



DFG

Excellence Initiative – the German Experience

Excellence Initiative – the German Experience, Dr. Klaus Wehrberger
Bucharest, 18 February



DFG

Contents

1. What is the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) ?
2. What is the Excellence Initiative?
3. Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?
4. How does the Excellence Initiative work?
5. Where is the Excellence Initiative active?
6. How were the winners selected ?
7. Lessons learnt



What is the DFG?

Germany's largest research funding organisation

The DFG

- ▶ serves **all branches of science and the humanities** by funding research projects and facilitating cooperation among researchers
- ▶ supports the **education and advancement** of young scientific researchers
- ▶ promotes **equality** between men and women
- ▶ **advises parliaments and public authorities** on scientific matters
- ▶ fosters **relations between research and the private sector** and between **scientists and academics at home and abroad**



What is the DFG?

Germany's central, self-governing research funding organisation

Member institutions include

- ▶ German universities (69)
- ▶ non-university research institutions (16)
- ▶ German academies of sciences and humanities (8)
- ▶ scientific associations (3)



List of members: www.dfg.de/dfg_im_profil/struktur/gremien/mitgliederversammlung/mitglieder.html

What is the DFG?

An association under German private law

The DFG is funded by

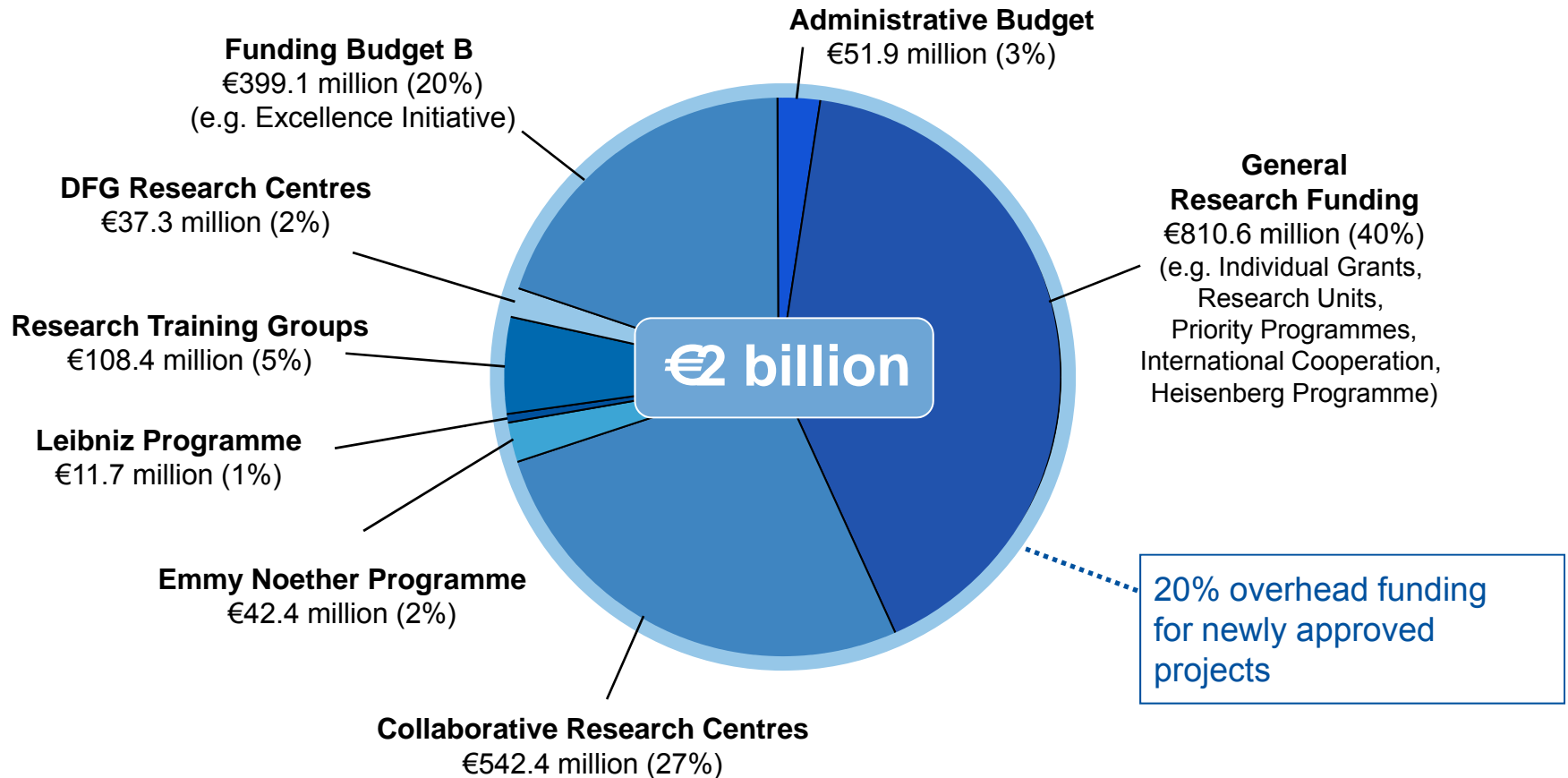
- ▶ German federal government (62.9%)
- ▶ German states (36.7%)
- ▶ Private sources (0.4%)

