

29 July 2005

Based on the resolutions of the Joint Commission of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG) and the Wissenschaftsrat (German Science Council) of 28 July 2005, the DFG announces the following funding programme:

Excellence Initiative by the German federal and state governments to promote science and research at German universities

On 23 June 2005 the federal and state governments agreed on the “excellence initiative” which was arranged by the Federal-State Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion. The aim of the initiative is to promote top-level research and improve the overall quality of universities and science in Germany.

The programme will be implemented by a uniform, project-related competitive procedure. The joint funding covers the scientific activities of the applicant universities as well as of their partners in the academic sector, in non-university research and in the private sector. It consists of the following funding lines

- Graduate schools to promote young researchers
- Clusters of excellence to promote top-level research
- Institutional strategies to promote top-level research

Eligible to apply are universities, represented by their governance. It is projected to appropriate about 40 graduate schools with an average annual funding amount of 1 million euros each, and approximately 30 clusters of excellence with an average of 6.5 million euros per year. The number of universities funded in the third funding line will be limited by the following basic conditions: a) In order to be eligible for the funding of institutional strategies, it is required that there must have been granted funding for at least one cluster of excellence and at least one graduate school. b) The total average amount of funding for the third line, including funding for graduate schools and clusters of excellence, will be 21 million euros per year for each university. If applications are submitted for several graduate schools and clusters of excellence, the total funding may be significantly above average. The actual sum approved will be based on an overall view of the decisions in all three funding lines.

In addition to this, a general allowance of 20 percent of the funding amount will be provided to cover indirect expenses related to the funding.

Two calls for proposals, approximately equivalent in terms of financial value, are planned, with approvals for this first round being scheduled for October 2006. The second call for proposals is scheduled for spring 2006, approvals are expected in autumn 2007. The funding

period in both rounds is five years. The federal and state governments will decide on the continuation of the programme in 2009.

All universities in Germany are invited to submit draft proposals for the three funding lines.

Graduate schools are a quality instrument for promoting young researchers and follow the principle of qualifying outstanding doctoral students in an excellent research setting. Graduate schools therefore offer optimal conditions for doctorate students within a broad scientific area.

Clusters of excellence aim at establishing internationally visible and competitive research and educational institutions at German universities as well as enabling networks and collaborations as are scientifically indicated. Clusters of excellence should therefore be an important part of a university's strategic and topical planning, sharpen its profile and require that priorities are set. They should also provide excellent educational and career conditions for young researchers.

Institutional strategies to promote top-level research aim at promoting top-level university research in Germany and increasing its competitiveness at an international level. All measures can be funded that allow universities to substantially develop and supplement their internationally outstanding areas and to establish themselves as top-level institutions within international competition. Thus, the German university and science system is to be strengthened sustainably and existing excellence is to be made more visible.

The following general funding criteria apply to all three funding lines: excellence in research and in promoting young researchers in at least one broad scientific area; overall strategy for connecting disciplines and creating international research networks; collaborations between universities and with non-university research institutions, where possible formalised by specific and binding cooperation agreements. Furthermore, it has to be taken into considerations whether the measures are appropriate to promote equal opportunities for men and women in science.

The application process is divided into two stages. First, universities will be requested to submit draft proposals. For this first call for proposals, draft proposals for funding lines 1 and 2 must be received by the DFG's Head Office by 30 September 2005 (closing date). They will be evaluated at comparative review sessions. Draft proposals for third funding line must be received by the DFG's Head Office by 14 October 2005 (closing date). In January 2006, the Joint Commission – appointed by the DFG and the German Science Council – will hold a selection meeting to decide which initiatives will be allowed to apply. If an application for a cluster of excellence is submitted by more than one university and if one or more of these universities also present draft proposals for an institutional strategy, the Joint Commission will also decide in this meeting whether any of these universities will be allowed to apply for the third funding line, and if so which. Immediately after the selection meeting, invitations to submit applications will be issued. Applications will be reviewed in June and July 2006. On the recommendation of the Joint Commission, the Grants Committee appointed by the DFG is expected to reach a decision on funding for all three funding lines by the end of October 2006. Dates for the second call for proposals in spring 2006 will be announced in due course.

Draft proposals and proposals for all three funding lines must be sent to the DFG. Please note that draft proposals and applications for all three funding lines must be sent to the DFG via the responsible state ministries.

Further information

Further information on the programme is available in German only at:

www.dfg.de/exzellenzinitiative/

www.wissenschaftsrat.de/exini_start.html

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