

Press release



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Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition hosts its first “Journalist in Residence”

Manfred Ronzheimer to investigate the renewal of innovation journalism in Germany

(Munich, 15.06.2016) The Munich Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition has for the first time established a Journalist in Residence fellowship. Starting on 1 June, Berlin-based science journalist Manfred Ronzheimer will hold the position for three months. Ronzheimer’s focus during this tenure will be on the present situation and the renewal of innovation journalism in Germany.

The Journalist in Residence program is an opportunity that has been offered over the past few years by a small number of scientific institutions in Germany, among them, since 2005, the Cologne Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies and, since 2013, the Berlin Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. Journalists in Residence have the status of a guest scientist and take part in the scientific activities of the host Institute, thereby getting to know the research operations from within. In the course

of the fellowship, the resident journalist also has the opportunity to sit in on ongoing research at the Institute as well as to carry out research on an independent project. This is intended to improve the quality of science journalism, while at the same time introducing the Institute's research staff to ways of improving the communication of research results to the public.

"We live in the age of open science: Science must open its gates even wider while also exploring new channels of communication in society", explains Prof. Dietmar Harhoff, head of the "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" department at the Institute. "We desperately need improvements, especially in terms of communicating the topic of innovation, which is so crucial in economics", adds Harhoff, who also chairs the German government's Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI). "Our Institute is the logical place for a journalist to reflect on the future of his profession – that is innovation!", adds Prof. Josef Drexler, head of the department for Intellectual Property and Competition Law. "We legal scholars have a large gap between our world and the world of the media, and I am interested in what causes this rift", Prof. Reto M. Hilty, the department's co-chair, voices a further expectation.

"Journalists are curious and like to look behind the scenes", says Manfred Ronzheimer, who as a freelance journalist has for years focused on innovation, a subject that gravitates between the classic media branches of science and business. "Normally we journalists have the task of reporting the outcomes of research. As a Journalist in Residence, you can see close up what specific steps are necessary to achieve those outcomes".

In his project, Ronzheimer examines the thesis that, although in Germany the factual significance of innovation is growing, journalistic reporting of the field is dwindling, and is moreover accompanied by a troubling drop in qualitative standards. Via a survey of innovation journalists and communicators in science and business, he hopes to either confirm or refute this hypothesis. A further task is the designing of a "living lab" where a concept of "renewed innovation journalism" can be subjected to a practical test using the new means of media dissemination.

About the Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition

The central focus of research at the Institute is on examining processes of innovation and competition and on developing proposals for designing framework conditions for these processes. The research questions are examined by a law department and an economics department. The

Institute was founded in 1966 as the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Patent, Copyright and Competition Law. In 2013, after the establishment of a new economics department, its name was changed to Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition.

The Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition is one of 83 institutes of the Max Planck Society, one of Germany's leading research organizations. In choosing and executing their research tasks, the Max Planck Institutes are free and independent; thus, each has its own internally administered budget, which can be augmented project-wise by external funding. The research at the Institute must meet the criteria for scientific excellence of the Max Planck Society, which is ensured by regular audits.