

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

April 11, 2025 | Page 1 | 3

Statement by Professor Holger Hanselka on the Coalition Agreement

The heads of the CDU, CSU and SPD political parties unveiled their coalition agreement on Wednesday, April 9, 2025. With an eye to the German science, research and innovation system, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft believes the agreement contains important measures that can help bolster Germany's innovative strength and competitiveness. The President of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Holger Hanselka, welcomes key points of the agreement, which is to be approved in the weeks to come.

"The coalition agreement is in place, and the new German federal government, which will be responsible for setting the country's direction for the next four years, is forming. Important decisions will have to be made, and fast, bold action is needed to ensure that Germany remains competitive and innovative in the long term and can strengthen and enhance its technological and political sovereignty," Hanselka says.

Ministry for research, technology and space

"The decision to create a separate ministry for research, technology and space is the right signal at the right time. It is a strong, forward-looking signal of the importance the upcoming federal government places on innovation," Hanselka comments. "Having a ministry that focuses on research, technology and space not only promises to simplify administrative processes and structures but will also enable a coherent, coordinated and consistent national innovation policy by bringing together the various strands of research funding at the federal level, from the idea to industrial implementation and from societal and economic needs to the individual funding decision. This will systematically enhance the position of German research and innovation policy."

Innovation-friendly conditions

"The positive signals I have seen with regard to the proposed Innovation Freedom Act and Research Data Act give me confidence," Hanselka says, welcoming the coalition's legislative plans. "We need to remove the bureaucratic obstacles that are holding science and research back and create overall conditions that are friendly to innovation. Important building blocks the coalition partners have agreed to include greater differentiation among scientific players so there is more of a focus on their complementary core competencies and plans to increase spending on research and development to 3.5 percent of GDP."

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Fundamentally, it is a step in the right direction that strengthening and accelerating knowledge transfer are being brought together under the common umbrella of the *Initiative Forschung & Anwendung* (Research and Application Initiative). However, the three pillars listed by the new coalition partners greatly restrict the concept of transfer. It would be important here to strengthen knowledge transfer across the board, from passing the proposed Transfer Freedom Act to establishing incentives for companies to innovate and on to reinforcing the individual players in their strengths and mission-specific transfer paths. Ultimately, successful transfer takes place within innovation ecosystems, such as the 20 Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft high-performance centers located throughout Germany. Industry and the various players in the scientific system work together at these centers toward specific goals, measuring their success by their market impact.

In times of limited funding, it is essential to reliably prioritize key technologies in the high-tech agenda for Germany. For example, we need to zero in and tap into the potential of AI as a driver of digital value creation. We can achieve that by aligning AI funding programs toward the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, specifically with an eye to transferring technologies into applications, and by providing targeted funding for AI ecosystems. As we forge ahead down this path, it is important to also learn from the previous coalition's Future Research and Innovation Strategy with regard to organizational aspects. The willingness we are seeing to strategically develop and connect our defense research also shows that research is being taken seriously as a resource for security across Germany and the whole of Europe."

Ministry for digital transformation and government modernization

"The newly created ministry focusing on digital transformation and government modernization will be an important driver of momentum and change. After all, Germany can only step into a stronger position internationally as a hub of high-tech activity if we rigorously prioritize and swiftly implement the digital transformation across the various sectors. The ministry's success will be measured by how well it grasps the digital transformation as a central cross-cutting task and consolidates the expertise of the individual ministries in digital projects and activities. What we need is an ambitious digital policy. I also hope that this will allow us to better unlock the potential of our industrial AI solutions, and, for example, that we will be able to put large language models developed in Germany, such as the Teuken-7B model initiated with leadership from Fraunhofer, to work in the business sector faster so they can start having a positive impact."

Economics and energy

"The coalition's plans for energy policy are an important step, laying the cornerstone for a transformation where all technological options are on the table and climate action and competitiveness go hand in hand. In particular, CCS/CCU, the ramp-up of hydrogen and the use of gas as an interim solution are key elements in achieving our climate goals in ways that are environmentally sound and economically efficient. Combining

PRESS RELEASE

April 11, 2025 | Page 2 | 3

economics and energy into a single ministry opens up opportunities for coherent strategies. In this regard as well, it will be crucial to establish close ties between research and application so that we can swiftly roll out the innovations needed for the energy transition.”

PRESS RELEASE

April 11, 2025 | Page 3 | 3

Working together for a strong industrial sector and a resilient society

“The coalition agreement contains important measures that can bolster Germany’s innovative strength and competitiveness. The task before us now is to put those measures into action and make them a reality. The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft stands ready to join in shaping the path ahead and to substantially increase the transfer of knowledge and technology from research to industry — for a strong, innovative industrial sector and a resilient, flourishing society. That’s now more important than ever,” Hanselka concludes.



Fig. 1 Prof. Holger Hanselka, President of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

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