

Science4Peace: now more important than ever!

24. June 2022

By Hannes Jung

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine also has clear consequences for science and culture. But some sanctioning or boycotting measures actively harm the opportunity for peace-promoting exchanges. Especially in particle physics, the consequences can be felt. Hannes Jung reports on the effects at the DESY large-scale research center and the "Science4Peace" campaign.

For many years, even in times of the Cold War, there has been lively scientific exchange between states which were in different military blocks - also and in particular in elementary particle physics. One of the central places for such cooperation, which has repeatedly become known with particularly spectacular findings, is CERN in Geneva. This large-scale research institution was founded in 1954 by states that were at war a few years earlier. CERN became a symbol of the "Science4Peace" idea: Scientists from different countries, with different backgrounds and different political ideas, should work together on projects that pursue exclusively peaceful goals.

Exchange and cooperation

Another of these institutions in Germany is DESY (Deutsches Elektronen Synchrotron) in Hamburg. Even during the Cold War, researchers from socialist countries were able to work very successfully, well and peacefully with researchers from the West. As a doctoral student at DESY in 1985, it was an extraordinary experience for me to get to know colleagues from the GDR, Poland, the Soviet Union and many other countries, to work together and to make friends. Science4Peace was natural for me and many of my colleagues, and we were very proud to be part of this community. In November 2021, together with colleagues at DESY, I organized a seminar with the former director of CERN, Rolf Heuer, under the title "Science bridging cultures and nations" [1], in which Rolf Heuer represented the Science4Peace idea very convincingly and euphorically.

The war against Ukraine is changing everything

For me very suddenly and surprisingly, with the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, this fundamental attitude of the institutes and the German scientific community also changed. Just one day after the war started, the German science organizations published a statement (amazing how fast this went), which states "... (it) is recommended, however, that scientific cooperation with state institutions and commercial enterprises in Russia be frozen with immediate effect until further notice" [2].

A internal communication from the DESY Board of Directors of the 1st March 2022 stated that all guests of Russian and Belarusian institutes have to finish their work, new publications with the participation of Russian and Belarusian institutes are no longer approved. I was shocked - I never expected such a turnaround of 180 degrees. Within two days, scientists from DESY and CERN then wrote a letter to the DESY Board of Directors to protest against what we consider to be highly exaggerated and counterproductive reactions. For us, it was and still is unacceptable for all Russian and Belarusian colleagues to be placed under general suspicion and even to ban publications.

On March 15, DESY's sanctions were published on the website: According to this, there must be no joint publications, and " DESY employees will not participate in conferences co-organized by Russian or Belarusian institutes or at which speakers from Russian or Belarusian institutes will be announced." [3] These sanctions were unacceptable to me and colleagues, as they are counterproductive and do not put pressure on the Russian government, but only make communication between scientists difficult and in some cases impossible. They often affect

live). Science, similar to music and art, must build a bridge and show opportunities for conversation.

If nowhere else one can talk, science and art offers languages for understanding. We must set an example to our younger generation that one can deal peacefully or also argue for the right position in order to finally achieve the best answers to the pressing questions of the world. If this communication collapses, scientific systems are positioned against each other, this only further fuels further conflicts - but this cannot be our goal.

Science4Peace is therefore more in demand than ever, we must tear down walls instead of building new borders and iron curtains and marginalizing others - especially if they are committed to the peaceful use of science.

[1] <https://indico.desy.de/event/32037/>

[2] https://www.helmholtz.de/assets/helmholtz_gemeinschaft/Downloads/Allianz_der_Wissenschaftsorganisationen_-_Sopinion_on_attack_on_the_Ukraine_-_25.02.2022.pdf

[3] <https://particle-physics.desy.de/e283270/e312773/>

[4] <https://science4peace.com/>

[5] <https://www.change.org/science4peace>

[6] <http://cds.cern.ch/record/330625/files/? Ln=en>