EXZELLENZ STRATEGIE des Bundes & der Länder

Joint press release from WR and DFG

11 March 2026

Decision in the evaluation process for the Universities of Excellence funding line:

Ten Universities of Excellence to receive continued funding

The go-ahead for Germany's Universities of Excellence: Ten of the eleven institutions currently funded under the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments have been evaluated as part of their long-term funding and have all received positive assessments. From 1 January 2027, the following institutions will receive funding for a further seven years: RWTH Aachen University, the University of Bonn, the Berlin University Alliance (a consortium comprising the FU Berlin, HU Berlin and TU Berlin), TU Dresden, the University of Hamburg, Heidelberg University, KIT Karlsruhe, the LMU Munich as well as the TU Munich and the University of Tübingen. The University of Konstanz had no longer met the minimum number of clusters of excellence required for continued funding.

The decision was taken today on the basis of the assessment by the Committee of Experts, comprising international scientists, and was unanimously confirmed by the Excellence Commission of the Excellence Strategy. This commission is composed of the Committee of Experts and the federal and state ministers of science.

Following the meeting, the decisions were announced via livestream by the Chair of the German Science and Humanities Council, Wolfgang Wick; the President of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), Katja Becker; the Federal Minister of Research, Technology and Space, Dorothee Bär; and Falko Mohrs, Deputy Chair of the Joint Science Conference of the Federal Government (GWK) and Lower Saxony's Minister for Science and Culture. They praised the commitment of the universities, which had impressively achieved the goals set within the framework of the funding and successfully developed their institutions strategically. They also highlighted the quality of the scientific peer review and the assessment by the Committee of Experts as the basis for the joint science-led decision by science and politics in the Excellence Commission, as well as the outstanding significance of the Excellence Strategy for Germany as a centre of science.

The Committee of Experts commended the successes achieved through the funding, which the Universities of Excellence had documented in detail in their self-reports. These had also

become apparent during the on-site visits, which the Universities of Excellence had simultaneously used as a catalyst for quality assurance and further development.

The university-wide Excellence funding had been used by the recipients as a lever for institutional change and for strategic prioritisation. Energy and resources had been deployed very effectively; the set targets had been achieved and, in some cases, even exceeded. Overall, greater international visibility, a successful selection of top talent from the global talent pool, an increase in prestigious international grants and strong national and international partnerships were achieved, concluded the international Committee of Experts.

It is not only the Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia that would benefit from the improvement in scientific performance and the enhanced reputation, but the entire German research system, which could learn from these experiences. The locations of excellence provide an exemplary model of how institutional development can succeed and what conditions are necessary for this. The increasingly interdisciplinary organisation of research, for instance, or the involvement of young researchers who take on responsibility early on, contribute new ideas and thereby strengthen the institutions' capacity for renewal, were recognised as exemplary. This is accompanied by participatory and adaptable governance structures, ensuring that strategies are implemented with broad support.

A further effect of the funding is the high priority given to issues of equality of opportunity and diversity. The transfer of knowledge is also being consistently promoted. It has also become clear that the Universities of Excellence contribute to solving challenges facing society as a whole. This is evidenced by efforts to increase knowledge and expertise on issues such as research safety and responsible innovation in the interests of society as a whole.

The recommendations made by the committee to the universities of excellence include: a closer link between monitoring and strategy formulation to guarantee the success of the measures as well as data-driven further development. Furthermore, the institutions should focus even more specifically on the needs of different groups of people in matters of diversity and equal opportunities, further consolidate both research-oriented and practice-oriented teaching, and, particularly in technology-related fields, consistently promote the teaching of ethical competence.

The Committee of Experts is convinced that the research-intensive locations will also use future funding to consistently pursue their strategic goals and constructively implement the recommendations of the international reviewers. The Universities of Excellence funding line, in conjunction with regular evaluations, creates a reliable and quality-assured framework. This long-term approach gives the centres of excellence the planning security they need to develop sustainable structures and remain internationally competitive and capable of renewal at the institutional level.

To ensure the transparency of the review process and to provide impetus for a learning-oriented research system, the Committee of Experts' statements on the individual Universities of Excellence were published on the German Science and Humanities Council's website.

Background on the Excellence Strategy and the Universities of Excellence funding line

In the first round of the competition in 2019, ten individual universities and one University Excellence Consortium were recommended for long-term funding under the Universities of Excellence funding line. The prerequisite for the continuation of long-term funding is the successful acquisition of at least two – or, in the case of a University Excellence Consortium, three – excellence clusters, as well as a positive evaluation of the funded excellence sites, which is carried out every seven years.

After the Excellence Commission of the Excellence Strategy had selected 70 clusters of excellence for (continued) funding from 1 January 2026 in May 2025, it was established that ten of the eleven centres of excellence continued to meet the requirements for funding under the Universities of Excellence funding line. One university no longer met the required minimum number of clusters of excellence

From September to December of the same year, site visits were conducted at all locations with international expert panels. The sites were assessed against the goals they had defined themselves as well as their individual strategic development.

