

Joint Press Release

by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the
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First Decisions in the Second Phase of the Excellence Initiative by the German Federal and State Governments

Joint Commission of the DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities selects 59 new proposals from 32 universities for final round / Full proposals until September 2011 / Decision in June 2012

The first decisions on the second phase of the Excellence Initiative by the German federal and state governments were made on 2 March 2011 in Bonn. The Joint Commission of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and the German Council of Science and Humanities for the Excellence Initiative selected 59 projects from 32 universities for the final round of the programme aimed at promoting top-level research. They were selected from 227 proposals (draft proposals) that were submitted by 64 universities the year before. Amongst the successful proposals, 25 are for graduate schools, 27 for clusters of excellence and 7 for institutional strategies. They must all submit detailed funding applications by 1 September this year in order to compete with the 85 institutions that are currently funded as part of the Excellence Initiative. The final decision will be made in June 2012.

Preliminary Decisions in the Three Funding Lines

Graduate Schools

For new graduate schools, 98 draft proposals were submitted by 55 universities, including 3 draft proposals that were submitted jointly by 2 universities. Of these, 25 draft proposals from 18 universities were selected for the final round, including 2 draft proposals that were submitted jointly by 2 universities. The selected draft proposals are distributed amongst the universities as follows:

RWTH Aachen 2
University of Bamberg 1
Free University of Berlin 1
Free University of Berlin / Humboldt University of Berlin 1
Humboldt University of Berlin 3
Technical University of Darmstadt 1
University of Düsseldorf 1
University of Göttingen 1
University of Halle-Wittenberg 1
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) 2
University of Cologne 1
University of Constance 1

Technical University of Munich 1
 University of Munich 2
 University of Munich / University of Regensburg 1
 University of Münster 1
 Technical University of Lower Saxony (NTH) 1
 University of Stuttgart 1
 University of Tübingen 2

The 25 new proposals that have been selected for graduate schools will now compete with 39 graduate schools that have been funded as part of the Excellence Initiative since 2006/2007.

Clusters of Excellence

For new clusters of excellence, 107 draft proposals were submitted by 60 universities. Of these draft proposals, 6 were joint submissions by 2 universities and 2 were joint submissions by 3 universities. From the submitted draft proposals, the Joint Commission of the DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities selected 27 draft proposals from 24 universities for the final round, including 2 draft proposals that were submitted jointly by 2 universities. The distribution is as follows:

RWTH Aachen 1
 Free University of Berlin / Humboldt University of Berlin 1
 Humboldt University of Berlin 1
 University of Bielefeld 1
 University of Bochum 1
 University of Bonn 3
 Technical University of Chemnitz 1
 Technical University of Darmstadt 1
 Technical University of Dresden 1
 University of Düsseldorf / University of Cologne 1
 University of Frankfurt Oder 1
 University of Freiburg 1
 University of Hamburg 1
 Technical University of Kaiserslautern 1
 University of Kiel 1
 Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) 1
 University of Mainz 3
 Technical University of Munich 1
 University of Munich 1
 University of Münster 1
 University of Oldenburg 1
 University of Paderborn 1
 University of Tübingen 1

The 27 new proposals that have been selected for clusters of excellence will now compete with 37 clusters of excellence that have been funded as part of the Excellence Initiative since 2006/2007.

Institutional Strategies

For new institutional strategies, a total of 22 universities submitted draft proposals. Of these, the following 7 universities were selected for the final round:

Humboldt University of Berlin
University of Bochum
University of Bremen
Technical University of Dresden
University of Cologne
University of Mainz
University of Tübingen

The 7 new proposals that have been selected for institutional strategies will now compete with the 9 institutional strategies that have been funded as part of the Excellence Initiative since 2006/2007.

