

## Refund Real Travel Costs!

– A statement by the *Die Junge Akademie* | 19 November 2019 –

As researchers and members of *Die Junge Akademie*, we travel relatively often, and often internationally. We therefore find ourselves in a conflict between global personal exchange and research in the sciences and the ecological sustainability of travel. The costs for the environment – and, hence, for our own future – have to date not been included in the ticket price. As scientists, however, we are acutely aware of these additional costs. According to IPCC estimates, the atmosphere can now absorb a maximum of 1000 additional gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> in total before irreversible consequences ensue [1]. For each individual person, that equals about 100 tons. A single roundtrip flight between Frankfurt and New York consumes about 2.5 tons per capita [2].

We as *Die Junge Akademie* urge a clear and fast cultural change regarding travel by academics according to the principles:

Avoid, Reduce, Compensate.

For all journeys that we cannot avoid in our capacity as researchers, the possibility should exist of balancing out the resulting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and being refunded for the costs incurred therein. Although, for example, the German government has been compensating the CO<sub>2</sub> it emits through travel since 2014 [3], there are no comparable regulations for all public employees at the federal and state levels, for which a compensation for business trips by the respective budgets would readily be possible.

We therefore demand binding regulations that would enable the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of every official journey to be compensated and the incurred costs to be refunded.

This refund of incurred CO<sub>2</sub> compensation costs must of course go hand in hand with a high degree of transparency and a consistently exacting standard in selecting projects. Some members of *Die Junge Akademie* have already begun privately covering the costs of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compensation, even when traveling on official business.

We regard this demand as a small, first step in initiating an urgent and essential cultural change in travel and greater reflection on making research activities more sustainable. By demanding this step, we hope to initiate and help conduct a critical debate mapping out the conflict between a necessarily global and integrated research community and the vital need for ecological sustainability.

To affirm our demand, we as *Die Junge Akademie* have entered a voluntary commitment to avoid as much as possible short-haul flights on journeys under 1000 km which can be accomplished using other means of transport.

Paying the true cost of travel including priced-in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, will make long journeys substantially more expensive and infrequent. This effect is welcome and should encourage researchers and their sponsors to think twice about the actual necessity of each individual journey for the practice of academic work.

### References:

[1] see e.g. statement on climate goals 2030 of the Leopoldina

<https://www.leopoldina.org/en/topics/thema-klimaziele-2030/klimaziele-publikationen/#c10379>

2] The amount of CO<sub>2</sub> the environment must absorb per flight can be calculated using the site [atmosfair.de](http://atmosfair.de). One round-trip economy class flight Frankfurt - New York on a Boeing 767-200, for example, corresponds to some 2.5 tons CO<sub>2</sub>-Äquivalent. In comparison: To reach the 1.5°C goal, each person must reduce their annual budget to an average of 2.3 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. (IPCC Chapter 2.2 and <http://climatepositions.com/ipcc-report-limiting-global-warming-to-1-5oc-requires-45-co2-reductions-by-2030-compared-to-2010-and-zero-emissions-by-2050-but-which-countries-are-to-reduce-how-much/>)

[3] For 2014: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/bundesregierung-kompensiert-alle>

for 2015: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/die-bundesregierung-reist-weiterhin-klimaneutral>

for 2016: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/bundesbedienstete-reisen-weiter-klimaschonend>

for 2017: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/bundesregierung-bundesbehoerden-reisen-klimaneutral>

für 2018: <https://www.atmosfair.de/de/deutsche-bundesregierung-kompensiert-emissionen-der-dienstreisen/>