

## **11 principle recommendations regarding the development of the Austrian higher education and science system**

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1. The development and implementation of a universal development concept for Austrian higher education policy in the form of a 'higher education plan' is a central task of higher education policy. Such planning is to be developed by the Federal Government, as the primary body responsible for higher education policy, in agreement with the other participants in the system, respecting their autonomy, following the 'counter-current principle' as mid-term planning with respect to time and finance, and is to be based on the respective steering instruments (e.g. performance contracts, development and financing plan of the universities of applied sciences). It requires a resilient commitment in the form of a responsible political decision.
2. Because of the chronic under-financing of the universities and the necessity for an expansion of the tertiary sector, university policy must indicate a reliable financing scheme to the universities that is to be provided with a time frame. One orientation variable could be the declaration of intent – which has been politically affirmed several times and anchored in resolutions by the legislator – to spend two per cent of the GDP on the tertiary education sector from public and private means by 2020. Based on the GDP for the year 2006, this amounts to around 5.1 billion euros. Against this background it will be necessary for the state to increase its annual expenditure for the tertiary sector, in addition to the increases already assured, by at least 200 million euros per year starting from 2011. These budget increases should be specified in a legally binding university financing scheme. If one considers the necessary foresight for the reinvestment requirement and how it is necessary above all (but not only) for appropriately equipping the technical and scientific disciplines, this sum will have to be set even higher.

3. The *autonomy* awarded to the universities is to be developed further with the goal of increasing the self-regulation capability. In the sense of securing an internal autonomy, the universities must to this end also create appropriate internal governance structures as well as keeping an eye on the functional fairness of their internal organisation. Part of these structures must be a *participation culture* appropriate for science; part of an autonomy that is to be developed further must also be the transfer of properties to the universities. In the case of the remaining higher education institutions, but above all in the case of the university colleges of education, the securing of an autonomy appropriate to their character as tertiary education institutions still requires further efforts. In order to bring the steering of the university system into shape with the means of the *performance contracts* from the superordinated view of the whole, the responsible Ministry must put itself into the position of developing strategic goals for these negotiations in a dialogue with the individual universities and based on a higher education policy development concept ('higher education plan').
  
4. The opportunities offered by the *Bologna process* are to be used in continuation of the direction already taken, which also includes a critical reflection of experiences hitherto and readiness to revise erroneous developments. The universities should thereby be able to self-confidently use all of the room for manoeuvre left open in the context of the European specifications in the autonomous organisation of their curricula. Further development of the Austrian university system towards *quality* and *competitiveness* will not be possible unless Austrian education policy concerns itself responsibly with the problem of admission to higher education institutions. Capacity-orientated *quantitative admission restrictions* must be introduced for subjects and disciplines that are massively overloaded. In this context in particular, but also with regard to the financing of the universities by way of performance contracts, the decision in favour of a *study place financing* system is inevitable. Ultimately, in a system designed for autonomy, the universities themselves must be put in the situation of being able to take decisions on student admissions on their own authority.

5. The Austrian Science Fund (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung - FWF) should immediately be put in the position of being able to realise both an excellence cluster programme and the overhead financing that has already been decided upon. The past scope of project funding should not be (financially) limited by this. The cluster programme would be associated with entrance into the excellence funding on a larger scale, whereas overhead financing would make a significant contribution to securing the necessary research infrastructure.
6. The sustained nurturing of young scientists is accorded a key role in the development of the universities, particularly within the field of research. Without a quality offensive for doctoral studies and the appropriate sponsorship of post-doctorates, the universities will not be able to find the connection to the international research scene. In this context, also the necessity for an increase in the financial means has to be recalled.
7. The sectoral variety of the Austrian university system, above all the coexistence of *universities* and *universities of applied sciences*, is to be considered a strength and must be developed in the sense of a meaningful differentiation. The function of relieving the university system that is the basis for the existence of universities of applied sciences, in addition to their special educational task, should be used, also by means of their further development and a strengthening of their institutional self-sufficiency. A stronger concentration of the universities of applied sciences sector on an occupationally orientated Bachelor education is meaningful; in particular with regard to the more strongly science orientated education at Master level, it can contribute to the desired differentiation of the two university types and increase the opportunities for a mutually fruitful co-operation. A political decision on the future structuring of teacher training is urgently required; associated with this is a decision on the future of the *university colleges of education*, which are dependent on a clearer institutional profile.
8. An order of the range of subjects and disciplines at the Austrian universities, including careful reassessment of locations, is called for where performance deficits are

evident. An adjustment of subjects and disciplines as well as the reassessment of locations should not be decreed by the national higher education policy, but should be carried out by the universities concerned on their own authority, even if this is called for by the state and encouraged by appropriate incentives. Apart from that, the hitherto underdeveloped options for inter-university co-operation are to be developed, particularly at those locations where comparable subjects are taught at different universities. All of that requires the universities to activate the development potential that lies in the setting of a profile and an emphasis even more clearly.

9. An establishment of new public universities, as well as the expansion of disciplines at locations that do not already have the requisite conditions for those disciplines, should not be considered within the next decade. Furthermore, there are no reasons that speak for an ordered merger of universities; however, this does not rule out intensified co-operation, for instance by way of common *school building*, with the goal of a merger at a later date.
10. Cooperation between university and non-university research facilities should be intensified. That also applies once again to the relationship between university research and the research underdone by the Academy of Sciences. Here, work should continue with greater effort not only towards common professorial appointments, but also towards an ordered participation of academy research in university teaching. An integration of non-university research facilities in universities should be considered, particularly in the fields of humanities and social sciences. The prerequisite for such integration would be a clear research profile that meets high standards. For IST Austria, close cooperation with the universities is recommended, in particular in graduate education (common graduate schools).
11. The universities should develop internationalisation strategies appropriate to their profiles. This concerns in particular international cooperation in research and teaching as well as the exchange of scientists and students. Strategic steps for the strengthening of inter-university cooperation, e.g. with the instruments of the special research programmes of the FWF, the centres of competence (Kplus and COMET),

the linking of university and academy research and facilities according to the NAWI-Graz model, should at the same time place themselves in the service of a strengthening of international cooperation. They create the kind of institutional and organisational conditions which, in an international context also, increase the attractiveness of Austrian scientific facilities for international cooperation in the field of university and non-university research. In this regard national higher education policy must also coordinate its activities for the support of internationalisation strategies.