

To whom it may concern

Werner Welzig, President

Where do we go from here? Five years ago, the Austrian Academy of Sciences presented its Medium-Term Research Programme 1996-2000 to the public. Based on this Programme, an independent international Evaluation was undertaken of the work of all academic institutions of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and in 1998 and 2000, the results of this international Evaluation were made public. We also published the experiences gained from the process itself, as well as both definitive and anticipated conclusions leading on from these.

The task on which we are embarking now, at the beginning of this new century, constitutes the second stage on a path which no Austrian academic institution has taken before. We are taking this path on our own initiative, and our plans for ensuring an audit of our activities – both academic and political, as well as internal and external – are both rooted in our own convictions and a result of our own decision-making procedures.

The experiences we have gained from the Programme process which has evolved over the past five years can be summarized, as we enter this new phase, as follows:

1. In the context of academic research, no audit, indeed no internal audit, has the potential to be so destructive that it would not appear as a veritable elixir when set against public disinterest in the content of our projects and in the comments of international evaluators (whether critical, or encouraging) on the quality and standards of these projects. Here, it should be stressed that the word “our” denotes not only the institution

of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, but equally academic science in general.

2. The “public purse”, which keeps the academic sphere alive, will be relinquishing something vital if it ignores the result of such a programmatic effort exposed to such comprehensive and general control. We gratefully acknowledge the fact that the Austrian federal government has given significant initial indications of taking heed through establishing the new *Rat für Forschung und Technologieentwicklung* (Council for Research and Technological Development). However, a sustained focus is required in order to prevent such contributions from acquiring the character of one-off “awards”. It must be possible to undertake planning work in a context of certainty.
3. The word “concentration” is currently generating panic reactions in some quarters. Let us therefore make one thing clear: the Austrian Academy of Sciences considers its staged Programme work and the Evaluations based on this work as an important objectivizable contribution and incentive for concentration within the academic sciences in Austria. One aspect of this concentration must be that the focuses of university and non-university research should henceforth be more clearly delimited than before. This will not be possible without clearer working aims and schedules; this too is something we have learnt from the process described above.

To whom it may concern: Not only the achievements of academic science in Austria, but also its failings, are a matter of concern to us all.

