



Deutsches Institut  
für Urbanistik

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## Annual Review







Dear readers,

Of course, like most people, we at Difu thought at the end of 2020 that 2021 would bring a return to a kind of normality. The fact that this was not the case, and that COVID stayed with us, has not only shaped all of our lives, but also how we work. Of course, while our scientists can easily work from home using PCs and video technology, the situation is more difficult for our colleagues who work in administrative roles. What the scientists lose out on when working at home is the informal contact with colleagues, random conversations in the corridor, eating lunch together or encounters in the kitchenette. Difu is highly interdisciplinary and heterogeneous. Informal encounters, which can never take place in this way in the virtual world, can be inspiring and can result in innovative ideas.

In spite of all restrictions, 2021 was a very successful year for Difu. This was only possible thanks to our employees' highly flexible and creative approach to their jobs. We are extremely grateful to you for this.

As an application-focused research institute, we work for practice and learn from practice. That is why our knowledge transfer projects, as well as our further training events, are more than just a second mainstay in addition to our research projects. They give us direct contact with many cities on specific topics and help us build expertise, which we can use in turn in our research projects. As well as the long-standing knowledge transfer projects Service- und Kompetenzzentrum: Kommunaler Klimaschutz (SK:KK) and the Mobilitätsforum Bund, previously Fahrradakademie, two new projects were added last year: the Koordinierungs- und Transferstelle Smart City, whose responsibilities include scientific support research for the Federal model

projects, and the Zentrum KlimaAnpassung as a kind of municipal climate policy counterpart to the SK:KK. You can learn more about the two new projects in this annual review.

Two years ago, we could not have imagined that our Difu seminars and our Difu dialogues would also work so well online. A lot has changed, and some things only work in-person, but some things have become better. We can offer our services faster, it is easier for us to find speakers outside Berlin and we can reach more participants.

The 'Difu in figures' segment at the end of this issue shows that Difu has grown immensely, both in staffing levels and commercially, and now deals with a wider than ever range of subjects with a growing network. That is good for Difu's standing in the community. However, this is an immense challenge for our administrative staff who have to manage this corporate growth. As a result, we are particularly grateful to them.

Finally, we thank all those outside our institute without whom this would not be possible. Our gratitude is from the heart, not just from a sense of obligation. We would like to thank our shareholder, the Association for Municipal Research (Verein für Kommunalwissenschaften, VfK) and the Association of German Cities for allowing us to conduct our research independently and freely. We would like to thank the members of our academic advisory board for their discerning supervision of our work. We appreciate the financial support of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, the Federal State of Berlin and our donors. And we would like to thank our clients and project partners, without whom our work for the cities would not be possible.

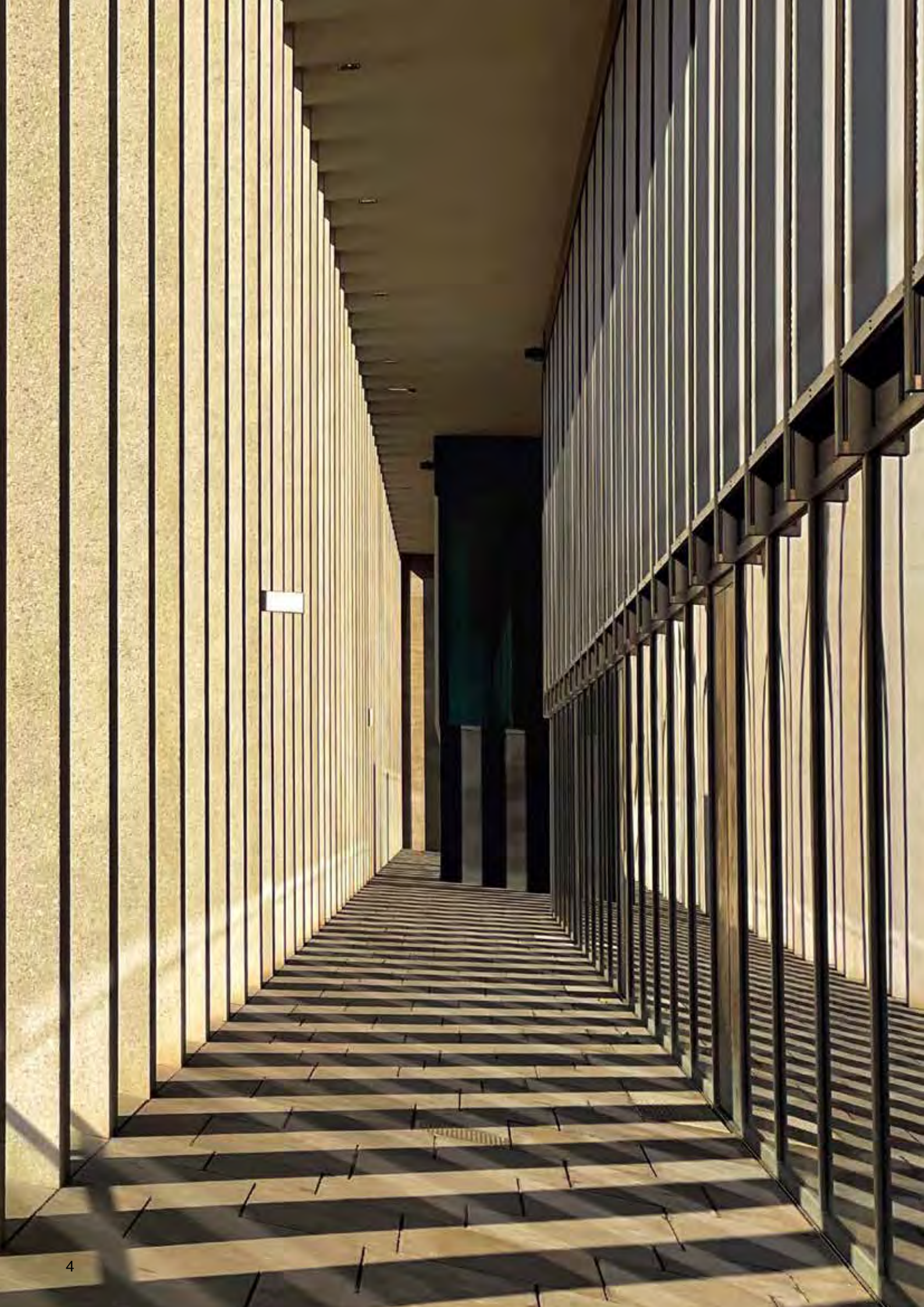
We ask that you maintain your association with the German Institute of Urban Affairs.

