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Universities will continue to make a significant contribution to culture, interpretation of society and human existence in the future, just as they do today. In order to ensure that this can happen, however, a clear strategy is needed. A strategy that extends to and even surpasses the boundaries of convention. A strategy for all those who are dissatisfied with our current understanding of nature, humankind and the universe, and who are therefore prepared to venture out of their comfort zones and go forth undeterred in search of solutions.

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We work for
tomorrow



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University without borders

Dear Readers,

By their very nature, universities are awash with no end of dedicated personalities, all of whom have their own individual ideas, approaches and academic areas of interest.

When a university sets out to bring all these visions together in one strategy, the goal must be to find the areas of common ground shared by the most people.

“Transcending boundaries” is one such area of common ground that unites us at the university. And when we talk about this, we mean boundaries in many senses of the word: mental, geographical, social, ideological, technological or historical.

On the next few pages, we would like to present the boundaries that we plan to transcend during the years up to 2035, which will mark 450 years since the founding of the University of Graz, as well as the measures that we intend to adopt to do so.

Peter Riedler
Rector

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To have a **vision** is to form a mental picture of something that does not yet exist. And then, step by step, to turn that idea into a reality.

Borders and boundaries we are transcending as we pursue our vision:

In order to conduct research at the highest level, we, as a university, are committed to a **culture of recognising achievement** that articulates modern requirements for all career stages.

In order to turn early-stage researchers into international trailblazers, we create **exceptional conditions** for the most talented among them.

In order to be a consistently sustainable university, we achieve ambitious goals in a timely manner by employing and swiftly implementing targeted measures relating to topics such as **diversity and climate neutrality.**

In order to be able to offer systemic solutions to burning issues of social relevance, we also actively **explore** unpopular topics, and offer platforms for transdisciplinary formats.

In order to give more students the opportunity to attend university and complete a degree, we foster **commitment** on the part of students and teaching staff as well as on the part of the university itself.

In order to make the range of studies we offer fit for the future, we ensure **flexible curricula** and develop modules that transcend restrictive disciplinary boundaries.

In order to be a **place of employment of the future**, we create a lively and vibrant campus with a modern infrastructure, where employees find a performance-oriented and motivating organisational culture.

In order to increase the visibility of our university as an academic hub, we transcend **institutional boundaries**, work with cooperation partnerships to harness the potential of our location and, as a result, also enhance the transfer of knowledge.

Ethics are an expression of how things “should be” and can thus be seen as the “conception of the desirable”. In this section, we define the standards preferred and practised at our university in terms of aspirations and attitudes.

Taking responsibility for the future

In an effort to fulfil our commitment to maintaining freedom of research and teaching, we constantly grapple with social, political and technological challenges. Actively contributing research findings to the social discourse and thus establishing a sound basis for people to pass judgement and make decisions is as much a matter of course for us as it is a matter close to our hearts. This is how we fulfil our individual, institutional and social responsibility.

Taking a holistic approach to education

We impart knowledge, bring something new to the table and offer guidance in a global and dynamic knowledge-driven society. Our studies and courses are transparent and comprehensive, and we address target groups in different life phases and situations. We support our students with their intellectual and personal development and teach critical thinking as a core skill. And we encourage them to let us know if things aren't working out.

Quality means exceeding expectations

We see ourselves as a leading institution with high standards in regards to teaching and research. While any organisation that promises this level of quality can expect a competitive advantage, it cannot simply rest on its laurels when it comes to these standards. In order to keep this promise, we are committed to cultivating an all-encompassing quality culture, which we live and breathe each and every day. And we want to surprise ourselves and others in the process.

Simply living diversity without restriction

We see ourselves as an institution for education and research that is sensitive to diversity, that follows the principles of gender equality, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination and that takes action to remove barriers facing disadvantaged groups. As an anti-bias organisation, we ensure an environment in which the wide range of experiences, skills and areas of potential of our students and staff is not just recognised, but is promoted to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Blazing a trail when it comes to transparency

Within communities, transparency creates a feeling of trust, as it gives people a sense that decisions and processes are open, genuine and fair. With this in mind, we attach great importance to making our decisions understandable to others. We strive to ensure that all relevant decision-making processes are substantially comprehensible. This comprises the allocation of resources, the filling of positions and the assessment of academic and research achievements.