The Road to the Preliminary Decisions

The present preliminary decisions were preceded by an intensive review process which took place over several months. Following the announcement of the second phase of the Excellence Initiative in March 2010, 227 draft proposals for new projects were submitted by the deadline of 1 September 2010. During the review process, the DFG was responsible for the first two funding lines of the competition, the graduate schools and the clusters of excellence. The 205 draft proposals that were submitted were initially evaluated by 20 peer review panels. This involved more than 200 reviewers, most of whom came from abroad – from the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Israel as well as Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates. The decisive criterion for the evaluation was alone the scientific excellence of the draft proposals.

The German Council of Science and Humanities was responsible for the review process for the third funding line of the competition, the institutional strategies. The Strategic Commission thoroughly discussed the 22 individual draft proposals and compared them with each other. The decisive factor for selecting the new applicants was the current research strength of a university (status quo) and the expected improvement of top-level research conditions that would be made possible through the institutional strategy. The proposals from universities that were already being funded were expected to demonstrate which of the objectives and milestones had already been achieved and how this had improved the university's research achievements. The present draft proposals clearly show that over the last five years the universities have familiarised themselves with the first phase of the Excellence Initiative and used the time to strengthen their strategic capacity and management. Many new, university specific ideas provide evidence that the respective universities are undergoing the development and restructuring process with commitment and ingenuity.

The Final Round of the Competition

The preliminary decisions in the second phase of the Excellence Initiative will be followed by the final round of the competition in which the new applicants must compete with the institutions that have been funded since 2006/2007. For this, the newly selected applicants must submit their detailed funding applications (full proposals) by 1 September 2011. By the same time, the current institutions must submit their renewal proposals for funding. All funding proposals and renewal proposals will then be reviewed by international peer review panels by spring 2012. The DFG will again be responsible for the graduate schools and clusters of excellence while the German Council of Science and Humanities will be in charge of the institutional strategies.

The final decisions will be made in mid-June 2012, following decision-making by the DFG-appointed Expert Commission, the Strategic Commission appointed by the German Council of Science and Humanities, the Joint Commission of the DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities, and finally by the Excellence Initiative Grants Committee, which consists of representatives of science and the ministers of the German federal and state governments responsible for science and research. On 15 June 2012, the Grants Committee will decide which graduate schools, clusters of excellence and institutional strategies will be funded for five years starting from November 2012. For this funding, a total of 2.724 billion euros (including programme allowances for indirect project costs and transitional and completion funding) will be available, 75 percent of which will be funded by the federal government and 25 percent by the states.

The Excellence Initiative

This second phase of the Excellence Initiative was agreed upon in June 2009 by the German federal government and the states. It is the continuation of the first phase of the Excellence Initiative in which a total of 85 institutions – 39 graduate schools, 37 clusters of excellence and 9 institutional strategies – have been funded since 2006/2007. Compared with the first phase of the competition, the funding has been significantly increased from 1.9 billion euros to more than 2.7 billion euros. In addition, more flexible funding amounts have been agreed on for the second phase. Graduate schools will receive between 1 million and 2.5 million euros of funding per year, clusters of excellence between 3 million and 8 million euros. As for institutional strategies, more emphasis will be given to elements of research-related teaching.

The aim of the Excellence Initiative is to strengthen Germany's competitiveness in terms of top-level research at university level. In the view of the DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities, the Excellence Initiative has already generated an impressive spirit of optimism in the German science system and given rise to a number of ideas and research projects of the highest scientific quality. These are noticed in particular abroad, where German science has again received significantly more attention due to the Excellence Initiative. Moreover, the Excellence Initiative has already created more than 4,000 additional academic positions at universities and research institutes, all of which have been filled with highly qualified individuals. This has primarily helped to promote top-level research, but has also been beneficial for academic teaching.

Further Information

Additional information on the Excellence Initiative can be found on the website of the DFG and German Council of Science and Humanities at

www.dfg.de/exzellenzinitiative/en

www.wissenschaftsrat.de/1/fields-of-activity/excellence-initiative/

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