I hope you will feel inspired reading this report.

Yours faithfully

Prof. Dr. Carsten Kühl  
Director of Research, Managing Director





# Annual Review 2021

This issue presents a selection of our work from the past year: important findings from our research and other interesting Difu activities and news. Please visit our website for a more comprehensive impression. You can see the full spectrum of our projects, publications and events at [www.difu.de](http://www.difu.de).

The second consecutive year of COVID is now behind us, and the pandemic has the potential to permanently change our society. What does the crisis mean for cities and urban regions? What consequences can be expected in the medium to long term? In 2021, Difu worked with the Association of German Cities to find answers to these important questions.

Even if we ignore COVID, municipalities still face a number of challenges. There are housing shortages in many places. This problem cannot be solved without new builds and funding of social housing construction. Difu is helping municipalities find ways to build more housing in no less than three projects. However, it also appears clear that we have to expect more extreme weather events in future, as the past year has made painfully obvious. Accordingly, we must not only introduce protective measures but also plan and build climate-appropriate towns, districts and buildings. We can use digital technologies for sustainable – and not just in the ecological sense of the word – urban development for the common good. With the new Zentrum KlimaAnpassung and the recently launched Koordinierungs- und Transferstelle Smart Cities, Difu and its partners have now created two more central points of contact for municipalities.

Pedestrian-friendly cities not only increase the standard of living, they are also an important step towards the mobility transition and climate neutrality. In early 2021, Berlin became the first city to adopt a law on pedestrian traffic and invited Difu to contribute its expertise in the Senate administration's new 'Pedestrian traffic' committee.

You can read more about these topics on the following pages.

## Towards more housing construction

There are housing shortages in many German cities. That is why Difu is supporting the housing construction campaign of the German federal, state and municipal governments. One thing is clear: we need new housing and funding for social housing.

Ensuring that all sections of the population have an appropriate place to live is a vital task in prosperous conurbations and university cities. Both the prices of residential property and rents have risen far more sharply than the other costs of living over the past decade. Given the price explosion in the city centres, more and more accommodation seekers are moving to the surrounding areas. However, prices are rising there too, so that the catchment areas for people working in the city centres are becoming bigger and bigger. Starting from a comparatively low level, the price development in Berlin is particularly dynamic. Over a five year period, advertised rents for existing buildings rose roughly 28.80%, and by 55% for initial rentals of new builds. In the freely financed housing construction sector in Berlin, the average initial rents advertised are roughly € 19.60/m<sup>2</sup>. At the price level reached, lower and increasingly also middle-income groups have great difficulties finding housing they can afford. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that far more residential units are becoming exempt from the binding requirements of housing construction support than new units included.

The housing supply problems described above cannot be solved exclusively by building new housing. However, it is also clear that new housing and funding of social housing are essential. The German federal and state governments have already addressed this issue in previous legislative periods with the housing campaign ('Die Wohnraumoffensive') and the Alliance for Housing and Building ('Bündnis für Wohnen und Bauen'). The last Federal Government's target of building 1.5 million new apartments, which was not reached, is now also being addressed by the new Federal Government with the aim of building at least 100,000 social residential units, and a total of 400,000 new units each year. Besides funding for housing construction, the previous