The **history** of the University of Graz dates back to 1585. With two faculties and 600 students.

Archduke Charles II sees the establishment of a Catholic university by the Jesuits as an important step in the Counter-Reformation: according to the university's charter, it intends for its subjects to "be brought back to the old state of piety and into the bright light of the Catholic faith". In a theological and a philosophical faculty.

Under Francis I of Austria, it was re-instituted as a university. Old or new freedoms in research and teaching at what is now called the "Karl-Franzens-Universität" are, however, out of the question. During the pre-March era, strict censorship was enforced, and academics in particular were monitored and spied upon.

The university moved to its current campus. Financial problems cause a delay to the inauguration of the new main building in 1895. Four years later, the Botanical Garden is established. 100 years after this, work begins on the construction of the new greenhouses, which would turn out to be a highlight of the campus architecture thanks to the intentional visual contrast of the constructions to the late-historicist style of the rest of the grounds.

1585

1782

1827

1848

1872

1897

"For the sake of maximum utility", universities are transformed into "lyceums" by order of Joseph II, sporting more streamlined organisational structures and focusing strongly on professional practice. The University of Graz is no exception, and is also demoted as such by court decree.

The repressive measures are unable to halt the spread of liberal and national ideas at Austrian universities: in March 1848, academics from the University of Graz joined the revolutionary movement, setting the course for fundamental reforms to the university system.

Universities gradually began to admit female students starting in 1897; the first step was to admit them to study within the philosophical faculties. In 1902, Seraphine Puchleitner became the first woman to receive a doctorate at the University of Graz. However, it took another three decades before a woman was first authorised to teach. The historian Mathilde Uhlirz became a tenured lecturer in 1932.

After the annexation of Austria in 1938, known widely as the “Anschluss”, many distinguished professors and students, particularly those of Jewish descent, were ousted for their ideology and race. This injustice led to the weakening of the university in the years that followed – something that took a long time to recover from even after the Nazi regime came to an end.

The University of Graz’s Human Rights Award is awarded to the Nobel Peace Prize winner the Dalai Lama in 2002. Other winners of this award include Jon Sobrino in 1992, Simon Wiesenthal in 1994, Vera Jovanovic, Branka Raguz and Esad Muhibic in 1997, the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), London, in 2007, Daniel Barenboim in 2011 and Volker Türk in 2016.

In its 438th year of existing, the university boasts more than 30,000 students (winter semester 2022/23), 62 percent of whom are women and 17 percent of whom are international students. Of the 4,681 members of staff, around 3,300 hold academic roles. The budget for 2023 is €298.2 million, €34.8 million of which comes from third-party funds allocated to research activities.

1938

1975

2002

2004

2023

The establishment of a new Universities Act (UG) leads to an enormous surge in applications, thanks in no small part to a high degree of autonomy and the opening up of universities. Whereas the University of Graz had just 9,800 students in 1975, it had grown to accommodate more than 20,000 students just ten years later.

The University of Graz and Graz University of Technology resolve for their two natural science faculties to work closely together on research and teaching activities as part of a groundbreaking project. 21 joint studies with around 5,300 students are currently under way. The construction of the NAWI Graz Center of Physics is set to be completed by 2030.

1923

Fritz Pregl
Nobel Prize in Chemistry

1927

Julius Wagner-Jauregg
Nobel Prize in Medicine

1933

Erwin Schrödinger
Nobel Prize in Physics

1936

Otto Loewi
Nobel Prize in Medicine

Victor Franz Hess
Nobel Prize in Physics

1973

Karl von Frisch
Nobel Prize in Medicine

Today, the University of Graz provides a space for outstanding research to be conducted – in a broad, interdisciplinary range of subjects and in five so-called Fields of Excellence:

BioHealth

... is a consortium of researchers from molecular biosciences, chemistry and pharmacy working in the field of life sciences.

Researchers work together to develop a molecular understanding of diseases and their interventions. The aim of BioHealth is to reach a better understanding of the causes of disease-related changes at the molecular level.

This knowledge can then be used to develop innovative interventions aimed at maintaining or restoring good health throughout a patient's life, particularly in the context of ageing.

In a nutshell: BioHealth works in various fields of research to develop solutions to ensure that people can enjoy long and healthy lives.

