PhD's, universities and funding strategies

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Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF)

- Regional actor: strengthen scientific research in Vienna
- About 7 to 10 Million € funding per year
- Strong links with regional policy making

- Thematic Focus: WWTF uses broad thematic calls
  - Life Sciences
  - Mathematics in an interdisciplinary context
  - „SciENCE for creative industries“
  - Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
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Funding strategy: Excellence and Relevance

- WWTF's strategy is defined by its intention to
  - reinforce outstanding competence in fundamental research
  - where such competence is organized in visible dimensions and
  - touches areas where there is a recognized problem affecting society and/ or economy.
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Instruments

- Large projects (~ 600,000 €) for 3 -4 years
- Science Chairs: Recruitment of excellently qualified early stage researchers from abroad (1,5 Mio € for 5 years)

- We want to strengthen young researchers
  - Exposure: We want to see them on stage! (PIs)
  - We earmark money for young PIs
Do Local Authorities play a role in doctoral education? (I)

- Do local authorities and their agencies play a role in strengthening doctoral training at universities?
  - Should they?

- Austria is a federal state, Vienna is one of nine provinces
- The constitution clearly defines the competences of the federal state and the provinces
  - § 14-1 BVG: The federal state is responsible for legislation and execution in the field of the school system
    - This is a blanket clause for the federal government in all matters concerning the universities
  - Policy of Connectivity: Only pay for those affairs you are responsible for
Do Local Authorities play a role in doctoral education? (II)

- Do local authorities play a role in strengthening doctoral training at universities?
  - Should they?

- The answer depends on the legal/constitutional framework
- Vienna’s answer: (…anyhow…) We are very much interested in doctoral education
  - No substitution of federal funds
  - No substitution of initiatives set by the Austrian Science Fund
  - We cannot substitute Doctoral Programs and Graduate Schools. But Graduate Schools and Doctoral Programs are our starting point
  - Looking for niches
Science and Education: Why regions are interested in

- Increasing Interest in the policy fields science, research, innovation
  - Barcelona and Lissabon: 3%
    - “Doctoral Education is an important link between the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process” © M. Runacres
  - Competition Law
  - „Science Policy is the Industrial Policy of the 21st century“
- Not only on a national level, but also on the regional level
- Vienna: Political goal to make Vienna a top RTI location in Europe
  - Active research funding policy
  - But: Only add-on instruments to those instruments provided by the federal government
The Case of Vienna

- Austrian institutional setting in RTDI highly centralised: More than 40% of research performed in Vienna
- Number of strengths in scientific research
  - Biology and Medicine, Mathematics, Physics
- Nine Universities and a number of polytechnics
- Non-university and research labs: (Quantitative) Strengths in Social Sciences
- Lack of (fair) postdoctoral opportunities at universities
WWTF Lessons

- To sum up:
  - Vienna wants to be a top R&D Location in Europe
  - WWTF (as an agency closely connected to a local authority) contributes to this task
    - We want to attract young researchers to Vienna
    - We want to give young researchers postdoctoral opportunities
  - WWTF is not engaged in doctoral training and in financing graduate schools
Global Competition on Talent

- The market to find the best is truly global and becoming increasingly more competitive

- Vienna: WWTF Science Chairs € 1.5 Mio
- Saudi Arabia: KAUST € 8 Mio
- Germany: Lichtenberg-Chairs, Volkswagenstiftung € 1.5 Mio
- Canada: Canada Research Chairs € 1.2 Mio
- South Africa: South African Research Chairs € 0.8 Mio
Factors in the global competition on talent

- Attractive instruments to attract people, but also...

- Quality of Life
- Attractive framework conditions
  - Career perspectives
  - Teaching work load, administration work load
  - IPRs....
  - ....

- Attractive instruments to hold people
  - Vivid funding possibilities

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Vienna Science Chairs

- We want to attract younger researchers to Vienna
- 4 Science Chairs in Vienna, calls for 4 additional positions are open
  - Bioinformatics (2)
  - Mathematics & Biology (1)
  - Quantitative Methods in Life Sciences (2)
  - Finance (1)
  - Cognition (2)

- Science Chairs, Age: 32 / 35 / 35 / 45
- Applicants, Age: From 27 to 35
High Potentials Programme at WWTF

- We want to establish postdoctoral opportunities
- In 2007, we invited Vienna based researchers to submit proposals for projects within the field of applied mathematics
  - Carefully planned programme: interviews, focus groups
- We earmarked 2 Million € for young Principal Investigators
- Who are High Potentials?
  - Postdoctoral researchers
  - Outstanding career, given their academic age
  - No age limits
  - It was up to the jury to decide

- 37 applications
  - Oldest applicant: 64, youngest applicant 32
  - Average applicant was 38 years old
  - 17 High Potential applications

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High Potentials Programme at WWTF (II)

- 10 projects were funded
- 8 projects for high potentials
- Average PI is 33 years old
- Oldest PI was born 1965, youngest 1975

High Potentials: and what now?
- More communication with PIs
- Training on soft (generic) skills like presentation, science communication, leadership…
- Interface between universities and WWTF with regard employment and treatment of young scientists has to be formalized: management of expectations
- Development of Instruments
Possibilities

- Federal Governments and Universities
- Local Authorities and their Agencies
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