

Statement of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (IAI, Ibero-American Institute) on the report of the Wissenschaftsrat (German Science Council) and the further reform process of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation)

The Scientific Advisory Board of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (IAI, Ibero-American Institute) held an extraordinary meeting on August 31, 2020. At this meeting, we discussed the results of the evaluation of the IAI and the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) in general by the Wissenschaftsrat (German Science Council). We also discussed possible future scenarios for the Institute and identified necessary prerequisites and framework conditions for these scenarios. However, this special meeting was only the first step in a longer process in which we will - as always - accompany the IAI critically and with great commitment. After all, we are all aware of our responsibility for this outstanding and internationally renowned institution of Area Studies.

We were very pleased about the excellent evaluation of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (IAI) by the Wissenschaftsrat. This is a recognition of the Institute's outstanding work, its cross-disciplinary networking and its central role, both in the national and international context, for scientific and cultural exchange between Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal on the one hand and Europe on the other. It is important for us as Scientific Advisory Board to emphasize that not only the performance of IAI's main working areas - library, research, and cultural mediation – was rated very highly, but also the innovativeness of interconnecting these working areas.

The report of the Wissenschaftsrat underlines that the IAI has very successfully achieved a unique, well-balanced and integrative structure consisting of a research library, a research institute and a cultural center, and that it should definitely maintain this balance in the future. The Wissenschaftsrat also evaluates very positively that the IAI is not only strategically well positioned in all of its areas of work and has very well established and productive international networks, but stresses that it has also *"played a very active role in strategic considerations within the SPK and is striving for closer collaboration with the other institutions of SPK"*.

As the Wissenschaftsrat clearly points out, an important prerequisite for the success of the IAI is its great autonomy and freedom of action. The recommendation of the Wissenschaftsrat that the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut *"should be run as a legally independent institute affiliated to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, represented to the federal government by the Staatsbibliothek"* and that the management of its personnel and other administrative services should be in charge of the Staatsbibliothek (Berlin State Library) is therefore all the more incomprehensible and difficult to understand for the Scientific Advisory Board. It is obvious that this model would weaken the IAI in its creative freedom, innovative power and institutional agency and would therefore erode the basis for its success. The Scientific Advisory

Board sees a contradiction here in the evaluation of the IAI's achievements and special assets (or USPs) on the one hand and the future structural integration proposed for the IAI on the other. Therefore, the Scientific Advisory Board strongly rejects this recommendation of the Science Council, which endangers and even calls into question the future viability of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut as an innovative and creative institution.

Should the IAI become an autonomous, stand-alone institute under BKM (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media) as a result of the reform process that is now imminent, a model would have to be developed for it that would ensure its independence and autonomous capacity to act and develop, its broad recognition as a non-university institution of Area Studies that uniquely links library, research, and culture, and its international visibility, and its cross-over networking strength.

As far as the SPK as a whole is concerned, we, the IAI Scientific Advisory Board, judge the "cutting up" of the SPK into sections - museums, libraries, archives - as recommended by the Wissenschaftsrat to be an extremely traditional and not very forward-looking approach. It contradicts national and international developments in science and culture, which emphasize the key relevance of networking and strengthening of interfaces between science and culture, especially in the context of digital transformation and increasing global interdependencies.

The IAI shows how successful it can be, despite all limited financial and human resources, to work across disciplines and sections and develop cross-cutting links in order to achieve a stronger impact on society. In an international comparison, the institutional configuration that makes up SPK has a number of potentials that can be exploited far better in the future: multiple networking opportunities, cross-disciplinary as well as cross-sectoral work, a size that allows high national, European and global visibility, international outreach, growing digitality, but above all the potential to establish common thematic foci, addressing central societal challenges.

With its specific expertise and strategic orientation, the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut is an important player in the profound reforms of the SPK which are now pending. Its unique combination of a library, a research institute, and a cultural center under one roof represents in a nutshell what the SPK in principle constitutes as a whole. It is characterized by a high degree of national and international networking and a considerable amount of third-party funding. Thus, it also provides important impulses and contributes comprehensive knowledge of what autonomous administrative action in an international, competitive environment means and how the relationship between decentralization and centrality can be optimally balanced. Due to its profile, its bridging character and its specific experiences, the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut is also a central driving force for the further development and the stronger articulation of the SPK's museums, libraries, archives and research institutions. The Scientific Advisory Board has therefore welcomed the IAI's commitment to the Forschungscampus Dahlem (Dahlem Research Campus) from the very beginning.

While we understand the focus in the reform process and the political debates on the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin), we as the Scientific Advisory Board would like to point out that the IAI in particular has nationally and internationally recognized competencies and expertise in central future fields that are or could become important for all SPK institutions. We therefore see its future in terms of a strong member of a newly oriented foundation.

Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner (President, Umweltbundesamt - UBA), Chairman

Prof. Dr. Eveline Dürr (Universität München, Munich)

Ronald Grätz (Secretary General, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen – ifa, Stuttgart)

Dr. Dietrich Halm (Director, International Cooperation with Latin America, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – DFG, Bonn)

Prof. Dr. Silke Hensel (Universität Münster, Münster)

Prof. Dr. Jens R. Hentschke (Newcastle University, Newcastle)

Prof. Dr. Johannes Kabatek (Universität Zürich, Zurich)

Prof. Dr. Susanne Klengel (Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin)

Berlin, September 15, 2020

For further information see:

www.wissenschaftsrat-de/download/2020/8520-20.html

www.iai.spk-berlin.de

www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de