Climate Change Graz

... has summed up its mission in one sentence: “understanding change to address the climate crisis”. In order to understand such a complex phenomenon, assess the consequences thereof with scientific precision and develop solution strategies, close collaboration between the most diverse disciplines and social actors as well as a strong regional and international network is required. The Field of Excellence Climate Change Graz is based on many years of research experience and the expertise of researchers from various disciplines.

This also prompts the creation of new framework conditions that are intended to encourage organisations, companies and people to change their behaviours.

Complexity of Life: COLIBRI

... is the interfaculty initiative for research into complex systems of biological and social life. Humanity – as a “superorganism” – is forced to contend with a host of profound changes. All species and the communities they form are complex networks of interaction consisting of numerous components that are mutually influential and therefore difficult to understand or predict. Only by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the complex systems in our living environment can society prepare for these changes. The interdisciplinary understanding of these kinds of systems should provide the worlds of science, business and politics with a vital basis for making decisions with principles of sustainability in mind.

Dimensions of Europe

... unites researchers from five faculties and addresses processes of social transformation of both past and present. It investigates the changing discourse about Europe and the transfer of concepts, values and ideas. These developments are particularly apparent in South Eastern Europe, where “Europeanisation” is a complex, historically evolved process; this is compared with developments in other regions. Relevant dimensions in this context are politics, business, culture and social co-existence. These threads also suggest a critical reflection on the terms “centre” and “periphery”. This Field of Excellence builds on the University of Graz’s historical emphasis on South Eastern Europe.

Smart Regulation

... focuses on research topics relating to the smart regulation of technological, social, and economic innovations: digital data, robotics, Industry 4.0, artificial intelligence, self-driving cars and synthetic biotechnology are technological developments that bring about major changes to the existing legal, economic and social environment.

Researchers from four faculties dedicate themselves to these and other issues that emerge with regard to both existing and future models of regulation, behaviour management and the creation of incentives that guide the decisions of individuals, companies and society.

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What is needed to ensure that outstanding research can be conducted? Even though it is rarely said so openly: no university is better than its researchers. First-class appointments, a broad range of opportunities for early-stage researchers and the appropriate framework conditions form the basis for the University of Graz to become one of Europe's leading research institutions by 2035.





Excellence in the life sciences advances groundbreaking research and innovations that aim to improve people's lives and support their health.

Enquiring minds can change the notion of history – as demonstrated by the discovery in the University Library, which could fundamentally transform the way in which books are dated.



Key objective #1: **Conduct research at the highest level**

We do fundamental research that is solution-oriented, innovative, relevant to society. Leading-edge fields of research are identified and actively promoted. They gain international attention, are well connected and are a source of pride for our university. We can recruit and retain top researchers in these fields in particular. At the University of Graz, high performance is considered standard. To measure this performance, modern specifications are agreed upon for all career stages and transparently presented and recognised. The university's academic personnel structure is strongly oriented towards performance in research and teaching. An increasing number of national and international large-scale research projects are being promoted thanks to the availability of suitable support measures and incentives.

Establishing an activity framework

The expectations of researchers at the various career stages are subject to constant change. The University of Graz's Activity Framework makes the expectations of our researchers with regard to their tasks in research, teaching, promotion of junior researchers, outreach and self-administration transparent. It thus also serves as a basis for qualification and appointment agreements and can be used as a tool for strategic staff planning and performance evaluation. In conjunction with this, a new incentive system is also being introduced to reward outstanding performance.

Focusing on attracting EU research projects

Based on the European Research Area strategy, the reputation of the University of Graz is gaining such international prestige that it is seen as a beacon for international researchers. Success in acquiring third-party funds from competitive international funding programmes such as Horizon Europe and the subsequent EU Research Framework Programme thus has a major impact on the university's visibility in the field of research.

In order to further boost the university's success in the renowned excellence programmes of the European Research Council (ERC) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and to gain exposure in topic-oriented fields, advisory and funding support is being expanded.

Key objective #2:

Turn early-stage researchers into international trailblazers

We provide high potentials with an attractive working environment and extensive international networking opportunities. They can take advantage of customary international framework conditions and resources to successfully launch their academic careers. At the University of Graz, career positions are created in key strategic fields of research for outstanding junior researchers (in particular recipients of ERC and FWF START awards, MSCA fellows, and ESPRIT and Elise Richter scholarship holders).

