

Postdoc Appreciation Week Germany Toolkit

Introduction.....	2
1. Choose a relevant topic	3
2. Suggested Event Formats	4
3. Organizing an Event	4
4. Enlarge your own network	5
5. Publicizing your event	5
6. Social Media Campaign	6
7. Have fun!	7
8. Disclaimer - Events & social media.....	7
9. FAQ.....	8





Introduction

The Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW) has been celebrated in the USA and UK for several years to bring postdocs into the limelight. We strongly believe that postdocs in Germany also deserve more attention, visibility and support given their key role in the German academic system – and their difficult working conditions and career prospects coupled with an often very one-dimensional evaluation culture.

We have created this toolkit for anyone who wants to contribute to the PAW, whether you are a professor or team leader, a postdoc network or postdoc service, or any other stakeholder who wants to thank and support postdocs for their great work.

We would like to thank our colleagues from the National Postdoc Association in the U.S. who inspired us to establish a Postdoc Appreciation Week in Germany and provided us with valuable material in the form of their “National Postdoc Appreciation Week Toolkit”. We have added our own ideas and best-practice examples from the last German Postdoc Appreciation Weeks. We would also like to thank the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry (MPIB) who created the PAW logo.

We appreciate the positive feedback received so far and all the interest that this initiative has raised. We would also like to thank all the coordinators, administrators, postdoc networks, and postdoc support groups that have offered their assistance and have opened their activities to external postdocs during the last PAWs.

Please spread the word and feel free to share our materials with your colleagues, team leaders, social media managers, and anyone else involved in supporting postdocs in Germany.

Your PAW coordination team

Hannover & Munich, January 2025



1. Choose a relevant topic

The range of topics you can cover in the PAW is broad! We are particularly happy if you focus on one or more of the following aspects:

- professional development and diversification of career paths
- new ways of research assessment
- open science practices
- finding a balance between individual and team performances
- integration and inclusiveness
- mental health and work-life-balance
- how to build a network and keep it alive
- funding

We also very warmly welcome initiatives and contributions that build and strengthen the postdoc community and networks! Bringing together energies and interests can strengthen one's own voice and increase its weight.

Please think carefully about the benefit you offer to postdocs. You can provide information, encourage dialogue, establish or strengthen a network or offer a joint social event. For example, the PAW program in the last years included workshops and meetings on topics such as power abuse, authorship practices, open science, network meetings, etc. Of course, the difficult working conditions of postdocs and possible solutions can and should be addressed. To reach as many postdocs as possible, it may also be important to hold the event in English.

The most important thing: The offer should express appreciation and recognition for the work of postdocs!

Events from last years (to name a few):

- Scientific writing with AI
- How to find the right mentor for my career
- Power abuse and sexism in academia: what can be done?
- Enhancing my visibility online
- Get together and career chats
- Proposal Writing Workshop
- Understanding the German research system

Your contribution can be an online or in-person event, for example a workshop or training, a plenary discussion, or a network meeting. We welcome events like informal get-togethers with the focus on social interaction and having fun.

You can also team up with other contributors in your region or even worldwide for gaining more impact.

It is possible that topics and dates will overlap during the PAW. From our point of view, this is fine and is more in line with the postdocs' schedules, and gives them more opportunities to attend events. We kindly request that you open your event to as many Postdocs as possible.



2. Suggested Event Formats

In case you are looking for suitable event formats, you can find a list here:

Online or in-person

- Workshops/Trainings
- Lunch Talks
- Scientific lectures featuring postdocs
- Guest lecturers on current topics relevant for postdocs
- Career Talks
- Plenary discussion
- A regular postdoctoral office or postdoctoral association event designated in honor of this day
- Three-minute talk competitions
- Escape Room
- Failure Slam
- Coffee hour
- Open space
- Barcamp
- “Stammtisch”

Our colleagues at the National Postdoc Association in the U.S offer the following suggestions for **evening events**:

- (Virtual) happy hour or networking events
- (Virtual) game night
- (Virtual) paint night
- Table or Pub quiz
- Karaoke night
- BBQ
- Improvisational theatre (Improv)

Even though the culture of workplace-related events in Germany is different from the U.S., we think this list might be inspirational to those of you planning evening events. Having fun is a serious objective during PAW!

