be two major structural developments that build on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.5), and serve as catalysts for innovative collaboration across Berlin's academic, cultural, and industrial landscape.
30

A new *Berlin Universities Career Academy*
40 will consolidate the talent promotion measures developed in the first funding phase, address key transition phases, and promote diversity and equal opportunities. A key element of progress monitoring will be to assess the Academy's reach, accessibility, and the relevance and impact of its programs for multiple target groups.

Berlin Career Tracks for Postdocs will create flexible, cooperative career pathways between
50 universities, non-university research institutes, and the public and private sectors. These new tracks will open up a previously uncharted field of action by facilitating mobility across sectors – including science, industry, NGOs, culture, and government, removing boundaries to permeable career paths. Key elements of monitoring the success of our integrated career space will include measuring the number of postdoctoral researchers whose career tracks

60 include cooperation agreements between at least two sectors, including shared use of research infrastructure and/or supervision. Complemented by a ***Professional Staff Program***, these measures will help to attract outstanding international researchers and highly qualified administrative experts to the Berlin University Alliance.

70 Field of Action 5: Sharing Resources

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will focus on creating a barrier-free, collaborative data and resource ecosystem for the Alliance, and expand shared infrastructures with external partners to advance scientific cooperation and innovation. Building on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.4), we will invest substantially into improving
80 access to resources, tools, and services to enhance framework conditions for research, while simultaneously reducing costs and enhancing environmental sustainability through more efficient and responsible use of infrastructure.

To strengthen Berlin's research infrastructure, the ***Berlin Data, Services, and Computation Hub*** will focus on scalable computing capacities with a strong emphasis on large-scale computation and artificial intelligence, with standardized software environments to support data-driven research and interdisciplinary collaboration. Through partnerships with Zuse Institute Berlin and other Berlin Research 50 institutions, the ***Hub*** will enhance BUA's international competitiveness, ensuring that research data and computational resources are efficiently utilized and adaptable to evolving scientific demands.
90

100 The ***Berlin Research Technology*** initiative will complement this endeavor by systematically developing shared research infrastructures, ensuring sustainable governance, and supporting interdisciplinary cooperation – among other things with a view to the specific resource needs of technology transfer. It will build upon prior achievements and systematically develop new frameworks for coordinated infrastructure management. Key elements of monitoring our success will include measuring cross-institutional utilization rates of shared infrastructure and reductions in duplicate purchases.
110



01 Field of Action 6: International Engagement

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will focus on generating knowledge, impact, and institutional advancement within a truly global network guided by international excellence and societal responsibility. Due to the growing importance of global cooperation, we will pursue internationalization as a main Field of Action. Building on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.7), we will intensify global engagement and focus on fostering responsible international cooperation, championing democratic values of academic freedom, equity, and sustainability.

The *Berlin Center for Global Engagement* will offer targeted new funding opportunities for interdisciplinary research consortia with partners in the “Global South” and visiting fellowships supported by the Einstein Foundation Berlin. We will also expand the *BUA Forum on Diplomatic Resilience* into an *Observatory of Academic Freedom* – a dedicated BUA resource to monitor and support academic freedom, complementing global tools such as the Academic Freedom Index.

We will also launch a new initiative focusing on Central and Eastern Europe. Responding to rising nationalist and illiberal trends, *NEXUS EUROPA* will foster collaboration between research and innovation ecosystems across the target regions to mutually strengthen institutional resilience and support European integration. Formats will include an expanded *ceecon congress* in Berlin on research and innovation, a *Leadership Program* for young researchers and policymakers, and an *Entrepreneurship Network Program*.

Our *Joint Strategic Partnerships* with world-leading universities will continue to play a key role in driving world-class research. We will continue to expand our flagship partnership with the *University of Oxford*, deepen ties with the *National University of Singapore*, and explore new partnerships with *São Paulo* and the *University of Chicago*.

As part of our commitment to attracting outstanding international academics and professionals and supporting scholars abroad affected by restrictions to academic freedom, we have pre-launched a joint “Welcome” portal – the *Global Scholars’ Gateway Berlin*. The portal provides a centralized resource for recruitment and relocation information, and will be further expanded into a Berlin-wide portal.

