

Opening of the Bavarian Research Institute for Digital Transformation (bidt)

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On 17 and 18 July the bidt was opened at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich. Its aim is to actively participate in the political and social "shaping of digital transformation for the benefit of society". The main focus is on interdisciplinary research, data-based analyses and intensive dialogue.

The contributions ranged from a welcoming address by the Bavarian Minister of State for Science and the Arts, Bernd Sibler, to eight project presentations by the Forum for Young Research. Anyone who had expected that the bidt would already become involved with concrete proposals in the debate, which has been going on for several years now, was disappointed, however.



Professor Alexander Pretschner (photo Sendler), chairman of the bidt board of directors, which is made up of ten professors from different faculties, ranging from political scientists and sociologists to lawyers, ethicists and innovation researchers, became somewhat concrete. According to Pretschner, the bidt has initially set itself three priorities. First and foremost is the promotion of interdisciplinary research projects in teams of scientists from all over Bavaria. Their topics combine technology, economics, law, social sciences and ethics. The other two focal points are the think tank, which produces reports and analyses on current developments and future trends, and the dialogue, which seeks exchange with the actors of social and political change. For its work, the bidt receives more than 20 permanent posts from the Free State of Bavaria and about 6.2 million euros annually.



In her keynote speech, Professor Ursula Münch, Director of the Academy for Political Education and member of the bidt Board of Directors, conjured up the "third, European path of digital transformation" between China and the USA, but what this should be remained unclear. On the one hand, she demanded that politicians seriously adhere to the principle of "using data, protecting data" and guarantee the rule of law. On the other hand, she immediately posed the first question that arises, namely the currently non-existent right of ownership of data, as something insoluble. Because the business models of Internet companies would be fundamentally called into question, "data ownership" would be practically impossible. But shouldn't the third way be to set rules to which the Chinese and US actors also bow?

She showed understanding for the politicians, who are obviously overwhelmed by the enormous speed and power of digital transformation. Perhaps one reason for this overtaxing might be that those who are familiar with the digital are not attracted to politics and therefore the competence there is lacking. Maybe so. At any rate, so far politicians have been trying to move voters to the next ballot with empty phrases about digital transformation, rather than to initiate legislation that includes state infrastructures and regulations for data-based business. People with digital competence have neither the time nor the desire to listen to phrases and election promises. They might be willing to get involved in serious legislative projects.

The Free State of Bavaria is spending money on digital transformation. Hopefully it will go to the right places and into the right projects. The young, convincing and convinced Professor Lisa Herzog, who introduced the young researchers and whose [interview in the FAZ](#) last week enriched the debate in the public, is leaving Bavaria for the Netherlands this autumn. Introduced yesterday as a member of the bidt board of directors by the University of Politics at the TUM, the TUM did not manage to decide quickly enough for her. Digital transformation also means that politics, science and society have to rejuvenate themselves significantly, especially in their leading positions. This was still too little noticeable yesterday.