

Joint Press Release

No. 11

07 April 2017

Germany's Excellence Strategy: Finalising the Next Steps

Committee of Experts for the Excellence Strategy determines further guidelines for Universities of Excellence

During its second meeting on 5 and 6 April 2017 in Bonn, the Committee of Experts for the Excellence Strategy agreed on the programme's next procedural steps and determined the requirements for proposals in the Universities of Excellence funding line. The new chair of the Wissenschaftsrat (WR, German Council of Science and Humanities), Professor Dr. Martina Brockmeier, commented: "Overall, we expect a high number of proposals in both funding lines and anticipate an increased competition. We therefore see the design of an academically driven selection procedure – guaranteeing both quality and acceptance of the funding decisions – as our most important task."

With regard to **Universities of Excellence**, the Committee of Experts set funding criteria and guidelines and discussed the instructions for letters of intent. The documents build on the administrative agreement between the federal and state governments and through their structure take into account both the universities' past merits and their future planning. The funding criteria are designed to provide information on the assessment standards. The guidelines contain general information and explanations regarding the programme's objectives and the requirements of application. The instructions for letters of intent address universities intending to submit a proposal in the Universities of Excellence funding line. These three documents provide important guidance for applicants and other programme stakeholders and will be published on the WR website at the end of April 2017.

In addition to the upcoming evaluation of the 195 draft proposals received, the main focus of the discussion with regard to **Clusters of Excellence** was on the university allowance, a new element of the programme. In the future, universities will be able to apply for this allowance together with their proposal for a Cluster of Excellence. This instrument, to be seen as an additional strategy allowance, amounts to €1 million per year. If a university hosts several Clusters of Excellence, the university allowance will amount to €1 million per year for the first Cluster, €750,000 per year for the second and €500,000 per year for each additional one. In the case of a university consortium the university allowance will be distributed proportionately among the consortium partners. Institutions that are also successful under the Universities of Excellence funding line may only receive the university allowance until such funding begins.

In addition, the schedule for the Excellence Strategy was further concretised:

Over the coming weeks and months, draft proposals in the **Clusters of Excellence** funding line that were received by the 3 April 2017 deadline will be reviewed by international panels. On 28 September 2017, the Committee of Experts will use these evaluations to decide which draft proposals will be

invited to submit full proposals. A year later, on 27 September 2018, the Excellence Commission will make the final funding decision on the proposals for Clusters of Excellence.

The **Universities of Excellence** funding line uses a one-stage proposal process (full proposals). Universities planning to apply must submit a letter of intent by 21 February 2018. The aim of this letter is to provide the WR head office with the information necessary to prepare the on-sight evaluations. After the funding decision on the Clusters of Excellence, universities hosting at least two and university consortia hosting at least three Clusters of Excellence may apply in the Universities of Excellence funding line. The proposals must be submitted by 10 December 2018; the funding decision will be made on 19 July 2019.

Meetings of the Committee of Experts are conducted jointly by the DFG President, Professor Dr. Peter Strohschneider, and the WR Chair, Professor Dr. Martina Brockmeier. The chairs were satisfied with the meeting's course and emphasized the committee members' commitment. Both also agreed that the experts had once again demonstrated their high level of expertise and had crucially contributed to the process of further designing the Excellence Strategy. They additionally stressed that the experts' decisions enabled the applicant universities a large degree of flexibility in designing their proposals.

Information on the Committee of Experts for the Excellence Strategy:

The Committee of Experts consists of 39 proven experts from various areas of science and the humanities with long-term experience at an international level, as well as with expertise in university management, in academic teaching or in the private sector. The Committee's members were proposed jointly by the DFG the WR; they were appointed by the Joint Science Conference (GWK).

Information on the Excellence Strategy:

The Excellence Strategy is based on the "Administrative Agreement between the Federal and State Governments in Accordance with Article 91b Paragraph 1 of the Basic Law on the Funding of Top-Level Research at Universities - Excellence Strategy", issued on 16 June 2016. The programme is designed to continue the advancement of German universities begun particularly through the Excellence Initiative by supporting research of the highest standard, enhancing research profiles and facilitating cooperation in the research system. The goal is to bolster Germany's position as a research location in the long term, further increase its international competitiveness and continue the successful development of a research culture that supports high performance and quality across the board.

Further information:

Additional information on the Excellence Strategy and the Clusters of Excellence and the Universities of Excellence funding lines is available at the DFG and WR websites:

www.dfg.de/excellence_strategy

www.wissenschaftsrat.de/en/fields-of-activity/excellence_strategy.html

Detailed information on the Excellence Strategy is also available at: www.gwk-bonn.de

Press Contacts

Dr. Christiane Kling-Mathey, Head of WR Press and Public Relations,
Tel. +49 221 3776-243, kling-mathey@wissenschaftsrat.de

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