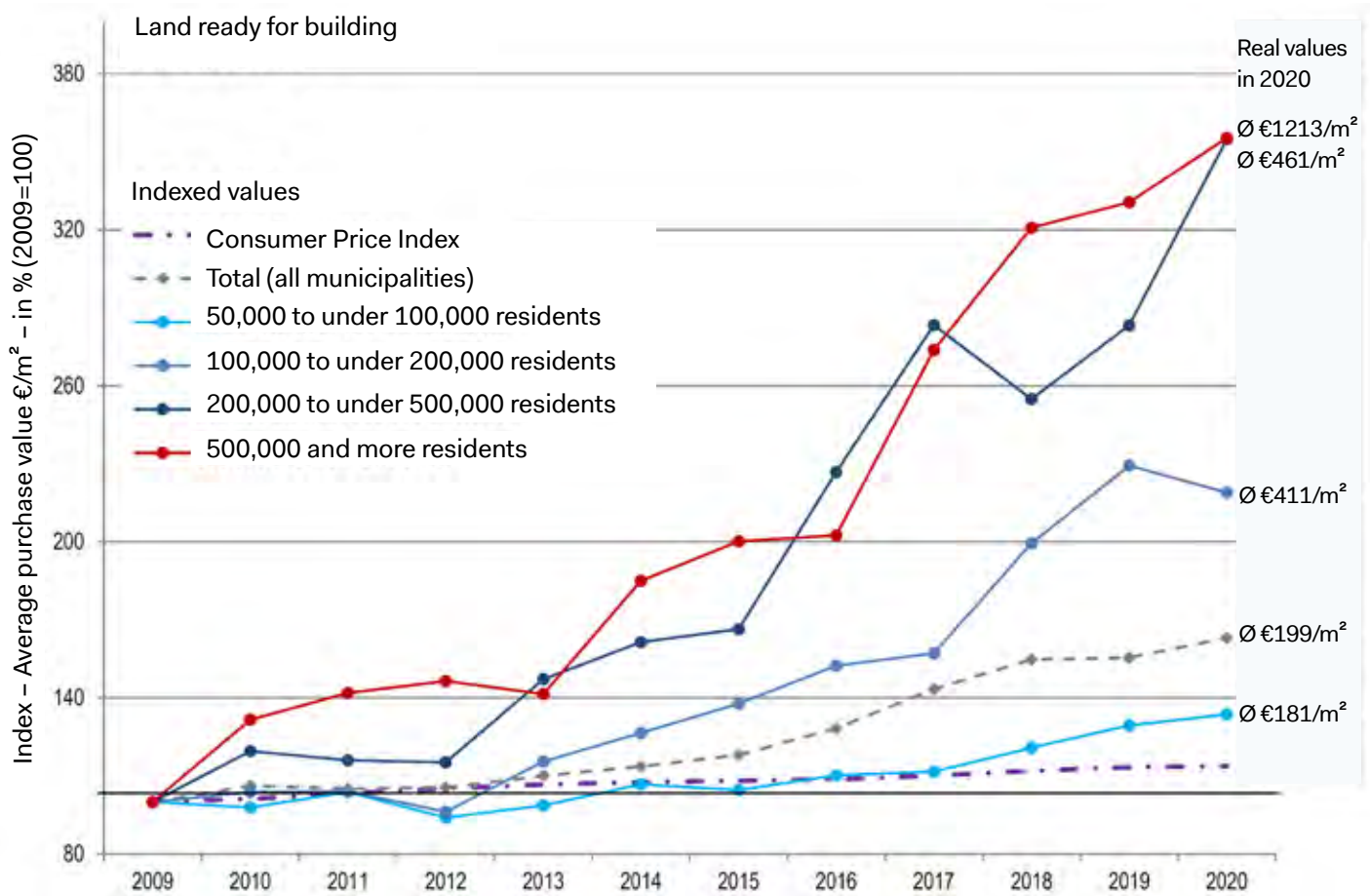
Federal Government also introduced a series of other measures to expedite housing construction. This also includes forming a development land commission, which adopted recommendations to apply and evolve the existing instruments in summer 2019. Among other things, it was recommended that the practical knowledge on the instruments for land development be improved via a campaign of vocational and further training. Difu has addressed this recommendation by supporting the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, BBSR) in three projects.

### 'Baulandbeschlüsse': good, better, appropriate

We investigated the status of the knowledge and application of the land development instruments in a representative municipal survey and in case studies. The result is a representative overview of the practical application of the construction law and land policy instruments. One key finding of the survey is that more and more cities are optimising how they develop land, by adopting development land resolutions ('Baulandbeschlüsse'). These resolutions generally define the fundamental strategic framework (development land strategy), the procedure and the combination of instruments for municipal land development. The priorities for municipalities are to mobilise development land and/or increase the supply of development land, and often also to moderate the price trends for development land.

Through their practice, many cities confirm the significance of municipal real estate policy as a basis for land development. The research found that almost half of the municipalities implement long term land stockpiling, while almost as many use purchase land on an interim basis for land development.





Development of prices for building-ready land by city size (index series 2009–2019)

Source: Regional database of the Federal Government and federal states

Overall, it was apparent that the municipalities use urban development instruments, but that there is no consistent, uniform pattern of use.