3. Organizing an Event

We encourage you to start planning early and to identify colleagues or partners who are willing to support you and your idea. Planning a successful event can take a few months. You may need help throughout the planning process and during the Postdoc Appreciation Week, so it is wise to identify volunteers early. As the date of your event approaches, there will be many things to do in advance and there will be a few “day-of” tasks such as testing the set-up, moderating/hosting the event, and monitoring Q&A.

Decide in advance whether participation in your event is possible with or without registration. With registration, you have the advantage of knowing the number of attendees as well as who wants to participate in advance. Without registration, your event is open until it starts. This can also be beneficial.

If you want to send material to the participants after your event, remember to provide a download link or to ask them for their e-mail address for this purpose.



Virtual events

There is a variety of platforms you can use to host your event. Please use the platform you are most comfortable and familiar with. Look into the features and costs of each to determine the best platform to meet your needs. No matter which platform you choose, identify one that will be best for the number of attendees and for keeping your audience engaged. To increase engagement with the audience, consider including features such as breakout room discussions, polls and surveys, and breaks. Encourage the participants to switch on their cameras and actively participate. Consider that events for a limited number of people might need different methods and potentially different organization than events that are open to an unlimited number of participants.

If you are not sure how to design an inspiring online-event, think about asking experienced colleagues or the e-learning professionals at your institution.

In-person events

Be sure to determine if there are any accessibility needs. When considering off-campus locations make sure they are easily accessible, as well as handicap-accessible. Consider mid-way points if you have more than one campus at different locations.

Regional/City-wide Events

If you are interested in combining your event with another institution, get in touch with the respective institution as soon as possible. Identify the relevant contacts at other institutions and send an invite to them to discuss the feasibility of a joint virtual or in-person event. If you want to find collaborators through our shared communication channel Slack, please write an email to paw-germany@gast.gwdg.de.

4. Enlarge your own network

The PAW is a great opportunity to advertise your postdoc network or association during your event. Use the momentum to recruit new members and to enlarge your network! Be sure to record attendance at your event and ask people to join the Postdoc Appreciation Week Germany!

5. Publicizing your event

Consider using any or all of the media below to promote and advertise your event:

Before your event

- Consider your seven points of contact.
 - The rule of thumb is that a person needs to see or hear about an event about seven times before they might decide to attend; what will your seven points of contact be?
- Submit your event via PAW's website to notify us about your event, and we will post it there.
- Publicize your event on social media on your professional or institutional accounts. If you do not have one, this is a great opportunity to get started.
- Use links to PAW's website on social media.



- Publicize the event in your institution with emails, flyers, posters and the PAW Germany logo. We provide materials (logos etc.) for social media and advertisement of your events. Please send an e-mail to: paw-germany@gast.gwdg.de
- Email your faculty and other research staff to advertise your event. Depending on your institution, this email may need to be send through your postdoctoral office or the public relations office.

On the day of the event

- Take recordings, high-resolution photographs, or videos of the event and use them in your reporting to highlight the success of the event. Ask participant's consent in advance!
- Post your event on social media and be sure to tag us on LinkedIn so that we can share and comment your posts.
- Use hashtags like #PAWde, #PostdocAppreciationWeek, #Postdocs etc.

6. Social Media Campaign

To establish the Postdoc Appreciation Week more firmly in the scientific community and to promote it to a wider audience, we are organizing a social media campaign ourselves during the week via LinkedIn and are inviting everyone – postdocs, professors, PIs, science managers, institutions & networks - to participate. In the spirit of the PAW, we especially encourage professors and PIs to express their appreciation for (their) postdocs.

The initiative also provides an opportunity for postdocs to convey their own views and wishes about their own postdoc experience in Germany and to address challenges they are facing.

