

POTSDAM SUMMER SCHOOL

Press Release

"Facing Natural Hazards" – the Second international Potsdam Summer School will Start on 14 September 2015

Potsdam, 10 September 2015

The growing world population, climate change, rapid urbanisation, and the international interdependence of economies are all increasing our vulnerability to natural hazards. Such major global challenges are the focus of the second Potsdam Summer School on "Facing Natural Hazards". From 14 to 23 September 2015, 40 young professionals from 28 countries will meet with renowned scientists from Potsdam's Earth and Environmental Science institutions as well as with international experts. Participants will discuss the most pressing scientific and socially relevant issues concerning natural hazards. Earth and climate scientists, oceanographers, and mathematicians will exchange ideas and personal perspectives with social scientists, industry representatives, and politicians. Why do we tend to play down certain natural hazards while we dramatise others? What can we do in future to protect us from natural hazards? These questions will not only be discussed among the participants, but will also be addressed in a public lecture by the risk researcher Prof. Dr. Ortwin Renn on 21 September in Potsdam's Hans Otto Theatre.

Given the fact that more and more people are affected by natural hazards, dealing with risk research is a crucial issue. Earthquakes, volcanic activity, intense rainfall, floods and droughts are just a few examples of natural events that bring with them major challenges for society. In recent years, devastating earthquakes and dramatic climate capers have, in a terrifying manner, made it clear that considerable risks exist for people and the economy alike. These risks are formed at the interface of natural processes and human activity. An integrated risk management for the various processes therefore requires not only a solid understanding of the underlying natural processes, but also needs to take into consideration the associated political and societal tolerance limits. The complex dynamics precipitated by combining hazards and vulnerability requires new approaches in risk management and the ways in which our society deals with the risk.

Beyond all disciplinary boundaries, the participants of the ten-day Summer School will discuss, together with scientists, politicians, business representatives and professional practitioners, possible ways to face risks and challenges and to design options for sustainable prevention of natural hazards. For the second time, the Potsdam Summer School is sponsored and organised jointly by the Geoscience and Climate Research institutions in Potsdam: Helmholtz Centre Potsdam - GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, the University of Potsdam, the Alfred Wegener Institute - Helmholtz Centre



for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK). The state capital of Potsdam is supporting the event as a partner.

The different perspectives on the socially relevant topic of natural hazards will be the focus of a public event organised for the citizens of Potsdam on 21 September, beginning at 7.30 p.m. in the Hans Otto Theatre. As part of the proWissen Association's lecture series "Potsdam Heads", the well-known risk researcher Prof. Dr Ortwin Renn (University of Stuttgart) will present a talk on "How threatening are natural disasters? Between sensationalism and downplaying – insights into the state of current research". The talk will be given in the "Nachtboulevard" in the Reithalle of the Hans Otto Theatre and will revolve around the social perception of risks and disasters.

For further information about the Potsdam Summer School agenda and participants, please visit: <http://potsdam-summer-school.org>

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