To learn more about the application conditions, the results of the municipal survey were fleshed out based on case studies in 14 cities. This gave the participating cities the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. A key finding from the case studies is that there is no one best approach that can be used universally as a blueprint. Practical application always depends on the experience available to an administration. Where there is a lack of experience, the administration first needs to develop it. They often do not have the time and personnel resources to do so. The established responsibilities and processes, e.g. at the interface between planning and property management, can speak for or against certain procedures in development of building land. Accordingly, cities must first establish what land development method they can afford.

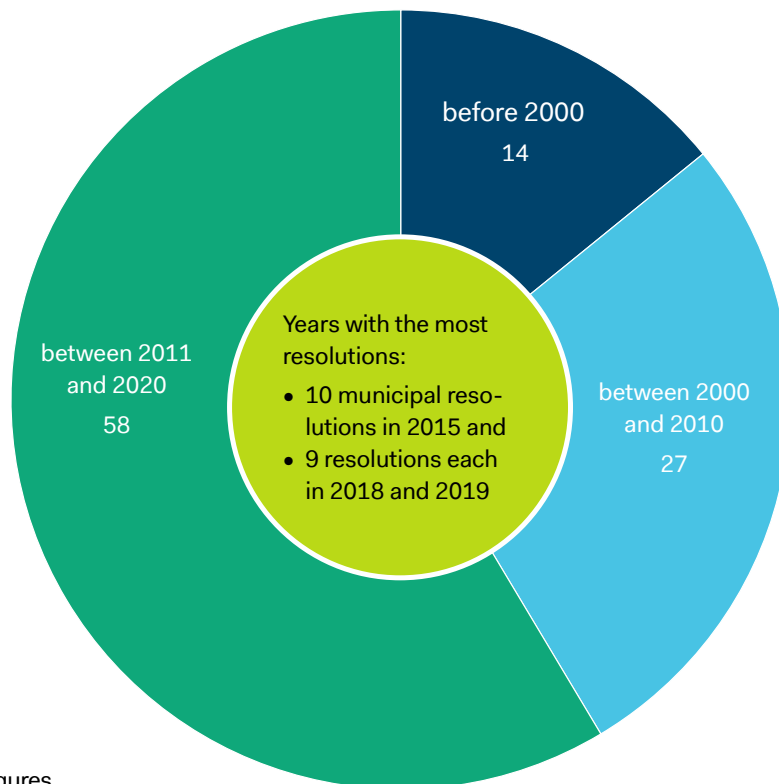
At the same time, the case studies deliver some ideas with the potential to inspire an evolution of

the development land strategies. The findings of this study are to be presented with the results of the survey in the 2nd quarter of 2022.

### 'Baugebot' – a practical check: manageable legal obstacles

A dedicated study, also financed by BBSR, investigated 'development orders' ('Baugebot'). This sovereign instrument allows municipalities to order development of a property by administrative act if there are prevailing public interests. Given the great development potential of unused development sites, the quantity in question is also significant. Based on the finding that this instrument for mobilising building land has barely been used to date in municipal practice, with a few exceptions, we explored the legal and administrative implementation conditions with nine interested municipalities.

This practical check showed that the legal barriers were manageable. A systemic and conceptual approach by the municipalities facilitates an effective procedure. Amicable solutions



Year of the development land resolution/  
adoption of the building land strategy

### Question 13

n = 99, absolute figures

Source: Difu municipal survey 2020

are generally preferred. However, the option of sovereign action is an indispensable backup for a successful mobilisation strategy. A guide containing proposals for an effective and legally watertight procedure will be published in 2022.

### Training campaign: Strategies and instruments for promoting housing construction

Finally, Difu partnered with the Federal Association for Housing and Urban Development (vhv - Bundesverband für Wohnen und Stadtentwicklung), to organise a series of events to teach practical knowledge to the regional practitioners, entitled 'Mobilising and creating development land – Strategies and instruments for promoting housing construction – A federal training initiative for municipalities'. The participants learn how the individual land development instruments are connected, and how to derive an appropriate strategy for building land development and mobilisation for the municipality. The generous federal funding allowed us to offer the event free of charge, enabling us to reach cities and municipalities that rarely take further training due to a lack of financial resources. In total, we have held 13 events to date, and a further four events specifically for career starters.

Further events will follow in 2022. A publication to disseminate the knowledge shared in the training events is also in planning. In addition to this, practical guidelines with sample applications of building land mobilisation and creation are planned. They are to focus on the new instruments introduced or improved by the 2021 Law for the Mobilisation of Development Land ('Baulandmobilisierungsgesetz').



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# Climate change: How municipalities can prepare

An interview with the head of the Zentrum KlimaAnpassung Jens Hasse on the consequences of climate change for cities and municipalities, climate-appropriate urban planning and reconstruction after the flood disaster of last summer.

Difu has been running the Zentrum KlimaAnpassung since 2021 in cooperation with adelphi on behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment. What are the responsibilities of the facility?