The DFG's 2008 budget totalled **€2 billion**.



What is the DFG?

Actual expenditures 2008



What are the DFG's aims?

The DFG's scientific aims are to

- ▶ ensure the best possible support for outstanding scientists and **young researchers**
- ▶ make research funding **open to all disciplines** in accordance with **scientific standards of quality**
- ▶ keep **Germany future-oriented** and **internationally competitive** as a scientific location



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1. What is the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)?
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3. Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?
4. How does the Excellence Initiative work?
5. Where is the Excellence Initiative active?
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What is the Excellence Initiative?

The Excellence Initiative promotes top-level research in Germany

The Excellence Initiative

- ▶ was launched in **2005**
- ▶ received **renewal approval in 2009**
- ▶ is coordinated by the **DFG and the German Council of Science and Humanities**
- ▶ is financed **jointly by the German federal government (75%) and the states (25%)**
- ▶ will continue to run **for another five years** (from 2012)



Contents

1. What is the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) ?
2. What is the Excellence Initiative?
- 3. Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?**
4. How does the Excellence Initiative work?
5. Where is the Excellence Initiative active?
6. How were the winners selected ?
7. Lessons learnt



Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?

The Excellence Initiative aims to

- ▶ **strengthen** German **universities and departments**
- ▶ make German research **even more internationally visible**
- ▶ enhance Germany's **attraction** as a **research location**

The Excellence Initiative is funded with up to **1.9 billion euros** (380 million euros per year) until **2011/2012** and with up to **2.7 billion euros** (540 million euros per year) for the period from **2012 to 2017**.

This **includes** overhead funding.



Contents

1. What is the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) ?
2. What is the Excellence Initiative?
3. Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?
- 4. How does the Excellence Initiative work?**
5. Where is the Excellence Initiative active?
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How does the Excellence Initiative work?

The Excellence Initiative rests on three pillars

The following programmes are funded

- ▶ innovative institutions for promoting young researchers (**graduate schools**)
- ▶ qualitatively outstanding research centres (**clusters of excellence**)
- ▶ **institutional strategies** to promote top-level university research

Proposals are reviewed by **international teams** of independent researchers.



How does the Excellence Initiative work?

Through its 39 graduate schools

Graduate schools are characterised by

- ▶ original strategies for **promoting young researchers**
- ▶ an excellent **research environment**
- ▶ **international networking**
- ▶ cooperation with **non-university institutions**
- ▶ **gender equality standards**
- ▶ professional **management**

Graduate schools currently receive approximately **€1 million per year**. During their renewal period, they receive between **€1 and €2.5 million per year**.



How does the Excellence Initiative work?

Through its 37 clusters of excellence

These are characterised by

- ▶ original, **forward-looking research**
- ▶ **interdisciplinary** collaboration
- ▶ cooperation with **non-university research institutions**
- ▶ international **competitiveness**
- ▶ original strategies for **promoting young researchers**
- ▶ **attractiveness** to researchers
- ▶ strategies for **applying results**
- ▶ **gender equality standards**
- ▶ professional **management**



Each cluster of excellence currently receives **approximately €6.5 million per year**.
During their renewal period, they receive between **€3 and €8 million per year**.

