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Which kind of influence do structural decisions about the scientific system have on the contents of institutional research?

There is a wide spectrum of structural decisions about the science system which go – not surprisingly – hand in hand with a spectrum of influences. If you think about the shift from a research institute from Helmholtz Association to Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, as we were able to observe in Sankt Augustin some years ago, the influence becomes obvious in totally different evaluation criteria coming along with the different missions of the umbrella organisations. The same, but the other way round happened to the Fraunhofer Institute for Atmospheric Environmental Research (IFU) following a recommendation of the German science council.

What kind of influence do evaluation processes have on the contents of institutional research?

Knowing the Helmholtz world from inside, the main advantage of the programme oriented approach is the common development of the 5 year cross-cutting programmes common to the member institutions of Helmholtz. In our programme there was a not always easy but finally successful communication process resulting in a collaborative programme between the research centre Jülich, DLR and KIT. The evaluation is an additional aspect in this “bottom-up steering process”, the programme is developed not only according to internal preferences but needs to find external acknowledgement as well. The evaluation process itself is competitive in terms of budget, but results, as far as I see it, in minor shifts of resources, only.

What kind of skills which the actors do not have can be contributed for example by the BMBF?

The BMBF is in charge of the political guidelines for the national research agenda. There might be societal needs for which R&D and new technologies can contribute to problem solving. The research political requirements addressed to HGF are an example. Technology Assessments and Foresights can help to identify these requirements.

What are the consequences of the current planning processes for creativity, structure and success of the scientific institutions?

Coming back to the HGF-programmes, the creative phase with reference to the structure is in the programme development phase. Once the programme is running there are possibilities to change the research agenda for relevant reasons. However, this needs arguing. Nevertheless the basic funding allows for these – sometimes necessary – quick adjustments to the research agenda. This possibility in itself can be a success factor for the institution. Moreover, additional funding schemes such as HGF-alliances are available, which increase flexibility with substantial cross-funding by the research programmes.