Zentrum KlimaAnpassung at Difu informs and advises local stakeholders nationwide on all aspects of preparation for climate change and precautions against the risks of extreme weather events. We aim to gradually get stakeholders to take action to prepare for climate change.

The centre serves municipalities and social institutions in particular.

Exactly. On one hand, it serves cities, municipalities and districts, and on the other social institutions and their supporting bodies. They range from medical institutions like hospitals and nursing services, to education institutes, especially schools and kindergartens, right up to community centres or youth clubs.

What services do you provide?

We have a wide range of different measures. Starting with the centre's website that offers comprehensive initial information, via telephone consulting available on working days, right up to weekly online office hours on various subjects. We even work in areas that have not yet become particularly so active in climate change readiness, or are not in a position to respond to climate change, for example due to a lack of financial resources. We work

with partners in the respective region to offer regional climate workshops, among other things.

Speaking of climate change, what must municipalities prepare for?

The weather services and climate research institutes report constantly increasing average temperatures as well as longer and more frequent heat events, and have done so for years in Germany, too. That has become particularly clear in the past 20 years. For example, 15 of the warmest years have been in the past 20 years.

What impact does that have?

Densely populated areas with a lot of asphalt and little green space heat up particularly and cannot cool down sufficiently at night, so that heat islands are formed. Of course, the situation is different in rural areas such as smaller towns and municipalities. They are at greater risk from drought and solar irradiation, for example when people spend time outdoors. This affects many employees like refuse collectors or construction workers. Occupational health and safety is an important topic when it comes to heat.

Is heat the biggest problem?

There are several climate signals that are relevant for densely populated areas.

Heat is not the only problem: there is also drought, storms can blow trees

over or roofs off, and of course there is torrential rain.

How can cities and regions prevent flooding due to torrential rain?

In particular, they should implement integrated precautions against heavy rainfall, which means ensuring that excess water that cannot be dissipated by the drain system in the event of unusually heavy rain being stored temporarily on the surface. Alternatively, it can be dissipated via 'waterways' in such a way that it cannot cause damage, either into rivers, streams or sports facilities or car parks designed to be able to absorb certain quantities of water without harming people and damaging vehicles or facilities.

And for heat?

It is important to seal less of the surface and preserve natural soils and green spaces. We need more open, green spaces that store very little heat. Trees in particular are extremely important for making our inner cities more attractive, as they give shade. Appropriate shading elements can also be used. There are good examples of this, whether in Vienna or in Southern German cities, where large awnings are suspended over squares, for example. Structures with climbing plants can also provide shady spaces to spend time. And we must definitely also build more publicly accessible fountains or other water features to allow people to cool down.



Water seepage installations in Antwerp

© Ulf Jacob

## What does that mean for urban planning?

The first task for urban planning is to ensure sufficient ventilation. Sufficient space must be left when planning and building so that air can circulate even on hot summer days.

## And at the municipal administration level?

All larger municipalities will have to have heat action plans, which systematically organise things like that, and which involve cooperation by departments of the environment, health and social affairs, along with various other departments, with social institutions and potentially affected population groups. Heat and health protection must also be regular topics at municipal health conferences, as heat-specific health protection will affect us all more in future than in the past.

## How does this work in practice?

France has had very positive experiences with heat action plans, which all municipalities were obliged to introduce after the dramatic heatwave in

2003. More and more plans of this nature have been implemented in Germany since the unusually hot summer of 2018. Municipal heat action plans define standard health protection workflows and suitable warning levels in advance, which enter into force when the weather becomes unusually hot. For example, from a specific point in time, air-conditioned buildings are opened to the public to give people some respite from the heat.

## In principle, that affects us all.

That's right. This overlaps with personal precautions to be taken by the population. It encompasses everything private stakeholders can do for themselves. What do I do when it gets hot? Could flows of torrential rain fill my cellar or underground car park? If so, how do I avoid that? The municipal sewage companies of the major cities like Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin, Stuttgart etc. now have great guides and checklists. And of course there are also various measures to protect against heat, starting with sun protection film on south-facing windows, to green façades or window shading like in Switzerland, Italy or

Spain, up to and including – and of course this goes quite a bit further – totally different building designs.

## Such as?

Ideally, in future, buildings will have green roofs with photovoltaic systems that are also designed to give shade to the roof. And the buildings will protect against the sun in the form of more roof overhangs, internal balconies, arcades or covered pavements. Modern windows keep out heat from the outside, especially in urban areas that heat up a lot.

## What would a city planned for climate change look like?

The city would have enough space and significantly more green between the buildings, which means taller and more climate-friendly buildings. In general, there would be fewer cars on the roads, and more green and open spaces instead.

They not only increase the standard of living and make areas more attractive, they also help seep or capture rainwater locally and use it for irrigation,

for example. That means we need more rainwater retention installations in our cities. In future, these installations will also be integrated in the buildings and communicate with one another via smart city infrastructures. In the event of torrential rain, these stores are emptied early to allow them to absorb as much volume as possible. And in the event of a drought, they can be filled early to spread the load. The available space in the city will serve different functions. For example, underground car parks can serve as intermediate storage in the event of downpours. We call this multifunctional land use. The buildings, façades and roofs would also be lightly coloured. Light colours reflect solar irradiation and prevent the building materials heating up. So the city would be significantly greener, bluer and brighter.

