

## Germany

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It is striking how often researchers in Germany mention their appreciation for the chance to pursue blue-sky science. This ability to undertake fundamental, curiosity-driven research without first needing to demonstrate potential applications is especially evident at the Max Planck Society, Germany's flagship research organization and the country's most prolific institution according to Share in the Nature Index, our key metric, which measures contributions to articles in 82 selected natural-sciences journals.

Lucy Aplin, a researcher who moved there from the University of Oxford, UK, to run a lab that investigates the social dynamics of wild populations of songbirds, says nowhere else has encouraged her as much to focus on the blue-sky aspects. Aplin is also a leader in one of Germany's Clusters of Excellence (page S116).

Germany's long-term investment in basic research springs from its tradition of strong and steady science funding. It's also a prerequisite for innovation. In the 2020 Bloomberg Innovation Index, Germany broke South Korea's six-year winning streak to be ranked first. The nation's growing support for its start-up ecosystem is an important factor. Many start-ups are spun out of universities, such as Leibniz University Hannover, where geobotanist and soil-scientist, Simone Strey, conducted preliminary research before co-founding PEAT, the company behind one of the world's largest crop management apps by number of users (page S106). With the proportion of female start-up founders in Germany at just 15.7% in 2020, Strey joins Ida Tin, founder of Berlin-based start-up, Clue, among a growing number of female leaders in Germany's innovation scene. But a similar lack of diversity in the academic sector, where women accounted for just 19.4% of senior academic staff in 2016, is a reminder that, despite its successes, German science can still do better.

**Bec Crew**  
*Senior editor*

### Note on Share:

Nature Index's signature metric, Share, is a fractional count for an article allocated to an institution, city or country/region, that takes into account the proportion of authors on the article whose institutional affiliation is with that institution, city or country/region. For the calculation of Share, all authors are considered to have contributed equally to the article, and the maximum combined Share for any article is 1.0.



**On the cover**  
Ida Tin and Lynae Brayboy from Clue.  
Cover image: Gene Glover

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