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
  - personnel 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!