



Leopoldina  
Nationale Akademie  
der Wissenschaften

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Press release, 26 February 2010

## **Jörg Hacker takes office as President of the Leopoldina**

### **National Academy of Sciences bids farewell to Volker ter Meulen**

**Jörg Hacker will become the 26th president of the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina on 1 March. The microbiologist, who is currently President of the Robert Koch Institute, will be taking over office from Volker ter Meulen, under whose direction the Leopoldina was appointed National Academy of Sciences in July 2008.**

The handover ceremony took place today, Friday, 26 February 2010, in the auditorium of the Löwengebäude of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. In her introductory speech, the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Annette Schavan, thanked the outgoing president, Volker ter Meulen: "You have successfully overseen the development of the Leopoldina into the National Academy of Sciences and laid the foundations for its expansion into a modern working academy. Your efforts on an international level played a decisive role in these accomplishments." The research minister also had words of praise for the new president: "With Jörg Hacker, the Leopoldina has gained a highly respected researcher who has won numerous awards and who brings a great deal of experience in science management to the presidency."

Jörg Hacker was elected by the Senate of the Leopoldina in a secret, written ballot on 1 October 2009. He will officially become the 26th president of the Leopoldina on 1 March 2010 and will hold office full time. Hacker aims to involve the Leopoldina in a more active, yet independent, role in political debates: "The members of the Leopoldina have a reputation for first-rate research. We would like to contribute their scientific insights to political decision-making processes, taking due consideration of the political context, the addressees, and the appropriate timing," Hacker said in his inaugural address.

Born in Grevesmühlen/Mecklenburg in 1952, Jörg Hacker studied biology at Martin Luther University in Halle (Saale) from 1970 to 1974, specialising in genetics and microbiology. After earning his Ph.D. in Halle in 1979 and gaining his postdoctoral lecture qualification at the Institute for Microbiology at the University of Würzburg in 1986, Hacker became a professor of microbiology in Würzburg in 1988 and director of Würzburg's Institute for Molecular Infection Biology in 1993. Hacker's career has also taken him abroad: He worked as a visiting researcher

at the Institut Pasteur in 2000 and 2005 and was a guest professor at Tel Aviv University in Israel in 2006. In his capacities as Vice President of the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2003 to 2009 and as President of the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin between 2008 and 2010, Hacker gained valuable experience in advising policymakers and promoting communication between the scientific community and society as a whole. Jörg Hacker has been a member of the Leopoldina since 1998.

Volker ter Meulen, a virologist and physician, became president of the Leopoldina in 2003. During his term in office, he cooperated intensively with, and participated actively in, various international committees. His efforts in the international arena played a key role in the decision of the Joint Science Conference (GWK) of Germany's federal and state governments to appoint the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina as the National Academy of Sciences in 2008. Germany's Federal President Dr Horst Köhler took over the patronage of the Leopoldina as the National Academy of Sciences. During ter Meulen's term as president, the Leopoldina has developed into a modern working academy and has collaborated with other academies and scientific organisations in making statements and recommendations on a number of topics, including ageing in Germany, synthetic biology, energy research and green genetic engineering. Volker ter Meulen has been a member of the Leopoldina since 1984.

Volker ter Meulen will continue to work in the Presidium of the Leopoldina and will increasingly focus on helping to shape international policy, in particular on supporting the work of the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), of which he is chairman. The EASAC Secretariat which has so far been located at the Royal Society in London, will be moving to the Leopoldina in Halle in April 2010.

Founded in Schweinfurt in 1652, the Leopoldina boasts an uninterrupted tradition going back more than 355 years and is thus the world's oldest academy devoted to medicine and the natural sciences. The Leopoldina has had its headquarters in Halle since 1878 and currently has more than 1,300 members worldwide. An important focus of the Leopoldina in its role as the National Academy of Sciences is providing independent advice to policymakers and society on current scientific issues, with the aim of drawing attention to major future challenges that the scientific community believe must be tackled by taking an interdisciplinary approach. As the National Academy of Sciences, the Leopoldina maintains close links with scientific institutions in European and non-European countries and represents German scientists in international bodies in which other national academies of science such as the Royal Society (UK), the Académie des Sciences (France) and the National Academies (US) are also members.

Detailed curricula vitae and photographs of Jörg Hacker and Volker ter Meulen are available on our website at: [www.leopoldina-halle.de](http://www.leopoldina-halle.de).

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