

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AS A CATALYST: German Top Universities' Recommendations for the Next German Government

Germany is facing major challenges: stagnating economic development, increasing international competition and intensifying geopolitical uncertainties. At the same time, we are called upon to safeguard our free and democratic order, prosperity and living conditions and to protect the sovereignty of our country.

With its strong universities, Germany is well equipped to compete in the international arena of research, innovation and technology. To succeed, we need a courageous campaign for research and innovation – to ensure that our country is fit for the future.

Six points are particularly decisive:

- 1. OFFENSIVE FOR RESEARCH:** Germany needs more excellence in research and innovation, not less. The Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments is an outstanding success story: it must be continued, expanded and further developed. We need realistic program allowances of 40% (German Research Foundation (DFG) & Federal Ministry of Education and Research) in order to unburden basic budgets of universities, guarantee strategic capability and ensure fair competition.
- 2. OFFENSIVE FOR FREEDOM:** Excellence grows with freedom. Our academic freedom is the envy of the world – politicians should show a strong commitment to it. We also need a consistent reduction in bureaucracy and harmonization of administrative procedures, for example in the application for funding. We further need research-friendly rules, for example on VAT, data protection and animal testing.
- 3. OFFENSIVE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE:** Top research and top teaching need top infrastructures. Germany's universities are in danger of suffering a fate like that of Deutsche Bahn. That is why we need a bold program for construction and restoration. We also need a boost for more large-scale equipment and research infrastructure. Article 91b of the Basic Law should be used more resolutely for both.
- 4. OFFENSIVE FOR INNOVATION:** We want to generate more excellent transfer results from excellent research. This requires strong and flexible support for university start-ups and start-up-friendly intellectual property (IP) laws. The German Agency for Transfer and Innovation (DATI) must promote cutting-edge transfer – or be disestablished. Broader access to research data means more innovative research – this requires the adoption of an ambitious research data law in a timely manner.
- 5. OFFENSIVE FOR CAREERS:** The Future Contract Studying & Teaching (Zukunftsvertrag Studium & Lehre) creates the necessary conditions for the qualification of a highly-qualified workforce and skilled professionals. The Zukunftsvertrag needs to be dynamised beyond 2027. Universities must be provided with the required means to offer the best career and working conditions to attract and retain the best minds in global competition.
- 6. OFFENSIVE FOR INTERNATIONALISATION:** In times of geopolitical disruption, we need strong international networks more than ever. At EU level, this requires an independent 10th research framework program (FP10) with a budget of at least €200 billion, an independent European Research Council (ERC) and productive relations with strong partners such as the UK and Israel. In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) must be strengthened and visa procedures accelerated. Universities have the expertise and procedures to assess who they cooperate with in an interest-driven and risk-conscious manner – the decision on international collaborations must remain within their autonomy.

ABOUT GERMAN U15

German U15 is the strategic representation of research-intensive and internationally visible German universities. The U15 universities educate almost a third of all German and international students in Germany and supervise half of all doctoral projects. The U15 universities raise two-fifths of public third-party funding, in the medical sector even 60 percent.

ABOUT TU9

TU9 is the Alliance of leading Universities of Technology in Germany: RWTH Aachen University, Technische Universität Berlin, University of Braunschweig - Institute of Technology, Technical University of Darmstadt, TUD Dresden University of Technology, Leibniz University Hannover, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Technical University of Munich and University of Stuttgart. TU9 Universities take special responsibility for the productive and innovative power of our society and economy. They are helping to shape the future by contributing to digitalization and the energy and sustainability transition. They combine their specific expertise in basic research, particularly in the natural and engineering sciences, with application-oriented research and innovation.

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