Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft e. V.

MEDIA CONTACT
Hauptstraße 5
53604 Bad Honnef, Germany
Phone: +49 (2224 9232 – 82)
Fax +49 (02224 9232 – 50)
E-mail: presse@dpg-physik.de

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PRESS RELEASE
of the German Physical Society

Klaus Richter appointed as new President of the German Physical Society

His presidency will focus on the Quantum Jubilee 2025, strengthening schools and climate change presenting a challenge for physics.

Prof. Dr. Klaus Richter from the University of Regensburg is the new President of the DPG. Image: © DPG / Heupel 2022

Berlin/Bad Honnef, March 21, 2024 - On Thursday, March 21, 2024, Klaus Richter takes over the presidency of the German Physical Society (DPG), the largest physics society in the world with around 55,000 members. He succeeds Joachim Ullrich, who held the presidency from April 2022 to March 2024 and will now become DPG Vice President according to schedule. The previous Vice President, Lutz Schröter, is stepping down accordingly.

"In this decade in particular, the major social developments and challenges have gained in importance and momentum. The DPG has a responsibility here to identify the fields of action in which physics in general and the DPG in particular can contribute to solutions," says the new DPG President.

Richter's most important fields of action during his presidency include the major topics in which physics plays a particularly important role, namely quantum science and technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and the colossal challenges of climate change. Additionally, Richter wants to further promote scientific exchange, education and communication between physics and politics.

" Quantum mechanics, the theoretical foundations of which were laid in Göttingen in 1925 and the following years, has fundamentally changed our view of the world and influenced all our lives in many ways. According to many experts, today, after 100 successful years of quantum physics, we may be on the threshold of a second quantum revolution," says Richter. He therefore sees the anniversary year organized by the DPG under the motto "Quantum2025 –

100 years is just the beginning..." as a unique opportunity to demonstrate the importance of basic research in physics for solving social and technological problems.

The second comprehensive topic with enormous momentum concerns "big data" and AI. "These will permeate our everyday lives in many different ways, with the associated opportunities but also risks," Richter is convinced. Physics is already playing a key role in the development and application of AI methods. "Against the background of the latest rapid developments, I see the need to devote special attention to these topics during my presidency. As the DPG, we will emphasise the key role of physics regarding these topics and participate even more strongly in the public discourse," emphasizes Richter.

One particular cross-cutting task for Richter during his presidency is climate change. Concerning this matter, it is important for the DPG to get involved with insights from the field of physics, especially regarding a sustainable energy supply. Richter warns: "By now, the effects of climate change can be experienced by all of us, we need to act fast!" In addition to physics, the economic, social and political sciences are indispensable when it comes to the complex issues surrounding the social implementation of the Energiewende , says Richter. He emphasizes: "Physics has a key role to play in the necessary transformation towards a secure, fossil-free energy supply and all its challenges." To this end, he would like to bundle existing DPG-activities on climate change more strongly and make the data and knowledge base available in the DPG more visible to the public.

During his presidency, Richter will continue to attach great importance to promoting physics as a school subject and - in view of the acute shortage of physics teachers - supporting universities in optimizing teacher training programmes. Richter: "In recent years, the DPG has expanded many of its activities in the school sector and is well positioned, from the organization of teacher training courses to the implementation of the German Young Physicists' Tournament and participation in association hearings on curriculum development. I would like to promote these measures during my presidency.”

Furthermore, as President Richter would also like to continue the efforts of his predecessors to support a peaceful and trusting dialog across borders and cultures through scientific exchange. Richter is also very keen to strengthen communication between science, politics and the media. Richter believes that physics has a responsibility to point out long-term perspectives and thus serve as a "compass" for politics and the media on the basis of scientific facts - for example by organizing further DPG Parliamentary Evenings.

About the career of Prof. Dr. Klaus Richter

Klaus Richter was born in Kiel in 1962 and studied physics at the universities of Kiel and Freiburg. After graduating in 1988, he completed his doctorate three years later at the University of Freiburg in theoretical atomic physics on Rydberg states in the helium atom.

He then shifted his research interests to the physics of condensed matter and, after a guest stay at the Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research in Stuttgart, he became a postdoctoral researcher at the Université Paris Sud in Orsay/Paris from 1992 to 1994 with a scholarship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. After working as a research assistant at the University of Augsburg, where he habilitated in 1998 on the subject of "Semiclassical Theory of Mesoscopic Quantum Systems", he headed a junior research group at the Max Planck Institute for the Physics of Complex Systems in Dresden from 1996 to 2001.

Richter has held a chair in the field of condensed matter theory at the University of Regensburg since 2001. His research group "Complex Quantum Systems" conducts research in the fields of solid state physics, cold atom physics and many-body quantum chaos. He was awarded the Dresden Physics Prize for his work in 2019. His research received further recognition in 2021 with funding as part of the DFG's Reinhart Koselleck Program. In 2022, Klaus Richter was awarded the title "Professor of the Year" in the Medicine/Natural Sciences category by the UNICUM Foundation.

In Regensburg, Klaus Richter was spokesperson for the DFG Research Training Group "Nonlinearity and Nonequilibrium in Condensed Matter" from 2003 to 2006 and was head of the DFG Collaborative Research Center "Emergent Relativistic Effects in Condensed Matter" from 2017 to 2023.

Klaus Richter is actively involved in the German scientific community. He was an elected member of the DFG review board "Statistical Physics, Soft Matter, Biological Physics, Nonlinear Dynamics" and has held various positions in the DPG over the years: Among other roles, he was spokesman of the professional association "Dynamics and Statistical Physics" from 2006 to 2009 and spokesman of the "Condensed Matter" section from 2012 to 2015. From 2017 to 2021, Klaus Richter was also a member of the DPG Executive Board responsible for Scientific Programs and Awards.

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Media contact

Dr. Michaela Lemmer and Melanie Rutowski, M.A.
Phone: +49 (2224) 9232-82
Fax: +49 (2224) 9232-50
E-mail: presse@dpg-physik.de

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