

Outcome

In a highly competitive process, from 33 proposals 13 bilateral projects were chosen for funding. Starting in 2003, these projects have received financial support by BMBF and MEiN for three years with a total of about 5.5 million Euros. Both Ministries have recently decided to launch a new call for proposals to open the programme for additional projects.

The projects were jointly designed by Polish and German research groups, and joint applications were prepared and submitted. In order to generate and discuss scientific ideas a trustful atmosphere already in this early phase of collaboration is required. Thus, close professional and personal links between scientists from both countries have been initiated. In the course of the project, the researchers exchange their knowledge, experiences, and experimental results during mutual visits in the partners' laboratories; joint symposia and other meetings are organized. The highest level of professional collaboration is demonstrated in joint authorship on publications in scientific journals.

Research areas in this governmental programme are the development, degeneration, regeneration, regulation, or protection of the nervous system. Projects aim at a better understanding of the mechanisms of neurological and mental disorders and at developing therapeutic strategies and rehabilitation procedures for these diseases. Diseases of major importance for both nations are studied, e. g. epilepsy, brain tumours, stroke, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. High levels of synergy have been achieved in many of the Polish-German projects. Researchers use the same paradigms to examine patients from both countries, they exchange experimental animals or biological material. For example, a joint gene bank has been established at the universities of Warsaw and Ulm, which serves to study the molecular genetics of orphan diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. A common cell bank is used to investigate immunoregulation in multiple sclerosis – a project conducted in Würzburg, Göttingen, and Łódź.



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Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

German-Polish Cooperation in Neuroscience



RESEARCH



Scientific cooperation

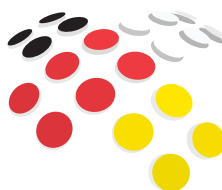
The maintenance and restoration of health is one of the most valuable goods in human life and a fundamental need for citizens in all countries. Among the many diseases affecting health, disorders of the brain are major causes for impaired quality of life.

According to estimates of the World Health Organisation (WHO), more than one billion people suffer from disorders of the central nervous system. Within Europe, approximately one-third of all burden of disease is caused by brain diseases. This percentage will rise further, since the incidence of neurodegenerative diseases is rapidly increasing with increasing average life-expectancy of the population, especially in highly industrialized countries. Thus, neuroscience research and its translation into diagnosis and therapy are of highest priority.

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Polish State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN), the predecessor of the Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN), decided in 2001 to combine forces and establish

government-funded cooperation in medically oriented neuroscience with the goal to combat neurological diseases and mental disorders. The objective of the bilateral programme is to advance scientific progress by using the synergy of a collaborative approach to research. In the long term the programme shall contribute to health care improvement in both countries. In addition, the scientific cooperation will strengthen the relations between Poland and Germany.

Finally, close cooperation of the BMBF and MEiN is also a step forward towards implementation of the ambitious goal of a European Research Area.



Rok Polsko-Niemiecki
Deutsch-Polnisches Jahr
2005/2006

Scientific results from the collaborative projects are presented to the public as a contribution to the German-Polish year 2005/2006. Announcing a „German-Polish year“ is a common venture by both governments. Hundreds of measures from various areas of science, culture, economy, and politics are introduced to the general public in Poland and Germany. The aim is to demonstrate to the people from both countries that close links exist between them, to spark interest in and increase knowledge about the respective neighbour.

Specific goals of this cooperation are:

- achievement of an excellent scientific outcome through joint efforts of the brightest minds in both countries
- mutual training of young scientists in the best laboratories of both countries
- a better understanding across language barriers and cultural boundaries.

Selection of bi-national projects

A call for joint research proposals is published in both countries. A bi-national jury of experts reviews the submitted grant proposals and selects the best projects for funding. The quality of their work is monitored in regular progress reports or seminars throughout the entire funding period.

The selected projects have to meet special requirements:

- scientific excellence of the planned project and the participating research groups
- interdisciplinary research
- close contacts between investigators from both nations, mutual visits, exchange of information
- exchange of young scientists
- joint publications of research data.

Midbrain of a healthy person (left) and a Parkinson patient (right). Degeneration of dopamin-producing cells leads to obvious reduction of blackening in the Substantia nigra.