Other stakeholders supporting postdocs such as scholarly societies, funding agencies, networks, coordinators or administrators are also welcome to join the campaign and share any successes or challenges they see when dealing with postdoc matters. We would be very pleased if as many of you as possible participate in this campaign.

Post, share and retweet our campaign materials before and during the PAW!

We have prepared this toolkit and other materials that you can post yourself, share or retweet via social media. You can use the materials to encourage others to participate in the PAW campaign. Please write to paw-germany@gast.gwdg.de if you would like to use our materials.

You can of course also prepare and use your own materials as well using your regular design and branding.

Share the joint open event program for the PAW

The joint program includes events organized by different institutions, organizations, networks and individuals in Germany. Feel free to share the program via social media, email, newsletter etc. Most of the events are open for all postdocs in Germany irrespective of whether your institution actively organizes an event. So please spread the word! The program can be accessed in July via the PAW's website.

Prepare your own posts for the PAW!

Do you have a social media profile on LinkedIn? Share a post, image or video during the Postdoc Appreciation Week. As an inspiration, we are suggesting some questions you may want to answer as part of your posts/videos. Please tag us and use the hashtags #PAWde or



#PostdocAppreciationWeekto join the campaign. We will be happy to like, share and comment your contributions from our PAW account.

As a Professor, Research Group Leader, Director, Research Staff, Phd Student...

- Feel free to use your social media channels as well as your website or a press release to share how important postdocs are for you and how you support them!
- How about a joint post or video that you share during the week? Maybe you can combine statements from different researchers on postdocs and share it as a video?
- Introduce active, dedicated postdocs at your institution! Who contributes innovative and new research ideas? Who is committed to improving the quality of research or the research culture? Who is a dedicated team player and cares for the development of others? Who contributes to broader society or other research users?
- Which challenges do you see when supporting postdocs? What are your ideas on how this can be improved? What is your take on the debates about career perspectives and insecure situation of postdocs?

As a Science Manager, Postdoc Coordinator/Advisor, stakeholder...

- Why are postdocs an important group for you? Why and how do you support them?
- Present your program & your portfolio! Which activities are you currently offering or planning to support postdocs?
- Tell us about an event you organized or a situation that made you realize that your activities are meaningful and important for postdocs!
- What would be your vision to improve the experience of postdocs in Germany?
- You may also use posts to encourage professors or postdocs to prepare their own posts during the week.

7. Have fun!

Remember to have fun and realize that your (fellow) postdocs appreciate all the hard work that has gone into making the Postdoc Appreciation Week successful. Organizing events not only brings the community together but also teaches you new skills and helps you broaden your network.

8. Disclaimer - events & social media

Please keep in mind that the responsibility for the organization of your events and your social media activities remains with you. We only provide a platform to promote your events and logos to link the activities with the PAW.

A friendly and respectful interaction is important to us! Please understand that we reserve the right to reject any contributions or posts that we deem problematic.



9. FAQ

What is the Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW)?

The Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW) was started in the US by the National Postdoctoral Association to recognize the significant contributions postdocs and researchers make towards research and academic life in general. The PAW is also widely celebrated in the UK and Ireland. In 2022, the [Research and Innovation Services of the Leibniz University of Hannover \(LUH\)](#) and the [Munich Postdoc Network](#) (particularly Helmholtz Munich and the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry) teamed up to establish this initiative in Germany.

Who is coordinating the PAW Germany?

The Research and Innovation Services of the Leibniz University of Hannover (LUH) and the Munich Postdoc Network (MPN) are the main players behind the PAW Coordination. We started collaborations with different research institutions, organizations and postdoc networks across Germany to offer a collective program with events and activities for postdocs during PAW.

I am not convinced that a Postdoc Appreciation Week is helping anyone given the difficult situation and lack of perspectives postdocs face in Germany.

We are doing our best to support postdocs, and we are very aware of the difficulties postdocs are facing. We believe that postdocs are extremely important for the German academic system and deserve more appreciation & joint support. You are most welcome to share your input on social media and to link the PAW to e.g. #IchBinHanna, #IchBinReyhan, #WissZeitVG etc.