Establishing a Research Careers Campus

Our doctoral and postdoc students operate in networked research groups and are thoroughly prepared for successful careers as up-and-coming researchers on the global stage.

The “Research Careers Campus” supports junior researchers through specialised training and mobility programmes as well as networking and collaborations with other scientific institutions and commercial enterprises. This serves to empower early-stage researchers at a critical stage in their careers, enables better integration and inclusion of this group, which is so vital to research at the University of Graz, and shines a spotlight on their academic activities.

Applying ERC profiling and introducing visiting awards

By providing them with the relevant tools to apply for funding, the University of Graz ensures that promising talents can reach their full potential and enrich the research landscape both nationally and internationally.

As part of the ERC profiling initiative, high potentials from the pool of early-stage researchers are identified early on and given targeted support when it comes to applying for ERC Starting Grants and other comparable competitive funding programmes (e.g. START).

As a further measure in the run-up to the submission of applications, mobility grants are awarded, enabling junior researchers to complete guest residencies at internationally outstanding research institutions. This gives them the opportunity to further bolster their personal research profile and be part of an international network.

What makes universities attractive to students?

Anywhere else, you would probably hear the response that they are educating the leaders of tomorrow. And that is indeed one way to look at it if you restrict yourself to viewing universities as educational institutions. But the University of Graz wants to go one step further: it wants to transcend the boundaries of subjects, help shape the professions of the future and thus epitomise the claim that "we work for tomorrow".



*Study programmes have to have their finger **on the pulse of the times** in order to interest young people in the future. The Master's module "Digitalisation – Data Science" can be cited as a successful example of this and is available for all students to participate in.*

Commitment is an essential quality that our university expects from its students and staff. And, of course, from itself.



Key objective #3: **Give more students the opportunity to complete a degree**

We are increasing the proportion of students who are actively studying after being successfully onboarded. Our range of studies are designed in such a way that they can be completed quickly and efficiently. What's more, we also jointly develop study programmes in the context of international cooperation partnerships, such as the Arqus partnership and interdisciplinary initiatives, in a concerted effort to create an attractive range of courses and offer students the opportunity to build an international network. At the University of Graz, we foster commitment on the part of both students and teaching staff. This is seen in the active encouragement and support of the students along their academic journey.

Creating framework conditions for efficient studying

Consciously choosing a study programme creates a deeply rooted sense of identification with the university and commitment on the part of the students. For its part, the university will do everything in its power to strengthen and cultivate this commitment to its students. We want new students to feel welcome, supported and guided, particularly when they are just embarking on their study programme. Personal professional support and smooth administrative processes are an absolute must in this regard.

An evidence-based approach is adopted to ensure that any obstacles in the course of studies are identified, and the optimisation of study programmes and improvement of framework conditions for successful studying are explored.

Boosting attractiveness for students

To be clearly visible to all as a leading university campus with attractive teaching subjects and research topics, we purposefully communicate with future students in Austria and abroad. Those interested in taking a degree will find on our website an exciting and future-oriented range of study options, and especially during their first weeks on campus, they will experience spirited engagement. In particular, we are keen to address an increasing number of students from neighbouring countries, but also from outside the EU, and have expanded our range of English-language curricula for this purpose – not to mention our multilingual campus. We wish to establish a supportive and opportunity-rich learning environment in an effort to appeal to all students.

Key objective #4:

Make the range of studies we offer fit for the future

The range of studies we offer, which will gain international attention in the future, take a modern approach to preparing students for the working and living environments of tomorrow. Students are stimulated by motivating teaching methods, coaching offers and new forms of learning support. The curricula at the University of Graz are flexible and modules can be combined according to individual interests.

Establishing Master's modules and a range of modularised studies

Building on our positive experience with the interdisciplinary "Master's modules plus", this offer is set to be expanded further and integrated into as many curricula as possible.

In addition to the "Master's modules plus", more specialised modules and microcredentials are being introduced. These modules can then be integrated into the curriculum by students according to their personal interests.

