

# Press Release

Berlin, 31.01.2022

## The external funding system is an expensive lottery

**Members and alumni of *Die Junge Akademie's* research group Science Policy criticise the current system used to allocate research funding and suggest routes for improvement**

Many of the current research funding schemes involve a great deal of work on the part of the applicants, who then have a relatively low chance of actually being allocated the funding they have applied for. This means that the overall benefits for the scientific community are surprisingly minimal. This is the conclusion reached by members and alumni of *Die Junge Akademie* working on a project as part of the Science Policy research group. Their results have been published in the volume of scientific journal *Nature Human Behaviour* released on 31 January 2022 (<https://www.nature.com/nathumbehav/>).

In their publication, the authors demonstrate that many funding schemes involve a great deal of work and a low success rate, meaning that the resources they take away from the scientific community in terms of working hours more or less counteract the resources actually being allocated through the funding on offer. The effort required to complete detailed applications and reports is only of very limited use when it comes to ranking the submitted research projects based on research quality.

“The current system for allocating external funding is often like an unbelievably inefficient lottery,” says Martin Dresler, Neuroscientist at Radboud University Medical Centre and Member of *Die Junge Akademie*.

In many countries, funding is increasingly being allocated to research projects on the basis of proposals being judged against one another in competitions rather than coming directly from the university's main pot of money. The high costs associated with many working hours being dedicated to this process of allocating funds is often disregarded by funders and researchers alike. The members and alumni of *Die Junge Akademie's* research group Science Policy call upon research funders to check that their own funding processes are efficient and suggest that they are more transparent when it comes to the amount of time an application is expected to take on average and the success rate of a specific funding programme. Potential applicants can use the online tool developed as part of the *Die Junge Akademie* project (<http://f.unding.com>) to compare the amount of funding being offered against the amount of time required to complete the application with a view to confirming whether or not it makes sense to submit an application. The authors also put forward the idea of optimising the external funding system by creating alternative application processes or by moving away from competitions used to allocate funding and instead reinforcing the basic funding provided by the universities themselves.

## Authors

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### Publication:

Dresler, M., Buddeberg, E., Endesfelder, U. et al. Why many funding schemes harm rather than support research. *Nat Hum Behav* (2022).

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-021-01286-3>

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For more information on the Science Policy research group project, click [here](#).

### *Die Junge Akademie*

at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities  
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*Die Junge Akademie* was founded in 2000 as the world's first academy for outstanding young academics. Its members – who come from all academic disciplines as well as creative fields – explore the potential and limits of interdisciplinary work in new projects, aim to encourage dialogue between academia and society, and provide new impetus in discussions about scientific policy. *Die Junge Akademie* is supported by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. Its office is located in Berlin.