Objectives of the BMBF Foresight Process

- Identification of new focuses in research and technology
- Designation of areas for activities across research and innovation fields
- Potential analyses, to identify in which technology and innovation fields strategic partnerships could become possible as well as
- Derivation of priority action areas for research and development.

The BMBF Foresight Process

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Why Foresight?

Future value added chains in research, technology and science must be identified as early as possible, so that research promotion can decisively set the course for the future in time. Only thus can Germany play a leading role in international competition in the future as well.

In order to sustainably safeguard the innovation capacity of Germany as a research and education location, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) launched a foresight process in September 2007. The look into the future should encompass 10 to 15 years – and even longer – in order to identify new priority fields and interdisciplinary themes in research and technology, as well as potentials for strategic partnerships and areas for top-priority actions. In a combination of tried and trusted and new foresight methods with a parallel monitoring process, the new BMBF Foresight Process aims at the direct and personal exchange among experts, on a national and also international level. This collaboration should extend the knowledge base of decision-makers in the German research landscape by an important complementary aspect and support the strategic planning of research policy measures.

A first workshop took place in Berlin in November 2007 with leading experts, both male and female, to launch the new BMBF Foresight Process. With the help of their expertise, and based on mainly national analyses, the fields were determined which are to be intensively further investigated in the process. The interfaces which should serve as starting points for further activities were also identified.

The subsequent international search phase for „new“ and cross-cutting topics in research, technology and innovation will utilize primarily interviews, talks with experts and a bibliometric analysis. The conclusions and results of the investigations will be discussed and validated repeatedly in the course of the process and finally evaluated.

Dialogue and Cooperation

In the course of the new BMBF foresight process, the personal dialogue with national and international experts and decision-makers of both genders will be sought. The Monitoring Panel with its international top-level members by integrating new trends in the process plays an outstanding role for the analysis and preparation of recommendations for action. Above all, co-operations with national research organisations as well as other institutional actors and processes from the areas of future and innovation research will be regarded as a vital pre-condition to attaining the goals of the BMBF Foresight Process.

Integrated Approach

The linking of foresight and monitoring utilises existing experiences from foresight approaches, including well-known search strategies as well as other methods from innovation research, e.g. bibliometrics, interviews, and surveys.

Simultaneously, new, creative methods e.g. workshops, time travel, inventor scouting and concepts for the look into the future are taken into account. The look back from the future, as well as the formulation of recommendations for action from today’s perspective, round off the approach. An analysis of the innovation system should provide assistance in identifying potentials for new strategic alliances. The constant shift in perspective from look into the future to look from the future should ensure that the foresight process delivers comprehensive information for research policy decision-making.