#### Does the vision also include sponge city elements?

The sponge city concept was devised several years ago as an approach to protect against torrential rainfall. The aim is to retain as much rainwater as possible where it falls. The sponge city concept also includes a city's ability to retain water from precipitation for periods of drought. In future, a sponge city should have both capabilities, so to speak.

#### Is the sponge city concept part of climate-resilient urban planning?

Absolutely. Companies, for example, can fit firefighting water tanks on their car parks, logistics or green spaces, to use the rainwater that would otherwise flow off. It can also be used to water trees. That is the multifunctionality that sponge cities offer.

As part of the joint project 'KAHR' (Climate Adaptation, Flooding and Resilience) of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Difu is supporting the reconstruction work in the areas of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate affected by the most recent flood disaster. What does this involve?

We are advising municipalities on how they can take the opportunity afforded to them by the reconstruction to plan and build back better than before. That means making their municipalities more modern, energy efficient and in particular more climate appropriate. And we want to inspire and suggest ways to design districts differently, more innovatively, with less sealing, more green space, with differently designed buildings. In Germany, we know so much about how we should build in the future. Now we have the opportunity to implement this in these areas to help protect them for the future.

The questions were asked by Dr. Sinje Hörlin.

You can find an overview of all Difu projects online:

➔ [difu.de/projekte](https://difu.de/projekte)



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Sun awning on Christian-Broda-Platz in Vienna

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# Smart Cities: Actively shaping change

Difu has been running the Koordinierungs- und Transferstelle Smart Cities as part of a consortium since August 2021. The office aims to help municipalities address digitalisation strategically to achieve sustainable, integrated urban development for the common good. All interested cities, municipalities and districts are to benefit from this. Over 70 municipalities are already participating with their model projects.

The digital transformation of the economy and society is advancing rapidly and already influencing all areas of urban development. As a result it is no wonder that digitalisation is one of the top priorities for municipalities, as shown once again not least by the annual 'OB-Barometer' compiled by Difu. For this reason, Difu started establishing a dedicated research cluster several years ago, and has conducted several major and minor projects since then. The focus is on the impacts of digitalisation on urban development, infrastructures and municipal provision of public utilities and services.

2021 was marked by a particular success story in this context. After working for more than two years on consortium formation and acquisition, Difu succeeded, with other renowned research institutes, in winning the support contract for the 'Smart Cities Model Projects' funded by the Federal Ministry for Building. As part of a Europe-wide tender, the Ministry commissioned a consortium to establish a Coordination and Transfer Office (Koordinierungs- und Transferstelle, KTS) and run it until 2030. Difu is part of the consortium headed up by the DLR Project Management Agency and implemented with institutes of the German Aerospace Centre, Fraunhofer IAO and IESE institutes, the Creative Climate Cities agency for digital urban development, Prognos AG and other partners.

## Extensive expertise: Difu 'Digitalisation and Smart City' research cluster

The Federal Ministry for Building is funding the conceptualisation and trialling of smart city approaches in German cities and municipalities in model projects. The funding programme is intended to help municipalities develop digitalisation strategies for sustainable, integrated urban development for the common good. Funding has now been approved for 73 municipalities and municipal cooperations. Total programme funding of roughly €820 million euros is available. The funding is based on the Smart City Charta adopted in 2017.

The model projects are broken down into a strategy and an implementation phase and have a maximum project term of up to seven years. The individual funding projects are intended to generate added value for all municipalities in Germany. The solutions developed must be scalable and replicable. To make this a success, knowledge transfer is being initiated both between the model projects and with municipalities that are not in direct receipt of funding, as well as national and international experts.

The new transfer office is to put in place the conditions required for this. The goal is for all interested cities, municipalities and districts to benefit from the results of the programme funding.

The office will explicitly integrate existing national and international expertise, such as that available in the municipal umbrella organisations and other interest groups.

Difu is contributing its comprehensive expertise on integrated and sustainable urban development, as well as its

experience in municipal digitalisation strategies to the transfer office.

An interdisciplinary group of Difu scientists has been formed for this and other projects in the 'Digitalisation and Smart City' Difu research cluster.



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## New free service for Difu donors: Keynote speeches on topical subjects

From climate change adaptation and parking space management to municipal participation culture: Our keynote speeches give you input on forward-looking topics of municipal relevance. They are online and free of charge for Difu donors. Bring specialist and management staff in your administration together for a brief exchange; leading figures from politics and business or interested representatives of civil society in your city are also welcome to participate.

You can find a selection of subjects and further information on the Difu extranet at ➔ [difu.de/17143](https://difu.de/17143)

### Interested?

Feel free to contact us and book a keynote on the subject of your choice. We welcome your suggestions for subjects. The speeches can also be combined with in-depth online internal training courses.