How does the Excellence Initiative work?

Through 9 institutional strategies

These are characterised by

- ▶ excellence in a variety of different **profile-enhancing scientific disciplines**
- ▶ outstanding **research quality**
- ▶ **interdisciplinarity and networking**, also with non-university research institutions and other scientific partners
- ▶ **international cooperation**
- ▶ targeted **promotion of young researchers**
- ▶ **measures to safeguard the sustainability** of excellence in research
- ▶ **gender equality** strategies



Institutional strategies receive an average of **€12 million per year**.

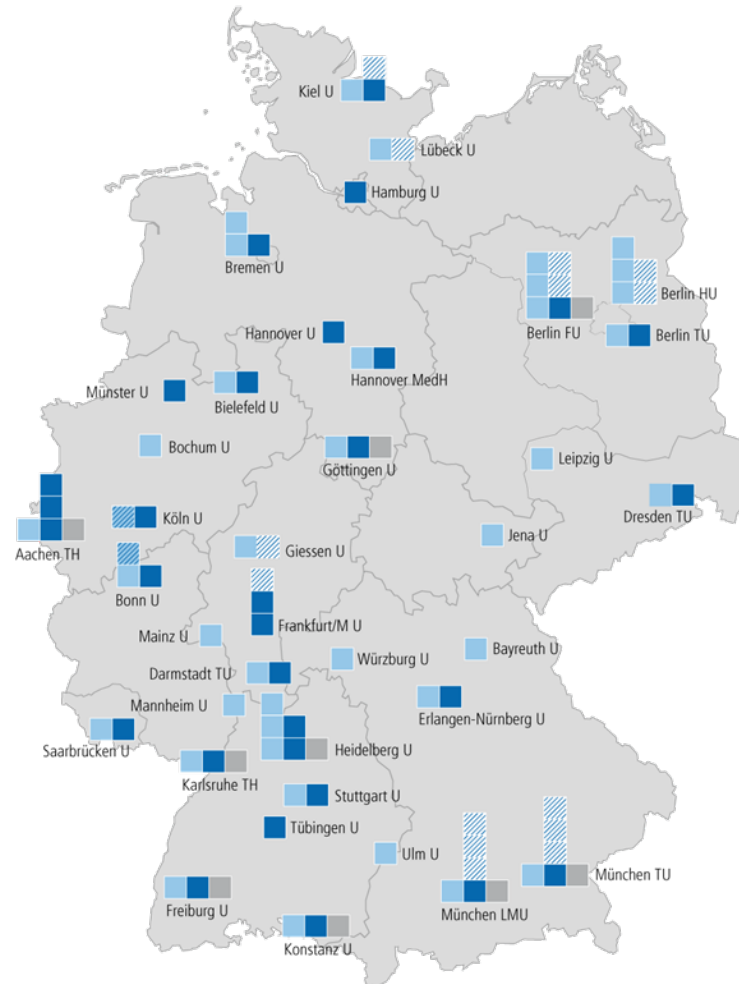
Contents

1. What is the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)?
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3. Why does the Excellence Initiative exist?
4. How does the Excellence Initiative work?
- 5. Where is the Excellence Initiative active?**
6. How were the winners selected ?
7. Lessons learnt

