

# PRESS RELEASE

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### Science as a lifeline? The Ethics Council discusses the role of science in the climate crisis

On Wednesday, 23 October 2019, the autumn conference of the German Ethics Council took place at the University of Göttingen on the topic "Thinking – Believing – Knowing: Climate Change and the Ethics of Science".

People around the world are calling for swift and at the same time sustainable policies to combat climate change. Science has been assigned a special role in this context since people expect it to provide answers to the most pressing questions of our time.

Right at the beginning of the conference, Peter Dabrock, Chair of the German Ethics Council, appealed to the audience: "We will only be able to meet the challenge of the climate crisis if, despite all our emotions and all our commitment, we take science, its variously substantiated claims to accuracy and its communication challenges seriously; if we defend what it can and should do with regard to the climate crisis." Representatives from climate science, philosophy, political science, sociology, communication science, and law as well as climate activists therefore met in Göttingen to discuss the ethics of climate science.

The speakers agreed that scientific findings can make an important contribution to the assessment of the climate crisis and to providing policy advice. Nevertheless, there was controversy about the political commitment of science. The speakers looked at the different expectations placed on science as well as the necessity of and possible measures for the responsible handling of scientific findings from the point of view of politics, the media and society.

Science can point the way to climate-friendly policies. However, there was agreement that it remains the task of democratically legitimised politics to create adequate framework conditions. In turn, it is up to society to help shape and implement these policies. In this context, scientists and scientific organisations should also see themselves as part of society.

Overall, the Ethics Council recommends to engage in a nuanced and objective debate. The freedom and complexity of scientific research as well as the revisibility of research results must be taken into account, also in order to enable credible scientific advice for politics and society.

The programme of the event, the talks and discussion contributions of the participants, including audio and video recordings as well as a transcript, are available (in German) at:

<https://www.ethikrat.org/weitere-veranstaltungen/meinen-glauben-wissen-klimawandel-und-die-ethik-der-wissenschaften/>

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