



EVALUATION PROCESSES AT THE AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES: Experiences and future perspectives

AGENDA

- **The Austrian Academy of Sciences (AAS)**
- **Research at the AAS**
- **Research-adequate quality assessment at the AAS**
 - **Internal Evaluation**
 - **External Evaluation**
 - **Intellectual Capital Reporting (ICR)**
- **ICR, evaluation and strategic controlling: perspectives**

The Austrian Academy of Sciences (AAS)

- Founded in 1847
- Autonomous status: legal entity under public law, "under the special protection of the Federal Republic of Austria"
- "Its mission is to promote the sciences and humanities in every respect and in every field, particularly in basic research."

- 3 major activities:
 - A learned society
 - **An organisation performing research:** 66 research facilities, approx. 1.100 employees in research and administration
 - An organisation promoting young scientists

Research at the AAS

- **Autonomous:** oriented towards basic research – flexible
- **Heterogeneous:** covering diverse research fields and missions
- **Initiatives for new trend-setting research areas**
- **Complementary research activities (with regard to Austrian universities)**
- **"Strengthening strengths"**
- **Room for long-term research**
- **Ensuring excellence based upon quality assessment and evaluation**

Research-adequate quality assessment at the AAS

- Internal evaluation (currently being reorganized)
- External evaluation (established)
- Intellectual capital reporting (new)

Internal Evaluation

- Yearly internal evaluation of each research facility or research center by SAB
- SAB-Members: elected for 5 yrs., *external instead of internal experts*
- Preliminary information of SAB: annual report (*partially standardized*)
- Meeting of SAB with heads of research facility/center
- Recommendations to the section's presiding committee

External Evaluation

- External ex-post evaluation of research facilities since 1995
 - Proactive initiative of the AAS
 - Assessment based on medium-term research program
 - External, independent experts from abroad
 - Evaluation cycle: approx. 5 years

- Evaluation = platform for discussion on
 - the (future) research areas, contents and strategies
 - the structure of individual research fields incl. allocation of budget
 - the implementation of specific recommendations

In the period 2002 to 2007, the AAS executed the following evaluations of various fields of research:

- Particle Physics and Mathematics
- Information Sciences
- European History to 1500
- Austria, the Danube Region and Europe
- Social Sciences
- Solid-State Physics, Biophysics and Earth Sciences
- Asian Research and Social Anthropology
- Austrian Academy Corpus
- European Languages and Literature

External Evaluation Procedures

- **First step: selection of research units to be evaluated**
 - More than one research unit
 - Either research units working in similar fields
 - Or research units similar in size, organizational structure, or life cycle phase

- **Second step: composition of evaluation team**
 - AAS asks external scientific institutions to propose possible foreign researchers for leadership of evaluation committee
 - AAS selects one expert as head of ad-hoc evaluation committee
 - This person selects further members of evaluation committee (flexible size of evaluation committee)

- **Third step: site visit**
 - Preliminary information: annual reports plus written general self-assessment of research units concerned
 - Typically one day on-site inspection
 - Presentation and discussion
 - Involvement of young researchers

- **Fourth step: evaluation report**
 - Draft report by head of evaluation committee a few weeks after site-visit
 - Research units concerned are invited to respond
 - Evaluation team prepares final report, to be presented to the AAS`s presiding committee
 - Non-binding recommendations

- **Forthcoming: responsibility for external evaluation to be transferred from presiding committee to research advisory council**

Intellectual capital reporting (ICR) - internal use

- **Target:** Improving research-adequate quality assessment and controlling (P-D-Check-Act)
- **Main focuses:**
 - Providing 'objective' data – input, output, outcome - as a sound basis for future-oriented discussion
 - Forthcoming: operationalized goals (in correlation with indicators)
 - Checking implementation of strategies and progress of medium-term research program
 - Contributing to ensuring high scientific quality and adequate allocation of resources
- **Document design:**
 - Internal report (forthcoming: time series of data)
 - Up to 30 indicators on a flexible aggregation level
 - Narrative parts where necessary

Exemplary Indicators (I)

▪ **Financial indicators:**

- annual total budget
- personell costs
- investments in buildings, equipment

▪ **R&D indicators:**

- staff-related indicators (qualifications, gender, age, distribution, competence in research management, continuing education measures)
- floor space, infrastructure
- involvement of internal and external experts in evaluation procedures
- incoming / outgoing
- cooperation partners
- External functions in research quality assurance, eg. reviewer

Exemplary Indicators (II)

- R&D portfolio (research fields, running research projects, projects with external partners, degree of interdisciplinarity, project duration)
- third party funds
- scientific publications (peer-reviewed, in indices, oral / poster presentations)
- patents
- popular science

- engagement in academic teaching
- prizes and honors
- presence in media

Interplay between evaluation and ICR: perspectives

- ICR provides standardized and 'objective' preliminary information for SAB and/or evaluation committee: **better informed peer**
- Refinement of adequate and (partly) measurable **criteria for success** – general or specific – through feedback of SAB and/or evaluation committee on relevant indicators and goals / targets
- **From goal tracking to target tracking**, where applicable: monitoring the target-to-plan situation by looking at relevant indicators on a regular basis, facilitating early discussion and intervention when indicators stray from goal trend
- Facilitating clear and **unambiguous evaluation recommendations** by including indicators and measurable targets, improving follow-up

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !