

Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, at the opening of the Nordic-Baltic Conference of German Scholars (Nordisch-Baltisches Germanistentreffen), held on Wednesday 8 June 2022, 10.30 am

Dear guests, liebe Gäste des Nordisch-Baltischen Germanistentreffens 2022.

It is my honour and pleasure to say a few words here at the start of this year's Nordic-Baltic Conference of German Scholars. The conference has a history spanning four decades. It first took place in Helsinki in 1979 and since then has been held every few years in cities across the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The roots of the conference can be traced back to a group of German scholars from the Nordic countries who met to discuss their work in areas of shared interest. The University of Iceland is delighted to have been chosen to host this year's conference, for which the credit must go primarily to Professor Oddný Sverrisdóttir. She took part in the 1996 conference, and thanks to her, three years later the Nordic Conference of German Scholars took place in Iceland for the first time. It was such a success that it is still fondly remembered today.

This is no conventional conference; over the years, it has been organised as more of a meeting – a *Treffen* rather than a *Tagung* or *Konferenz*. It is an occasion for colleagues to come together to exchange ideas and strengthen friendships within the discipline – not unlike a large family reunion. The 2002 conference in Finland marked an important milestone when the decision was made to expand the family and invite colleagues from the Baltic states. The Nordic Conference of German Scholars became the Nordic-Baltic Conference of German Scholars – NGT to NBGT – and in 2006 it was held in Riga.

Conference publications have been issued following the conferences. DAAD has financially supported the NBGT, including this year in Reykjavík. The title of this year's conference is *Magic and Diversity in Nordic-Baltic Collaboration in German Studies*, highlighting the diversity of topics within German studies and reflecting the magic of the Icelandic summer – or as the German poet Eichendorff wrote in his poem *Dowsing Rod* (Wünschelrute) in 1835: "The world will break into song, If you hit upon the magic word".

The programme is as wide-ranging as ever and will include discussions on almost all theoretical and practical aspects of the discipline, including German as a second language, language instruction, linguistics, professional communication, translation studies, regional geography, literary communication and history, literature, cultural studies, multilingualism and linguistic communication.

Finally, I would like to thank the many people and institutions who have made this conference possible, including DAAD, the German Embassy in Iceland, the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages, and Professor Peter Colliander.

Dear guests, without further ado, I wish you all an enjoyable and productive conference.

Thank you.