

or sponsored by them is mainly task-related in support of the missions of these Ministries.

S&T Strategy

The federal government has decided to focus on the need for introduction of structural reform in the S&T system as its key priority. A broad aim of such exercise is to review with Laenders, how to make joint research support less bureaucratic and more effective. It has decided that such reform is vital to positioning Germany as an advanced technological nation in the 21st Century.

The following principal thrusts form the basis of its new S&T strategy:

- Safeguarding scientific excellence and providing increased support for Germany's multi-tiered institutional research network.
- Promoting technological innovation in science based technologies through collaborative projects/programs
- Strengthening education and research in the new Laender through new such programs such as Inno Regio
- Protecting and enhancing training and employment opportunities for the youth building on Germany's traditional "dual system" education, especially its in-company practical training aspect. Additionally, existing curricula is being modernized and programs are being developed on new technologies eg. multi-media design.
- Developing and implementing structural reform with Lander level of governments for universities and Fachhochschulen (Technical universities/colleges) with a view to shorter graduation training, enhanced mobility for faculty, interdisciplinarity, cooperation with foreign universities and attracting foreign students. (This will require modernizing universities' personnel structures and personnel laws as well as upgrading of large scale facilities and high performance computing equipment).

S&T Priorities

Government's S&T priorities in recent years have shifted from large-scale projects such as energy research and space, to the support for "enabling" technologies which have cross-sectoral impacts eg. information and broadband width multimedia technologies, advance materials, laser technology, biotechnology and genomics, bio-medicine, environmental sciences and micro systems integration. BMBF support is in the S&T areas which are near market (vorweltbewerlich - the state of technology development that is not yet subject to competition) and need industry involvement to bring the R&D to the pilot or prototype phase. Basic research and research for solving important societal needs (eg. health, environment, and education) is also funded. (See also earlier section on Budget 2002)

New Programs

A set of new programs and initiatives have been established to mark the turn-of-the-century and in preparation for the next millennium. These are essentially cost-shared programs involving partnerships with industry. In such "project financing" schemes, private companies, depending upon their size and turnover, could receive up to 40 to 50% BMBF support for a project.

In addition, the Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWt) which has responsible for SMEs and technology applications in energy, aerospace and Information Technology, has established new programs for favourable innovative environment for small and medium sized firms. Most of