For the funding period 2027–2033, if successful in the science-led procedure, up to five further Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia may be funded in addition to the ten sites that received a positive evaluation. The total funding amount for this funding line in the first funding phase was 148 million euros per year for eleven funding cases.

In future, an additional 60 million euros will be available for a maximum of 15 funding cases. Depending on the application, the individual funding amounts range from 10 to 15 million euros per year for individual universities and from 15 to 28 million euros for university consortia. The exact funding amounts for the upcoming funding phase will be determined following the decision on up to five additional Universities of Excellence this coming October.

In accordance with the administrative agreement between the federal government and the Länder on the Excellence Strategy, the Universities of Excellence funding line is administered by the German Science and Humanities Council. The DFG administers the Excellence Clusters funding line.

Outlook on the procedure for the new application round in the Universities of Excellence funding line

As in the first call for proposals, an individual university is eligible to apply if it can demonstrate at least two Clusters of Excellence. A joint application by a consortium of two or three universities requires funding for at least three clusters of excellence at these universities. In this context, each of the universities participating in the consortium must either have at least one Cluster of Excellence or be involved as an applicant in a joint Cluster of Excellence.

As of the deadline of 12 November 2025, the German Science and Humanities Council had received eleven applications for the Universities of Excellence funding line under the Excellence Strategy. Seven applications were submitted by individual universities and four by consortia comprising two or three universities. In the next stage, site visits by international review panels will take place between April and June 2026. On 2 October 2026, the Excellence Commission will decide on the new Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia to be selected. Funding for all Universities of Excellence or University Excellence Consortia will commence on 1 January 2027.

Media contact:

Georg Scholl, Head of Communications and Public Relations at WR,
Tel. +49 221 3776 243, georg.scholl@wissenschaftsrat.de

Marco Finetti, Head of Press and Public Relations at DFG,
Tel. +49 228 885-2230, marco.finetti@dfg.de

Contact persons at the WR and DFG offices:

For the Universities of Excellence funding line

Dr Inka Spang-Grau, Head of Excellence Strategy,
Tel. +49 221 3776-281, inka.spang-grau@wissenschaftsrat.de

For the Clusters of Excellence funding line

Dr Christine Petry, Head of Excellence Strategy and Research Impulses,
Tel. +49 228 885-2355, christine.petry@dfg.de

Further information on the Excellence Strategy:

www.dfg.de/en/research-funding/funding-initiative/excellence-strategy
www.wissenschaftsrat.de/excellence_strategy
www.excellencestrategy.de/en

EXZELLENZ STRATEGIE des Bundes & der Länder

Ergebnisse der Sitzung der Exzellenzkommission vom 11. März 2026

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Universities of Excellence funding line:
List of locations receiving continued funding

(Decisions by the Excellence Commission of the Excellence Strategy on 11 March 2026)

Universities of Excellence and University Excellence Consortia (listed alphabetically by location)
RWTH Aachen University (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule **Aachen**)
Berlin University Alliance (Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin)
University of **Bonn**
Dresden University of Technology (Technische Universität **Dresden**)
University of **Hamburg** (Universität **Hamburg** , UHH)
Heidelberg University (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität **Heidelberg**)
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) (Karlsruher Institut für Technologie)
LMU **Munich** (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
Technical University of **Munich** (Technische Universität **München**)
University of **Tübingen** (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

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Universities of Excellence funding line: **List of locations in the new application process**

Locations in the new application process, listed by application title (in alphabetical order by location)
Ruhr Innovation Lab (Ruhr-University **Bochum**, Technical University of **Dortmund**) „An ecosystem for a future proof society”
Northwest Alliance (University of **Bremen**, Carl von Ossietzky University of **Oldenburg**) „Connecting for Tomorrow“
Rhine-Main-Universities (Technical University of **Darmstadt**, Goethe-University **Frankfurt** am Main, Johannes Gutenberg University of **Mainz**) „EXCITE – Excellent. Collaborative. Transformative.”
University of **Freiburg** „Sparking Change That Matters“
Justus Liebig University **Giessen**, Philipps Universität of **Marburg** „H_CORE – Hessian Collaboration for Research Excellence”
Leibniz Universitäy **Hanover** „Excellence. Impact. Change! United in the Spirit of Leibniz”
Medical Unversity of **Hanover** „INSPIREfutureHealth“
Friedrich Schiller University of **Jena** „LIGHT. LIFE. LIBERTY. – Connecting People and Ideas”
Christian Albrecht University of **Kiel** „Connecting Horizons. From the Baltic Perspective to Global Impact“
University of **Cologne** „NEUE UNIVERSITÄT – Continuous Change. Successful Renewal.”
Julius Maximilian University of **Würzburg** „Empowering for Change”