

The Meeting of the German Biophysics Society in Leipzig

22-25 September 2024

This meeting of leading German and International scientists in biophysics takes place every other year in Germany. It is hosted by the German Biophysics Society (DGfB). After the meeting took us all to Konstanz in 2022, the 2024 conference was organized in Leipzig. The last time, Leipzig hosted this conference, was in the year 2000.



The invitation flyer of this year's conference showed the New Paulinum, the new assembly hall of the university surrounded by trees in autumn colors to tune into the event. On closer look, the leaves on the trees turned out to be protein structures, emphasizing the molecular biophysics focus of the meeting.

Day 1: Opening with Synapses, Skulls and Serotone

When holding a meeting in Leipzig, it was our pleasure introduce visitors to the rich history, culture, and music one can find there. The opening of the meeting was dedicated to resonate with these facets of the city. It took place in the "New Paulinum". As promised, this place was chosen for a historic reason. The New Paulinum was built at the site where the old "Paulinerkirche", the university church St. Paul, built in 1240 AD, was standing. The university church St. Paul survived WWII, but was later blown up by the communist leaders in 1968. They did that, because in their view, communism and church don't align very well. The New Paulinum, hosts the faculty of mathematics and a large assembly hall, reminiscent of a church with very modern architectural elements. This hall made the perfect setting for the opening of the conference.

The opening session was accompanied by pieces of music played on a pipe organ. The instrument was played by Christoph Altner, letting the participants enjoy music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Max Reger, and Georg Friedrich Händel. All of these musicians are related to Leipzig or the nearby city of Halle.

To introduce the role of Leipzig in the turning of the government in East Germany in 1989, Gisela Kallenbach, shared her memories. She was actively involved in the movement that finally led to this democratic upraise. The movement was later called “peaceful revolution”, because opponents of the communist protested peacefully, which finally lead to the fall of the Berlin wall.

The next speaker was Johannes Krause, a director of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (where Nobel laureate Svante Pääbo works). He gave a talk on the journey of the human being, from the past to the future. He also reminded us of the fragile situation our planet is confronted with in current times.

Johannes’ talk led to the scientific part of our meeting with two plenary talks. One of which was given from Sudipta Maiti (TIFR Mumbai), who is the current president of the Indian Biophysical Society and shared the greetings from his society. At the subsequent get together, the participants could discuss science as well as politics and environmental issues both triggered by the stimulated preceding talks in the beautiful foyer of the Augustenum.



The opening of the meeting was already very well attended. Overall, we had about 250 participants in the meeting, many of which came from foreign countries such as USA, India, Poland, Czech Republic, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Iran, Slovenia, Russia, Ukraine and others.



Day 2: A Conference with Photons, Presentations and Posters

The subsequent days of the meeting were characterized by exciting plenary talks, very intense platform contributions, and lively poster discussion.

As a new idea, all participants who submitted an abstract could vote for short contributions selected for a talk and thus actively participate in the conference topics. The procedure turned out to be very successful. More than 90 participants voted and 33 platform and 20 poster flash contributions were selected this way.

All participants could enjoy the very motivated and exciting talks from mostly our young biophysicist.

