



Press release

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New large-scale research centres to lead German science and coal-mining regions into the future

Ideas competition for two new research centres launched: BMBF and Saxony to provide up to 170 million euros per year per centre

Two new large-scale research centres are to be established in Saxony in the coming years. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Free State of Saxony have launched a competition to decide the thematic orientation and establishment of the centres. The competition, known as “*Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!*” (Science Creating Prospects for the Region) was launched today by Federal Research Minister Anja Karliczek, the Minister-President of the Free State of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, and Saxony’s Minister of Science, Sebastian Gemkow. Federal Research Minister Anja Karliczek explained:

“It is important to me that we actively manage the structural transformation of German coal-mining regions and create the basis for new economic development and high-quality jobs on the ground. Education, research and innovation will all contribute to ensuring that the lignite mining regions of Lusatia and Central Germany are well equipped to face the post-mining era and remain an attractive part of the country where people want to live.

We want to establish two new large-scale research centres by 2023 with an international profile that will further strengthen Germany’s scientific competitiveness and help lead the coalfields of Saxony into the future. In order to achieve this, we are looking for the best minds with the best ideas. We are calling on all scientists who have an innovative idea for a new large-scale research centre to take part in this competition.

Overall, up to 3,000 new jobs are to be created in both regions due to the new research centres alone. The combination of excellent scientific research with innovative approaches to collaboration with industry creates a conducive environment for start-up activities and new locations for companies – and thus provides new prospects for the people in the traditional lignite-mining regions. For this purpose and within the framework of the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas, we will be providing up to 170 million euros per year for each centre together with the Free State of Saxony on a long-term basis.

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Today's launch of the ideas competition is the first step we are taking in this process. I call on all researchers to enter the competition and bring your ideas to Saxony."

Saxony's Minister-President, Michael Kretschmer emphasized:

"The planned establishment of two new large-scale research centres in Saxony's mining regions is a huge success. Saxony has lobbied hard to achieve this success right from an early stage. The research centres will create new prospects and jobs for the post-coal era. They will be critical in helping to create many more new well-paid jobs, in research as well as in industry in the regions of Lusatia and Central Germany. Along with the people in these regions, the whole of Saxony and German science and research will benefit from this. So it's great that we are getting started with the ideas competition. I would like to expressly thank the Federal Government, which is driving and funding this unique project in Germany together with us. It is good that we are thinking big with this project. This gives us the very real chance of a new economic dawn".

Saxony's Science Minister Sebastian Gemkow added:

"The environment for the planned large-scale research centres could hardly be better. Saxony offers outstanding possibilities for linking future research projects to university and non-university research as well as to industry. The academic and scientific institutions with their flexibility and their expertise in a whole range of subject fields give the region a crucial advantage in the setting up and subsequent operation of the research centres. This enables the creation of new scientific knowledge and innovations that can be used to generate new economic development. In the long run, it will not only be the coal-mining regions that see the benefits."

Background:

On 14 August 2020, the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas (*Strukturstärkungsgesetz Kohleregionen*, StStG) entered into force. In order to promote economic growth and the creation of jobs in the regions of the Lusatian and Central German coalfields in Saxony that are affected by structural change, the StStG provides for "*the establishment of a new institutionally funded large-scale research centre according to Helmholtz or equivalent principles in the Saxon part of Lusatia and the Central German coalfield following a competitive procedure*". It is for this reason that the BMBF and the Free State of Saxony have announced the ideas competition "*Wissen*



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schafft Perspektiven für die Region!” (Science Creating Prospects for the Region).

The best proposals for the establishment of the two new large-scale research centres are to be developed and selected in a transparent and thematically open competitive procedure. The thematic orientation and the precise location of the research centres within the two regions will be determined as part of the competition. In the long term, if they prove successful in scientific terms, the centres can expect to receive a budget of up to 170 million euros each per year.

The competitive procedure to select the proposals for the new large-scale research centres is divided into three stages:

1) National and international call to participate in the ideas competition

A national and international call for proposals will invite outstanding scientists to submit outline proposals of their innovative ideas for the establishment of the new large-scale research centres.

2) Selection of the outline proposals; conceptual phase

Those ideas that are to go forward and be developed into fully assessable proposals will be selected on the basis of the recommendations issued by a high-ranking “perspectives commission” after a review of the submitted outline proposals. In order to support this process, the selected outline proposals will receive funding of up to 500,000 euros to cover a conceptual phase lasting approximately six months.

3) Selection of the proposals for the establishment and development phase

Finally, the proposals for the establishment of the two new large-scale research centres will be selected by the funding providers. This will be undertaken on the basis of an external evaluation of the scientific excellence of the proposals as well as of the expected contribution to structural economic transformation and the proposed structures for collaboration with industry.

The call to submit outline proposals is aimed at internationally reputed scientists who consider themselves appropriately qualified to develop and implement an idea for the establishment of a large-scale research centre in the Lusatian and Central German coalfield regions of Saxony. An existing connection between the applicants and the envisaged location of the centre is not essential to participate in the competition. Further details will be announced with the publication of the funding regulations on the relevant BMBF webpage.

The process will be supported by a high-level “perspectives commission” comprising representatives from the fields of science, industry, innovation and



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civil society. It will be led by Wolfgang A. Herrmann, former President of the Technical University of Munich and head of the structural commission to set up the Technical University of Nuremberg. Further members of the commission will include the German Nobel laureate for chemistry, Stefan Hell, and the first German commander of the International Space Station (ISS), Alexander Gerst.

Further information:

“Wissen schafft Perspektiven für die Region!” (Science Creating Prospects for the Region)”

www.bmbf.de/en/science-creating-prospects-for-the-region-13171.html