

Foresight and research planning in science? - Unsolvable contradiction or calculated mania?

The systematic analysis of framework conditions and trends, along with their disruptions, and the attempt to anticipate upcoming events are obvious tasks for companies and political institutions, which influence their long-term planning and strategic development.

There is, however, one sector in society – the science system - which generates the above mentioned and required knowledge and insight but which seems to be subject to the free play of forces and to the experience of dominating stakeholders. It even can be liable to chance.

The changes in science system itself and the development of framework conditions raise doubts about whether this approach is viable in the long term or whether rather “intelligent” and “learning” institutions will be necessary.

Challenges to mention are

- The increasing impact of science on society and the changing modes of knowledge production
- The need for “strategic intelligence” for the traditional science system, which is generally based on the division of labor
- The external framework conditions, i.e. demographical development within the science system, the advancement of junior scientists and the increasing influence of international competition.

In view of realistic time-frames for response, adjustment and development of new research areas, thematic and institutional foresight should actually be indispensable to successfully develop new research priorities and profiles.

At this conference, the challenges will be illuminated from the following different perspectives:

- societal actors, who increasingly pose questions to the science community, who want to utilize their knowledge and who are not equally satisfied with all their results and solutions
- scientists, who are expected to realize today's ideas in the future
- science funding organisations, who may attach their own agendas to their funding activities and who seek new ways to identify research areas themselves
- research actors, who are subject to internal constraints and institutional logic.
- universities, trapped in a conflict between the need to define a unique profile versus retaining a diversified range of subjects of study as well as their mission to educate researchers who will be employed within the science system in the future
- And lastly considering the internationalization trends as individual ways to deal with the above raised questions and challenges are being increasingly developed in other parts of the world.