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You can find an overview of all Difu events online:

➔ [difu.de/veranstaltungen](https://difu.de/veranstaltungen)











# Cities after COVID

Together with the Association of German Cities, Difu is investigating how cities and urban regions are changing as a result of the crisis, the lessons municipalities can learn from the pandemic and the expected consequences in the medium to long term.

The pandemic situation, which has now been going on for more than two years, reveals weaknesses. Rectifying these weaknesses will ideally leave us better prepared for future crises. Along with the Federal and state governments and civil society, municipal politics and administration have their hands full coping with the current situation, short-term damage limitation and finding pathways to a new normal. At the same time, the municipalities are also developing innovative practices and cultures that could lead to a lasting urban transformation: For example, the forms of urban mobility that have changed during the pandemic could lead to changes in the road infrastructure (e.g. pop-up cycle lanes) or result in public spaces being used in new ways, to name just one example.

Significant structural changes are already becoming apparent in the cities. The option of working from home that has established itself in many companies due to the pandemic could lead to a willingness among households that want to move to consider locations further from city centres when choosing a place to live, with longer commutes becoming acceptable as their frequency declines. This means that the pandemic could have a longer-term impact on the relationship between cities and their surrounding areas, for example when daily commutes between home and the workplace are no longer necessary and rural areas become more attractive as places to live. Many also fear that there could be more empty units in city-centre locations as de-

mand for commercial property declines, but ownership structures often prevent rapid adaptation processes. Urban life comprises in particular sectors that are particularly hard hit by the crisis in economic terms, such as hospitality, retail, entertainment and culture, as well as some segments of the manufacturing industry. As a consequence of the decline in revenue in these sectors, municipal revenues will also decrease while social payments rise.

## Can the crisis inspire innovation?

The RegTransPan project ('Stadtregionale Transformationsprozesse im Rahmen der Pandemiebewältigung und der Post-Pandemie-Phase', Transformation processes in urban regions in response to the pandemic and in the post-pandemic phase), which was launched in 2021, studies transformation processes in German cities in response to the crisis from the perspective of municipal stakeholders. The project aims to identify medium- and assumed long-term changes in selected municipal responsibilities, in order to better understand innovation processes instigated by the crisis, in order to derive recommendations for urban adaptation and transformation processes and explain them based on practical examples. Difu is implementing the joint project funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research with the Association of German Cities as an associate partner.

The project combines the topical subject of the municipal crisis re-

sponse with the goal of sustainability research, in order to future-proof urban change. The conditions for urban development have changed considerably as a result of the pandemic. Decision-makers are becoming increasingly aware of sufficiency and (urban) resilience aspects, and these aspects are increasingly becoming guiding principles for many areas of action. At the same time, expanded forms of (hybrid) participation are becoming more and more important. The joint project focuses on these changes based on the crisis response and in particular crisis resilience, and also complements work in Difu's synthesis and networking project 'Zukunftsstadt' (City of the Future).



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# News on pedestrian traffic policy

Walking is healthy and environmentally friendly, yet is often ignored as a relevant form of mobility. Interview with mobility researcher Uta Bauer

**What is the role of pedestrian traffic in the mobility transition?**

Pedestrian traffic accounts for 22 percent of journeys in Germany, which means that every fifth journey is on foot. In major cities, the percentage is significantly higher at an average of 27 percent. However, its importance is greater than the figures would suggest. Pedestrian traffic has an important hinge function. It plays a key role for local public transport in particular. Passengers generally walk to their stops, but these journeys are not counted. That means that if the route to the stop is attractive, people are more likely to choose public transport. And in cities where there are more people than cars in the streets, the public spaces are more welcoming, increasing the standard of living.

**In 2021, Berlin was the first city to adopt a law on pedestrian traffic. What is planned?**

The Berlin Mobility Act has defined key quality standards for pedestrian traffic and laid out corresponding targets, for example longer traffic light phases, safe crossings, as well as wide and accessible footpaths. And – this must be emphasised in particular – a pedestrian traffic plan is being developed with a city-wide network of pedestrian routes. This means that pedestrian traffic promotion measures are no longer implemented selectively, e.g. in pedestrian zones. Instead, there is a systemic attempt to define attractive and safe pedestrian routes. These networks can provide a basis for urban planning, e.g. when upgrading accessible routes. Personnel is to be hired in the districts, which are responsible for implementation. Two positions are planned for each district. This is a step in the right direction.

Safety is key for pedestrian traffic. The ad-hoc pedestrian traffic policy working group of the

'Verkehrsministerkonferenz' has made specific recommendations on safety. What are they?

The working group met for three months and has submitted a total of 18 proposals, which were unanimously adopted by the Ministers for Transport of the federal states in 2021. They primarily involve recommendations to amend the road traffic regulations, which should be implemented as quickly as possible. Accordingly, the resolutions could of course be more far-reaching. Three aspects are key for safety: From the perspective of pedestrian traffic, parking or illegal parking is one of the most frequent causes of accidents with personal injuries. Footpaths full of parked cars not only impede those who are walking, they also block the view of junctions where pedestrians cross the road. Accordingly, one of the working group's proposals is that cars be required to observe a safe distance of 20 metres at 50 km/h or 10 metres at 30 km/h at T-junctions and junctions. Other instruments are also necessary, such as signposted zones with parking management and amendments to the fines ordinance to curb the proliferation of parking cars. To date, prosecution of illegal parking has not been cost-effective, as the revenue does not cover the costs incurred. As a result, it is often tolerated.