Key elements of monitoring our success will include measuring the extent to which international cooperation enhances the research excellence along our *Profile Lines* (see fig. 33) and our innovation capacity. This will include monitoring the acquisition of prestigious third-party funding from national and international sources, as well as joint patents and spin-offs.

70 Cross-Cutting Themes

All Fields of Action will be underpinned by three Cross-Cutting Themes: (1) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, (2) Sustainability, and (3) Artificial Intelligence. These will be embedded into both the measures and budgets of the Fields of Action, rather than having their own separate budgets.

In the next funding phase, the Berlin University Alliance will refine the *Diversity and Gender Equality Network (DiGENet)* to enhance its practical impact on embedding diversity and gender equality across all Fields of Action. Drawing on prior achievements and lessons learned (see section 1.b.6), *DiGENet* will play an active role in advancing, integrating, and monitoring equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging across the Alliance. Specifically, it will collaborate on the Fields of Action to establish measurable goals in each area, such as increasing the representation and inclusion of target groups. These efforts will contribute to a culture of inclusivity that supports research excellence and promotes democratic values.

In the next funding phase, we will also set-up equivalent cross-cutting networks for Sustainability and Artificial Intelligence.

Both topics have transformative potential for all Fields of Action. We are currently installing a *Sustainability Network* to advise the Alliance on the sustainability potential of our measures, especially in the field of **Sharing Resources**. The expert group of administrative and academic sustainability specialists from the BUA partners will also serve as a platform for sharing best practices and developing new methodological approaches for sustainability-oriented research.

In future, we will also establish an *AI Network* to support relevant measures, especially in the field of **Advancing Research Quality**.

01 2.4 Governance and Management

After six years of successfully establishing governance structures and processes that foster collaboration and trust, the Berlin University Alliance will refine these in the next funding phase based on lessons learned (see section 1.b.8).

10 **In the next funding phase, we will expand and strengthen the Berlin University Alliance Collaboration Platform.** We will develop the *Collaboration Platform* into the central structure of the Alliance and therewith a powerful administrative hub with new responsibilities, including management of Excellence Strategy funds. It will also serve as the central entity for all joint activities laid out in our Action Plan.

20 **In the next funding phase, we will simplify and streamline our governance structures in order to accelerate decision-making and avoid duplicate structures.** This will include aligning the currently parallel governance structures of our Alliance on the one hand, and our *Collaboration Platform* as a legal entity on the other. We will discontinue the *Executive Board* as a decision-making body. Instead, the current members (the vice presidents for research from FU, HU, and TU Berlin, and the dean of Charité) will drive the research agenda as a steering committee supported by four members of our current Internal Scientific Council – which will in turn be dissolved.

30 The role of the *Steering Committees* will be strengthened. In the future, they will be composed of institutional representatives with a decision-making mandate, supported by academic members. A regular *Conference of Steering Committee Spokespersons* will ensure communication and coordination across all Fields of Action and Cross-Cutting Themes.

40 **In the next funding phase, our governance processes will continue to be subject to regular quality assurance.** They will undergo the same internal and external evaluations as the Action Plan to ensure continued improvement and revision, based on our further developed principles of BUA governance (see fig. 37).

FIG. 37 **Seven Principles of Governance as laid out in our Cooperation Agreement 2018**



2.5 Support from the State of Berlin

Since 2019, the State of Berlin has expanded the Einstein Foundation Berlin funding portfolio to meet the specific needs of the Berlin University Alliance. **In the next funding phase, the State of Berlin will provide €6 million per year additional funding for the following instruments:**

- **A Pump Priming Fund** for BUA research initiatives (see section 2.2)
- **International visiting fellowship programs** (see section 2.3)
- **Excellence Professorships** to support recruitment of leading and high-potential international researchers (see section 2.2)

100 **In the next funding phase, the State of Berlin will actively support BUA infrastructure initiatives;** either through direct financial support, or by providing co-financing for national and international grant applications.

110 **In the next funding phase, amendments to State law will facilitate the further development of the Collaboration Platform,** enabling BUA to implement more flexible management and controlling structures for decision making and distribution of funding among the BUA partners.