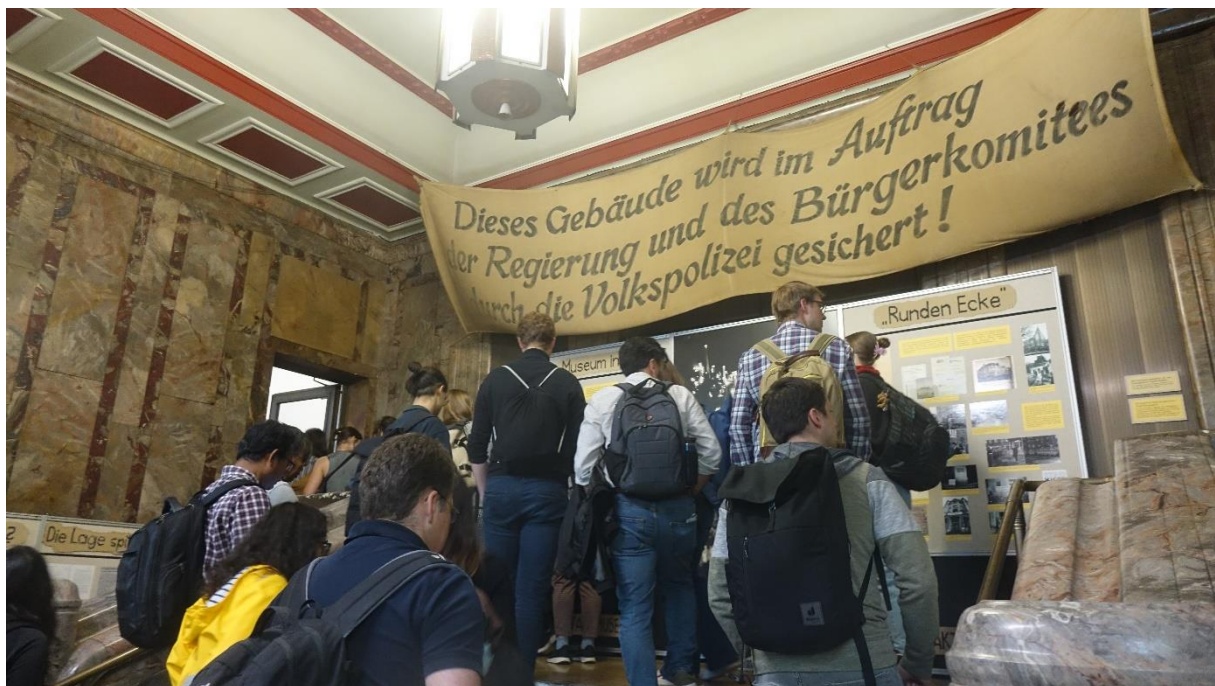


On Monday night, we also had the subgroup meetings as well as the general assembly of the DGfB, where the current president Klaus Gerwert, the deputy president Petra Schuille, the secretary Thomas

Gutsmann were confirmed by the assembly and Boris Musset was elected to become the next treasurer after Sandro Keller had done this job for the last 8 years.

Day 3: A Single Day but Multiple Activities: Proteins, Propaganda and a Party

After the usual posters, talk sessions and scientific exchange, Tuesday afternoon was free for individual activities in the city. There were also three excursions organized: to the Stasi Bunker in Machern, the Stasi Museum "Runde Ecke" including a discussion with the dissident Tobias Hollitzer who was involved in process history to deal with the remains of the secret service, and the Museum of Contemporary History.



With lots of impressions, we continued to the Conference Dinner at the Moritzbastei, a student's club that is localized in the former city fortification from the 16th century. In the 1970s, students discovered the remains of the Moritzbastei and about 30,000 students worked on the site during the construction phase, including the future German Chancellor Angela Merkel.



After enjoying the buffet, the party crowd could join the dance floor with a concert by “The Serotones”. For everybody who attended; lead singer Vanessa was impressed by the crowd – “You were the best audience that the band ever had!”



Day 4: Last but Not Least: Amino Acids, Awards, and Adieu

Our meeting resumed on Wednesday morning with the last presentations and the award session. Already on Tuesday, HaJo Galla presented Fabian Lolicato (Heidelberg) who received the Young Investigator Award of the society in a dedicated session. Today, Sandro Keller, Andreas Herrmann, and Peter Müller presented three Poster Awards, the Award for the Best Poster Flash talk, and the Klaus Arnold Publication Prize.



Our awardees were: Mirko Weber (Mittweida, 1st Poster Prize), Pilar Lörzing (Dresden, 2nd Poster Prize), Melinda Jaspert (Düsseldorf, 3rd Poster Prize), Martin Mütze (Leipzig, Best Poster Flash Talk), and Leon Lettermann (Heidelberg, Klaus Arnold Publication Prize). Congratulations to all prize winners including Fabian Lolicato.



This concluded an exciting and stimulating meeting with many highlights, new developments and contacts and new ideas for the future work. Thank you all for participating and contributing to a successful meeting in Leipzig.

We look forward to the next Biophysics meeting along with the Austrian Biophysical Society in Salzburg in 2026, organized by Sandro Keller, and of course to the big Meeting of the International Union of Pure and Applied Biophysics in 2027 in Berlin, organized by Klaus Gerwert.

Charlotte & Daniel Huster