



FRIAS could not have enjoyed a more auspicious start to 2014. The final months of last year brought with them a swathe of decisions that were distinctly echoed in the German press: **1. Management:** A new statute for FRIAS will come in effect by October 31, 2014. The Rectorate has appointed two directors to oversee matters in the interim (Hermann Grabert, theoretical physicist and FRIAS Director since 2007, who will cover natural, technical and medical sciences, and myself, Chair of English language and linguistics and Dean of the Faculty of Philology, to oversee the humanities and social sciences). **2. Core Financing:** In recognising that FRIAS, in its new form, provides “real added value for Baden-Württemberg”, the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts has agreed to provide key funding amounting to 1.2 million euros per year until the end of 2017. A similar amount will be provided jointly by the University of Freiburg and from EU funding obtained by FRIAS. This fixed core budget gives FRIAS the security it needs to plan for the next four years. In addition, a decision should be reached by mid-2014 on whether federal funding will also be granted. Applying for funding from other (third) parties is firmly on the agenda of the new Board of Directors. **3. Research Foci 2014/2015:** Following a call for proposals from across the entire university, in late November a committee of international experts nominated two projects from a five-strong shortlist for funding. The research focus “Designed Quantum Transport in Complex Materials” aims to systematically shed light on the potential of quantum mechanics to solve problems associated with converting light into energy. The second research focus, “Dynamic Alignments and Dealignments in Global Southeast Asia”, is devoted to the multidisciplinary analysis of this strategically important region, which is both highly dynamic in economic terms but also politically unstable. The two research foci will receive funding for a full twelve months starting in October 2014, allowing ten to twelve fellows at FRIAS per research area (or an appropriately higher number in the case of short FRIAS stays).

Above and beyond these three decisions, one must not forget that the 2013/2014 academic year – FRIAS’s first since the dissolution of its four schools – has got off to an extremely successful start. This applies both in terms of its composition and the work the fellows are conducting (by autumn 2014 they will number over 60). FRIAS also continues to provide an important platform for seminars, workshops and conferences of the entire university, most particularly for collaborative research centres and doctoral research training groups. Furthermore, we are naturally very pleased that FRIAS has maintained its excellent reputation throughout the world. This is reflected in the responses from other institutes of advanced studies, and especially by the numerous applications from academics wishing to bring to Freiburg their own funding (often prizes and awards or much-coveted scholarships, as was the case with Mirna Zakić, whose portrait features in this edition) in order to pursue research or publication projects as FRIAS fellows, typically in collaboration with researchers at the University of Freiburg. FRIAS will this year also launch a modest alumni programme allowing former fellows to return for short stays of two to six weeks. It is hoped that this programme will be continued in the future. With so much wind in our sails and such en-

thusiastic support from university bodies and the public alike, 2014 is set to be an extremely exciting year that will shape the mid-term future of FRIAS.

The principal tasks that now lie before us are the following: (a) to select the next-generation fellows for 2014/2015; (b) to select the two research foci for the 2015/2016 academic year; (c) to consolidate the privileged partnership we have with the Université de Strasbourg by means of joint fellowships with the USIAS, and to establish a similar partnership with Universität Basel; (d) to initiate a series of lectures and debates that radiate out into the whole university: these include the FRIAS Lecture, to be held every two weeks from this summer semester onwards, which is particularly aimed at students, as well as the “Freiburger Horizonte” events, which are of course intended for a wider audience; (e) to appoint members to the new committees that will advise and co-govern FRIAS. In the happy event that the considerable ongoing efforts of the Rectorate and the Baden-Württemberg Science, Research and Arts Ministry should result in co-financing being obtained for the Institute from the German government, a decision would also need to be taken this year concerning the structure of further funding programmes as foreseen in the new FRIAS strategy (in addition to the research foci as the main funding programme at the new FRIAS).

Motivation among all those at FRIAS, fellows and employees alike, could therefore not be higher. An uplifting spirit is tangible in every corridor, the crackle of excitement heard in every room! With its efficient, highly-professional team, FRIAS is most definitely on the up again. We welcome all who will continue to provide us with friendly assistance, and perhaps even active support, as advisors, bridge-builders or expert consultants. 2014, here we come!

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