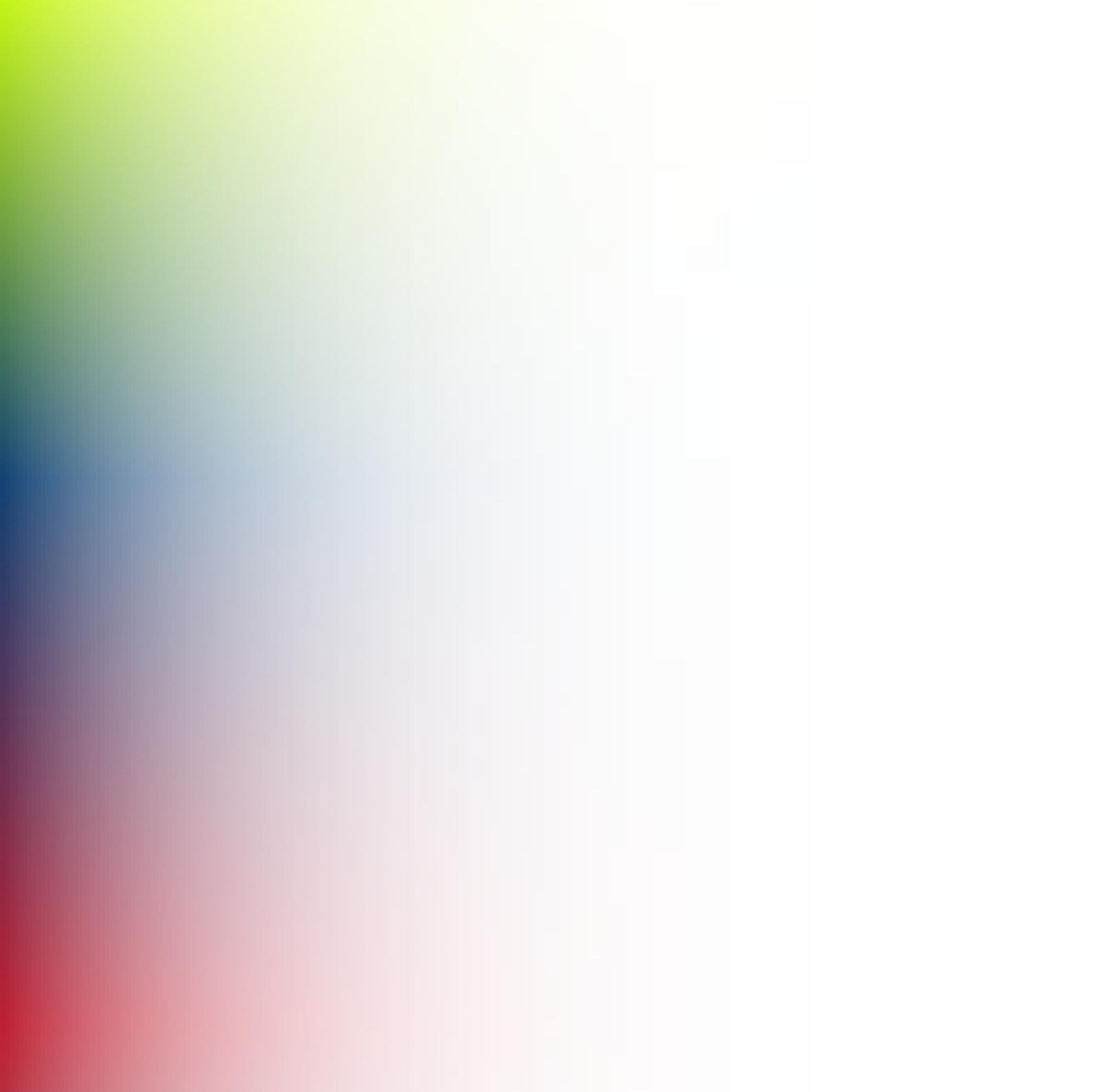
Together, these measures reflect the State of Berlin's vital role – alongside other key stakeholders – in realizing the Berlin University Alliance's shared vision of a globally competitive, excellence-driven, and collaborative knowledge and innovation space beyond boundaries.



IMPRINT

Kooperationsplattform der Berlin University Alliance, KdÖR
Kleine Präsidentenstraße 1
10178 Berlin

www.berlin-university-alliance.de



10

