

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

German universities last month received a significant cash injection to help them improve funding for young investigators, build university-industry research hubs and attract scientists from outside the country. The German government's Excellence Initiative awarded €873 million (US\$1.1 billion) over five years, the first step in a €1.9-billion bid to strengthen science in Germany. The money is being divided between graduate schools, research clusters and key research programmes. The initiative was launched after policy-makers noticed how few German universities were represented in the top 100 rankings of international universities and that the country had difficulty attracting researchers from abroad.

The approach differs from traditional funding in that it singles out a relatively small number of institutions for large grants, decided by an international panel outside the country, rather than distributing money equally to universities throughout Germany. It aims to promote specialization in some areas, rather than have many universities work on similar research agendas. Three institutions were the big winners of the first round, receiving funds in all three of the initiative's categories — the Karlsruhe University of Technology, the University of Munich and the Munich University of Technology.

This first round of funding sees roughly €175 million a year being split between initiatives at 22 universities; 18 graduate schools, 17 clusters of excellence and three key research programmes will share the money. The next round of applications for grants is already under way.

At the very least, this funding largesse should attract the attention of young German scientists weighing the benefits of training at home or abroad. If the programme receives continued funding and demonstrates some early research success, it should also meet its goal of attracting researchers from outside Germany. If that happens, expect other European countries to set up similar initiatives.

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