



Dr. Angela Merkel is the Chancellor of Germany.

German Science Policy 2006

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THAT OUR FUTURE LIES IN A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY founded on freedom and responsibility. This is what will enable Germany to rise to the challenges of today's world, be they national or global, or economic, social, or ecological in nature. That is why the promotion of science, research, and innovation is one of my top priorities.

"People love chopping wood," Albert Einstein once said. "In this activity one immediately sees results." Science policy, by contrast—like science itself—demands staying power. It requires cooperation between many different actors, the investment of considerable resources, and the courage to strike out in new directions. German science and research have a long and proud tradition that we must cultivate and build on. We want to offer German science and research conditions that rival the best in the world. Our benchmarks are excellence, internationality, and freedom. With our new 6-billion-Euro program to fund innovative beacon projects, we are investing more than ever before in top-flight science and research. The conceptual framework for this will be provided by a comprehensive high-tech strategy action plan. Our efforts to promote higher education and research institutions are geared to encouraging healthy competition. With our Excellence Initiative, Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, and Pact for the Universities, we want to strengthen institutions and academics that are particularly outstanding and creative and also network successfully. By 2010, we aim to increase spending on R&D to 3% of gross domestic product. Science and research will be one of the priorities of Germany's European Union (EU) presidency.

We are working hard to make German higher education more international, because excellence today is defined in global terms. In a few years, we will have completed the switch to internationally compatible bachelor's and master's degree courses. We are keen for our higher education and research institutions to expand their international links and are also committed to strengthening cooperation in Europe. To build new experimental research facilities such as the x-ray free-electron laser in Hamburg, we have joined forces with partners from all over the world.

We also plan to give science and research a freer hand. The task of government is to create conditions in which they can flourish and to provide the right kind of stimulus. That means that our universities and research institutions must be given more independence. They need greater freedom to choose their students and staff, develop their own profiles, cooperate with industry, and spend their funds as they see fit.

We believe there should be intensified dialogue between policy-makers, scientists, and industry on all aspects of science and technology policy. This is particularly crucial in fields where new scientific advances may raise difficult ethical issues or where policy decisions on the right innovation strategy for the future are at stake. That is why I have established a Council for Innovation and Growth, which brings together prominent representatives of the scientific, business, and political communities. For the same reason, we strongly support, at the European level, the establishment of a European Research Council to advise and comment on research policy decisions of the EU.

Germany's future depends on first-class research, creative talent, and high-quality education and training that are geared toward international standards as well as a fair deal for everyone, irrespective of social or ethnic background, who is willing to contribute to our society. Dedicated people and pioneering spirits are our greatest assets. An important goal of the German government's science policy is to encourage the creative talent of everyone who lives, works, or conducts research in Germany and to ensure that their working conditions and quality of life are continually improved.

I profoundly believe (to quote Albert Einstein again) that "Concern for man himself and his fate must always form the chief interest for all technical endeavours . . . in order that the creations of our mind shall be a blessing and not a curse for mankind."

– Angela Merkel



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