

## The German Excellence Initiative

The Programme "German Excellence Initiative" is intended to strengthen Germany as a location of excellent science and humanities, to enhance its international competitiveness, and to increase the visibility of top-level universities and research areas. The programme was started on the 18 July 2005 and will end on the 31 October 2017.

The Excellence Initiative is conducted by the German research Foundation (DFG) and the German Science Council (WR). It comprises three funding lines:

1. Graduate Schools to promote young researchers,
2. Clusters of Excellence to promote top-level research,
3. Institutional Strategies to strengthen the institution "university" and its research setting as a whole.

Graduate Schools play a key role not only in developing internationally competitive centres of top-level research and scientific excellence in Germany but also in increasing their recognition and prestige. They serve as an instrument of quality assurance in promoting young researchers and are based on the principle of training outstanding doctoral students within an excellent research environment. Graduate Schools thus offer ideal conditions for doctoral students within a broad scientific area and, as integrative institutions with international visibility, they encourage students to be active members of their academic and social communities. As a result, graduate schools will extend far beyond DFG Research Training Groups and differ from them substantially.

Clusters of Excellence enable German university locations to establish internationally visible, competitive research and training facilities, thereby enhancing scientific networking and cooperation among the participating institutions. Clusters of Excellence should form an important part of a university's strategic and thematic planning, significantly raise its profile and reflect its considered long-term priorities. They should also create excellent training and career conditions for young researchers. In conjunction with the other two funding lines, i.e. graduate schools and institutional strategies to promote top-level research, clusters of excellence will help to increase Germany's attraction as a research location in the long term and improve its international competitiveness.

The Excellence Initiative provides funding for institutional strategies that are aimed at developing top-level university research in Germany and increasing its competitiveness at an international level. The funding covers all measures that allow universities to develop and expand their areas of international excellence over the long term and to establish themselves as leading institutions in international competition. This will make a significant contribution to strengthening science and research in Germany in the long term and increasing the visibility of current research excellence.

In total, € 4.6 bn of funding through all three funding lines were approved, € 1.9 bn for the first programme phase (2006-2012), € 2.7 bn for the second programme phase (2012-2017). 25 % of the funding is given by the federal states, 75 % is provided by the Federal Government.

The Excellence Strategy programme is designed to continue and further develop the efforts begun with the Excellence Initiative to strengthen universities by supporting research of the highest standard, enhancing their research profiles, and facilitating cooperation in the research system. The aim is to bolster Germany's position as a research location in the long term beyond 2017, further increase its international

competitiveness, and continue the successful development, which aimed to nurture the very best research and make Germany an even better place for research and study.

The Excellence Strategy consists of two funding lines:

1. clusters of excellence for the project-based funding of internationally competitive fields of research in universities and university networks, and
2. universities of excellence to strengthen universities as institutions and university networks in the long term and further develop their leading international role on the basis of successful clusters of excellence