Reducing speed is another priority. A municipal initiative formed last year, with the support of the Association of German Cities, and now numbers over 70 cities as its members. It calls for greater flexibility in establishing 30 km/h zones in urban areas. In the context of the working group, we recommended allowing municipalities to impose consistent speed limits of 30 km/h outside social infrastructure institutions such as childcare centres, schools or residential homes for the elderly.

For example, along routes to schools on main roads, a speed limit of 30 km/h should apply



along the entire stretch of road. There is currently a patchwork of different limits.

Pedestrians must also be enabled to cross streets safely, especially streets with heavy traffic. However, the regulations for ordering the installation of zebra crossings or changing traffic light sequences are very complex. And that was one of our demands: We wanted municipalities to be given more scope.

**On behalf of the German Environment Agency, Difu drew up a framework for a nationwide pedestrian traffic strategy. You co-authored the study 'So geht's'.**

I believe that a nationwide strategy is urgently required. After all, there is also a National Cycling Plan. First of all, people's mindsets have to change. Many people do not even consider walking a form of traffic. Many municipalities do not even have personnel responsible for pedestrian traffic. The Federal Government can help municipalities put pedestrian traffic on the political agenda, for example by formulating action programmes and putting in place funding programmes and, not least, by creating an awareness of the importance of pedestrian traffic.

What is more, the legislative powers and competences for the regulations mentioned above are in federal hands. And they are in urgent need of change.

#### **What can municipalities do to better promote pedestrian traffic?**

At the moment, there are many interesting developments at municipal level. For example, the city of Karlsruhe has introduced 'fair parking'. The city no longer tolerates illegal parking on footpaths. It enforces the Road Traffic Regulations strictly. This was backed up with a comprehensive communication process in all districts of the city, which was critical for acceptance. Aachen has identified 'premium' routes to the city centre – peaceful, as green as possible and with footpaths that are wide enough. The aim is that the centre is easy to access on foot from any district. That is the right approach. Bielefeld is currently preparing a pedestrian traffic strategy including a pedestrian traffic network. It is important to send a signal that pedestrian traffic is a mode of travel that needs a systematic approach, just like cycling or local public transport.

Uta Bauer heads up the Urban and Regional Traffic Team at Difu and represents the institute in various specialist committees. Among others, she is a member of the new 'Pedestrian traffic' committee which was founded by Berlin's senate administration in 2021. The committee advises on and supervises the implementation of pedestrian traffic-related aspects of the Berlin Mobility Act. She was also a member of the ad-hoc pedestrian traffic policy working group of the 'Verkehrsmministerkonferenz'. In early 2021, the 'Verkehrsmministerkonferenz' submitted to the Federal Ministry of Transport a paper with specific recommendations to amend the Road Traffic Regulations from the perspective of pedestrian traffic.



• Uta Bauer  
bauer@difu.de

## New leadership in the Mobility Research Department

Anne Klein-Hitpaß has been the new head of the Mobility Research Department since July 2021, taking over from Tilman Bracher, who has retired after 20 years of service. She is a well-known figure at Difu – having already worked as a research associate to the institute management from 2009 to 2016 and worked on various projects in the Mobility Research Department at Difu. Anne Klein-Hitpaß has over 15 years of experience in transport and mobility research. She worked as project manager for urban mobility at think-tank Agora Verkehrswende, at the Institute of Transport Research of the German Aerospace Centre and at WZB Berlin Social Science Center. Her research interests are the transformation of urban transport systems and the urban transport transition.



Tilman Bracher

### Radverkehr und Verkehrswende Eine Geschichte von Gegenwind und Rückenwind

Edition Difu, vol. 19, 2021, 168 p.

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Difu was founded in 1973 on the initiative of the member towns and cities of the Association of German Cities (Deutscher Städtetag, DST). Difu is a non-profit limited company under German law and has offices in Berlin and Cologne. Alongside the German Federal Government and the state of Berlin, more than 100 municipalities are its donors. Its sole shareholder is the Verein für Kommunalwissenschaften (VfK - Association for Municipal Research).

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Researchers from different subjects work together at Difu on current municipal matters. Be it urban and regional planning, law, geography, social sciences, economy or environmental sciences – we look at the municipalities' topics from different points of views. And we benefit from an excellent network of cities and municipalities, with the research community and with our partner institutes in Germany and abroad.

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You can find an overview of all our employees online:

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The academic advisory board advises the management and the shareholders' meetings on specialist and strategical matters. The advisory board has 20 members. They include representatives from academia, practice, various German ministries and the State of Berlin.

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Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ulrich Battis, Chairperson of the academic advisory board

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