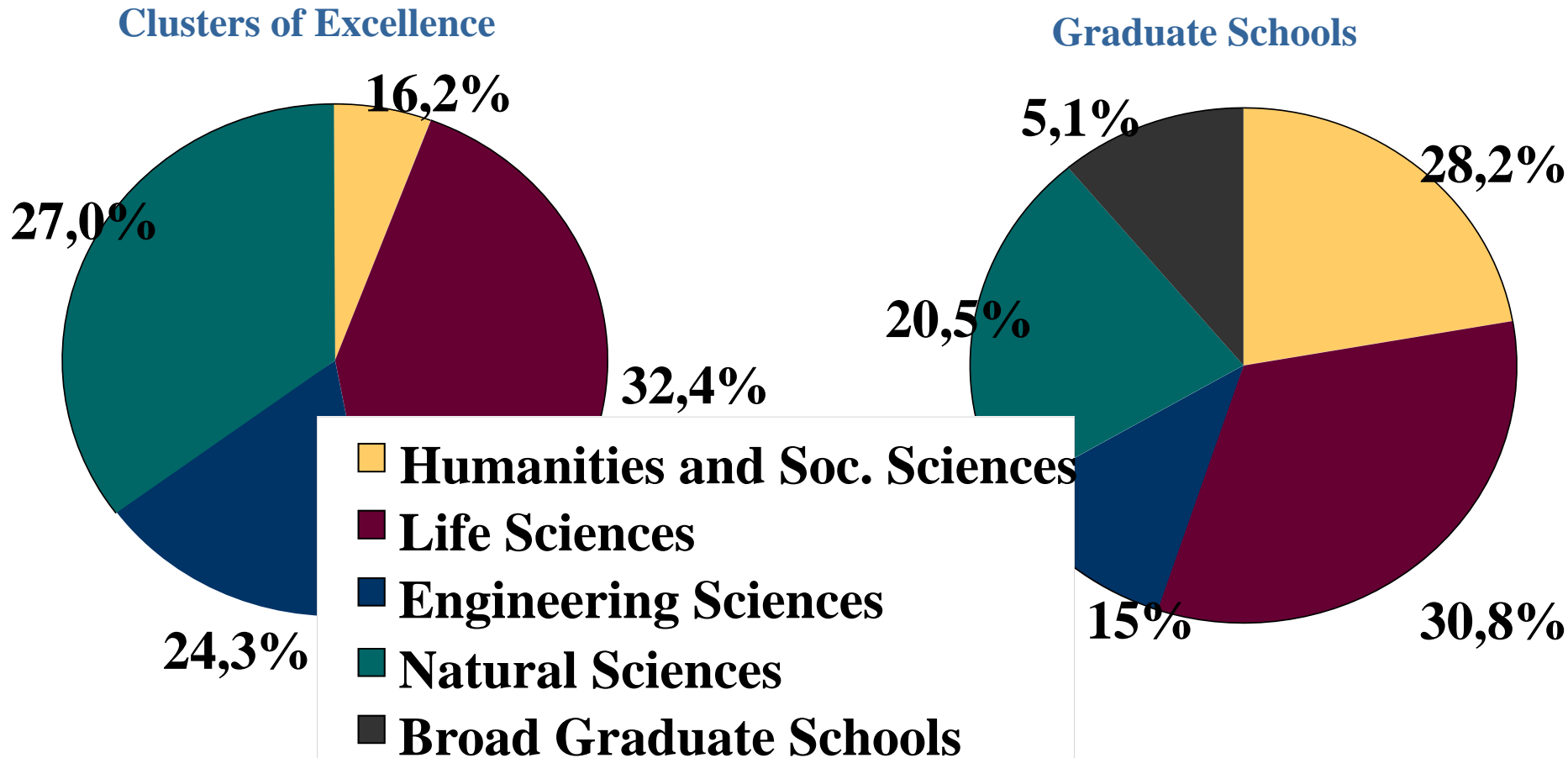


Where is the Excellence Initiative active? Throughout Germany

-  **Graduate schools** to promote young scientific researchers
-  **Clusters of excellence** to promote top-level research
-  **Institutional strategies** to promote top-level university research
-  **Co-applicants**



Proposals funded according to disciplines



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The German Excellence Initiative: First Competition

**157 Clusters of Excellence
(pre-proposals)**

**135 Graduate Schools
(pre-proposals)**

**27 Institutional Strategies
(pre-proposals)**

- *20 Panels (Winter 2005/06)*
- *Interdisciplinary Joint Commission*

First Selection Phase

**39 Clusters of Excellence
(full proposals)**

**39 Graduate Schools
(full proposals)**

**10 Institutional Strategies
(full proposals)**

- *24 Panels/ 10 evaluation groups (Summer 2006)*
- *Interdisciplinary Joint Commission*
- *Grants Committee (13 October 2006)*