Isn't it inappropriate to link the PAW so closely to the term "appreciation"? Doesn't that impede a critical discussion of the structural deficits in academia?

We believe that appreciation and critical discussion belong together. Of course, we welcome contributions to the PAW that take a critical look at the current academic system and address issues that cannot be resolved on an individual level. During the PAW, you can appreciate and support the postdocs committed to change structural deficits in academia and their work, too. We consider appreciation as a positive and encouraging act.

Why should I get involved and participate in the campaign?

If you feel like publicly stating your appreciation for postdocs and your insights into postdoc-life in a social media campaign that is joined by institutions from all over Germany, we will be happy to have you on board. Postdocs are usually not a very visible group in Germany and do not receive the appreciation they deserve for all their hard work. If you do not feel like participating because you are not convinced, that is fine as well.

All contributors promote the cause of giving more attention and appreciation to postdocs in Germany. Our joint program offers postdocs a more extensive selection of events during this week than any single institution could provide. The formats also promote the exchange of postdocs and a collaboration of institutions, organizations and networks across Germany.

Why a Postdoc Appreciation Week in September?

We would like the PAW Germany to take place at the same time as the other international PAWs. In addition, September is lecture-free time in Germany and the school holidays are usually behind us. We are aware that many conferences take place in September and



therefore many scientists are busy at that time. However, as there are many online formats during the PAW, the last PAWs showed us that we reach many postdocs in September

I am afraid my event will not attract enough participants because there are so many events. Why don't you coordinate the times and topics?

It is possible that topics and dates will overlap during the PAW. From our point of view, this is fine, because it is more in line with the postdocs' schedules, and gives them more opportunities to attend events. We see ourselves as enablers who provide a platform for bottom-up ideas.

Who is responsible for the advertisement of the events?

We are actively promoting all the events and activities during the PAW but of course, our outreach has limits. Therefore, it is necessary that you advertise your event on your own channels, too.

Should I offer my event in German or English? What about other languages?

Feel free to use the language you are comfortable with! If you offer your event in English, you reach the international as well as the German-speaking postdocs. You can use English to increase your target group.

Other languages are welcome, too! The "Network for Spanish researchers in Germany – CERFA" offered networking events in Spanish. They were a great success!

Should I share my social media posts in German or English?

We mainly use English to ensure that the many international researchers in Germany can read and reply to our posts.

Can I use the official PAW Germany logos in my posts or on my website?

Feel free to include the PAW Germany logo as long as you tag us accordingly. We share the logos and social media images with the participating institutions & organizations.

If you use the logo on your website, please mention the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry (MPIB) (<https://www.biochem.mpg.de/en>) who created this logo.

Can I use my own or my institution's design for the PAW?

Yes, you can definitely use your own design. We suggest to hashtag #PAWde and #PostdocAppreciationWeek on all social media channels. Feel free to prepare your own materials, use your own design, etc. if you prefer to.

Do I need to send you my posts?

Please share your own posts from your account. We recommend using the relevant tags for a higher visibility. If you are not using social media, but would nonetheless like to share your input, please approach social media managers at your institution.

I do not use social media but would like to share my input for the campaign. How can I contribute?

If you do not have a social media account, this is a great opportunity to get started!

An alternative option is to reach out to persons in charge of social media channels at your institute, institution, network, etc. and discuss whether they would be willing to share your input through their official channels. Please note that you may need to provide them with the respective rights to use and share your content.

**What do I need to keep in mind when uploading videos or pictures?**

Make sure that the persons shown in the video or images have given their consent and agree to share the material on social media. We suggest that you contact the person at your institution responsible for data protection and ask for help.

Will you repeat PAW next year?

Definitely! We expect to establish the PAW in Germany as a regular annual event to celebrate everything related to postdoc life or the postdoc experience.

How can I reach out to you if I have further questions and concerns?

You can reach us via paw-germany@gast.gwdg.de