Imparting skills and interdisciplinary knowledge

Skills-based learning is becoming an increasingly favoured phenomenon. Not only does it aim to impart knowledge to students, it intends for this process to be linked to the targeted acquisition of skills. In order to prepare them for contemporary labour market requirements, students are thus given the opportunity to successfully apply the skills they have acquired in the real world.

This also includes interdisciplinary knowledge, which we specifically integrate into our range of courses and continuously expand. Educational projects should increasingly be designed in such a way that they can be used as a basis for subsequent research cooperation projects. Challenge-based learning introduces students to problems in society and the business world and gives them opportunities to develop their own solutions.

What makes a university relevant to society? When it and its researchers address uncomfortable topics and ask questions whose answers are not always gladly received. Above all, however, when it not only asks questions, but offers solutions, points out alternatives and focuses on people's concerns. This is how the University of Graz continues to be perceived as contemporary, even after 450 years.



Third Mission is the term that universities use to describe the task of engaging with society on challenging issues. We do this, for example, on the topic of the climate crisis.



High tech in the apiary?
If you want to compete with the world's top researchers, you naturally have to cross technological boundaries in order to satisfy your challenging curiosity.

Key objective #5: **Be a consistently sustainable university**

We fulfil our responsibility to society. That is why the University of Graz has committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2040 by adopting and rapidly implementing a series of targeted measures, accompanied by participatory discussion processes. Our expertise will have a greater impact on society thanks to the corresponding transfer of knowledge.

At the University of Graz, we live and breathe diversity, variety, solidarity and fairness as an essential part of our organisation. With a view to creating a future worth living, we provide recommendations for action that focus on the present, are appropriate to individual situations and put people at the heart of the matter.

Living sustainability and climate protection

In almost no other field is our responsibility as a social pioneer more evident than in the field of climate protection. The University of Graz plays a leading role here and the focus areas of climate change and sustainability have an impact on society.

Our researchers are very present in the public debate and are more motivated than ever to offer solutions to the climate crisis. A good example of this is the university's carbon management scheme, which allows the university's academic expertise to be applied at other institutions. At the university itself, it is a central building block for achieving the goal of climate neutrality by 2040 at the latest.

Promoting equal opportunities, gender equality and diversity

The University of Graz sees diversity as a source of added value and strives to provide all its members with a level playing field when it comes to opportunities to develop their potential. Successful, prosperous, creative and productive coexistence requires us to dismantle prejudices and disadvantages, offer effective protection against discrimination and support groups that do not experience the equality of opportunity they need in order to unleash their skills and abilities. In an effort to make progress in this regard, we focus on ensuring that the ratio of male to female staff members is balanced, that we are sensitive to gender and diversity in our structures and workforce, and that we integrate the gender dimension in the content of our research and teaching.

Key objective #6: **Offer systemic solutions to burning issues of social relevance**

We don't shy away from our responsibilities and feel that it is our duty to play a role in finding solutions to social challenges and to enable action to be taken on the basis of scientific knowledge. We contribute to such discussions by formulating socially relevant questions from a systemic perspective, investigating them through interdisciplinary collaboration and finding answers based on independent research. The University of Graz creates platforms for transdisciplinary formats ("living labs") pursuant to the Open Science approach. In this context, the digital transformation supports the creation of new forms of networking and a spirit of openness in university research, teaching and administration.

Living labs and transdisciplinary interface management

Societal engagement means taking a closer look at issues such as justice and democratisation and facilitating participatory, transdisciplinary debates and research that turn those affected by such issues into active participants. Having said that, however, the forms of science communication and education that have been adopted to date do not provide enough scope for this to happen.

By establishing living labs as transdisciplinary formats for cooperation between science, students and society, it will be possible to develop appropriate application-oriented solutions. Living labs are a (real or virtual) space where stakeholders come together repeatedly over an extended period of time, contributing their different types of knowledge and experience and working together to explore how solutions can be developed and implemented.

Accepting the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation

The University of Graz has defined digitalisation and, in particular, the social challenges it presents, as one of its key action points. Our digitalisation strategy is aimed at shaping the digital transformation and the role of the university. The digitalisation of teaching and the expansion of digital infrastructure and services are important building blocks in this strategy. Those new possibilities for networking, openness, transparency and cooperation with regard to publications, data and software, teaching materials and infrastructures that the digital transformation brings with it are leveraged in the context of "Open Science".