Second Selection Phase

17 Clusters of Excellence

18 Graduate Schools

3 Institutional Strategies

The German Excellence Initiative: Second Competition

**123 Clusters of Excellence
(pre-proposals)**

**118 Graduate Schools
(pre-proposals)**

**20 Institutional Strategies
(pre-proposals)**

- *27 Panels (Winter 2006/07)*
- *Interdisciplinary Joint Commission*

First Selection Phase

**40 Clusters of Excellence
(full proposals)**

**44 Graduate Schools
(full proposals)**

**10 Institutional Strategies
(full proposals)**

- *29 Panels/ 8 evaluation groups (Summer 2007)*
- *Interdisciplinary Joint Commission*
- *Grants Committee (19 October 2007)*

Second Selection Phase

20 Clusters of Excellence

21 Graduate Schools

6 Institutional Strategies

Clusters of Excellence – Criteria (1)

Research

- Quality of research; originality and coherence of the research programme
- Added value of interdisciplinary cooperation
- Impact on the scientific field in the future
- Plans for transferring research results into practical application

Clusters of Excellence – Criteria (2)

People

- Highly qualified research groups and international visibility
- Career development opportunities and appeal to young investigators
- Research training concepts
- Gender equality

Clusters of Excellence – Criteria (3)

Structures

- Integration of local research capacities, e.g. non-university institutions
- Organisation and management
- Impact on the university's structural development

The Panel Session (Second Selection Phase)

Preliminary session

- address questions and special aspects of the proposal

Presentation and plenary discussion

- with researchers and representatives of the university's administration
- representatives of the German federal and state governments attend as guests
- no poster session / breaks may be used for informal discussions

The Panel Session (Second Selection Phase)

Closed session / Recommendation

- criteria assessment
- financial assessment
- if more than one university is involved: assessment and weighting of the individual universities contribution
- funding recommendation: yes/no
- final grading of the three main criteria

The Panel Session: Grading

Please mark each of the 3 main criteria of each proposal, on a scale from 5 to 1:

5 = excellent

4 = very good

3 = good

2 = weak

1 = not adequate

Clusters of Excellence

Research

People

Structures

Graduate Schools

Research and Training Environment

Research Training

Structures

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Lessons learnt (1)

- ▶ Additional funding, overhead, three well-balanced funding lines, open for all new ideas: driving force for many positive developments
- ▶ selection based on scientific excellence only, criteria published in advance, international peer review: acceptance by the scientific community
- ▶ 10 year time-scale required (5 + 5)
- ▶ maximum flexibility in the use of the funding
- ▶ lean management:
 - no yearly progress reports,
 - informal coaching,
 - external monitoring (iFQ),
 - evaluation on the basis of extension proposals (2012),
 - external evaluation of the entire program (2016)

Lessons learnt (2)

- ▶ universities: autonomy, differentiation, internationalisation, international visibility, active international recruiting
- ▶ strengthens ties between universities and other research institutions
- ▶ paves the way for new career paths in science (tenure-track, fast track ...)
- ▶ provides equal opportunities for women in science
- ▶ improves public visibility of science

- ▶ we look forward to phase II of the German excellence initiative:
 - evaluation of 37 clusters, 39 graduate schools, 9 institutional strategies
 - competition with many new proposals
 - 40 % more funding (2700 mio. €) for the next 5 years (2012 – 2017)



DFG

For more information

- ▶ on the DFG: www.dfg.de ,
klaus.wehrberger@dfg.de
- ▶ on the German Excellence Initiative:
http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/programmes/excellence_initiative/index.html
- ▶ on over 17,000 German research institutes: www.dfg.de/research_explorer/

Graduate Schools – Criteria (1)

Research and Training Environment

- Quality of the researchers and the research environment
- Contribution to the academic profile of the university and to the research areas involved
- Ability to develop and sustain a doctoral culture
- Interdisciplinary approach
- International visibility

Graduate Schools – Criteria (2)

➔ **Research Training**

- Quality and originality of the research training concept
- Integration of doctoral students into the research environment
- Supervision and strategies to promote research careers
- International networking

➔ **Structures**

- Organisation, management and support services
- Cooperation with non-university institutions
- Gender equality and affirmative action

Institutional Strategies – Criteria of Evaluation

➔ ***Excellent track-record***

- in top level research: several internationally competitive research areas
- and graduate training

➔ ***Convincing Institutional Strategy***

- innovative and unique approach to improve the international position of the university
- distinctive profile
- international competitiveness as an institution during the funding period