How does an academic hub gain international prestige? As a university, we lie at the heart of Graz and Styria. But that is not enough for us. The University of Graz wants to build a bridge to South East Europe, be the first port of call for international cooperation partnerships and be regarded as one of the most sought-after destinations for the international scientific communities of all subjects.



Hungering for knowledge since 1585.

Looking at the world from new, exciting perspectives – this is how researchers at the University of Graz have earned international acclaim for their alma mater.



Leaping into the future.

Together with Graz University of Technology, the University of Graz is building the “Center of Physics” on its campus – offering enormous potential and appeal far beyond Austria’s borders.



Key objective #7: **Be seen as a place of employment of the future**

We are tackling the challenges of the future head on and finding ways to make the most of major changes such as the demographic shift or the impact of artificial intelligence. New recruiting strategies, employer branding and multiculturalism are important cornerstones of our personnel strategy. The vibrant and attractively designed “Living Space Campus” and our modern infrastructure are also milestones on the way to becoming a place of employment of the future.

Creating a performance-oriented and motivating corporate culture

The objectives of the University of Graz can only be achieved with highly motivated and well-trained staff. That is why we attach considerable importance to their selection, their professional and personal development and the development of performance-based career prospects.

We implement measures that strengthen our position as an attractive employer, both within the institution and to the outside world, while also increasing our employees' identification with the University of Graz. We are, for example, breaking new ground in the field of recruitment by providing targeted support with the onboarding of new employees and adopting new appointment strategies, such as team appointments and interdisciplinary appointments. We support our university members in line with their life situation and career stage by applying formats tailored to individual target groups and appropriate framework conditions.

Re-imagining the concept of the campus as a living environment

A university campus is subject to a string of very heterogeneous requirements. The University of Graz provides the necessary and sustainable infrastructure for future-oriented research and teaching and continues to develop the campus as a modern research, teaching and learning environment by constructing a host of striking new buildings and renovating existing ones. The aspects of sustainability are incorporated into all planning and implementation phases.

We are also in the unique position of having a large green campus, but one that is still close to the city centre. By adopting a holistic concept, we have been able to create a place where staff, students, alumni and friends of the university can meet and network, at both events and informal occasions.

When it comes to the design of the campus, we are making our research more visible and giving students and academics, particularly those from other disciplines, the opportunity to experience it.

Key objective #8: **Increase the visibility of our university as an academic hub**

We work closely with other institutions on specific matters relating to the fields of teaching, research and administration in order to harness our full potential through synergies, to expand our range of services and, subsequently, to strengthen the transfer of knowledge. As an initiator and co-creator of social, economic and technological developments, the effective transfer of research results and inventions to the world of business and society is essential to the University of Graz.

Taking a cross-institutional approach to research and teaching

Although the University of Graz is the largest player in the academic hub, international comparisons demonstrate the boundaries and limits of individual universities – which is why close cooperation in research and teaching between the institutions within the hub and even those further afield is crucial in order to survive in the competitive global arena. We are therefore strengthening our cooperation with other universities and bolstering our interdisciplinary networks and (inter)national cooperation partnerships in order to better harness the potential of all participating institutions and to expand our services and offerings. By intensifying cooperative research projects with strong partners, we can increase our scientific output and boost the visibility of our research achievements – and thus also the visibility of the University of Graz.

Strengthening knowledge transfer at all levels

The University of Graz boasts potential for innovation in all academic fields, which allows us to address socially relevant topics. In addition to networking and cooperation in the university sector, the practical orientation of scientific achievements will become even more important in the future than it has been in the past, as will using questions posed by society and the business world as inspiration for research questions. By escalating our activities in the field of foundations, start-ups and cooperative projects with industry partners, we are increasing the transfer of knowledge at this level. In order to proactively promote dialogue and discourse between the world of science and the public, we focus on effective science-to-public formats under the umbrella of science communication. The aim here is to spark fundamental interest in science and to restore confidence in it across all social groups.

Epilogue. The University of Graz has committed itself to the motto: "We work for tomorrow." Because we see uncertainties as opportunities. And because we create space. Space for the questions that truly matter. For critical thinkers, for architects of the future, for rebellious dissatisfaction with the way things are, for social relevance and for the digital storm, for often surprising answers.

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