



# Press Release

## Great success for the University of Tübingen in the excellence competition

**Six cluster initiatives invited to submit full proposals – „location of top-level research both nationally and internationally“**

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The University of Tübingen has mastered the first stage of the current federal and state excellence competition with great success. "I am delighted that six of our initiatives for the establishment of new clusters of excellence have today been invited to submit a so-called full proposal," said University President Professor Karla Pollmann, on Friday. "This result makes Tübingen once again one of the most successful universities in Germany and underlines its position as a location of top-level research both nationally and internationally."

The following cluster initiatives were invited to submit a full proposal:

The paleoanthropological cluster initiative **HUMAN ORIGINS** will integrate both biological and cultural perspectives into human origins research and thus define a new conceptual framework to move away from the piecemeal study of the fossile and archaeological records which is currently prevalent.

The cluster initiative **TERRA** is about the interaction between diversity and stability in the geosphere and the biosphere. It aims to develop an integrated understanding of how geo-biosphere interactions in terrestrial systems induce and respond to environmental changes.

The cluster initiative **GreenRobust** from the field of plant biology will study plant responses to climatic and biotic perturbations to understand the organisational principles that provide robustness (i.e. the maintenance of function despite perturbation) to plant life, and thus deliver roadmaps for the sustainable management of plant-based agriculture and ecosystems. The initiative is a joint project of the University of Tübingen and the Universities of Heidelberg and Hohenheim.

The neuroscience cluster initiative **The Fe/male Brain** aims to identify the mechanisms underlying the impact of sex and gender on brain function

and behavior, as well as on mental and neurologic disorders. The goal is to develop individualized, sex- and gender-sensitive therapeutic approaches through basic and translational research.

In the planned **Bionic Intelligence for Health (BI4H)** cluster, an interdisciplinary research team is combining the neural and physical intelligence of the human body with a fundamentally new approach to intelligent technology. The aim is better to recognize neural diseases, treat them adaptively and thus improve the quality of life of those affected. To achieve this, the researchers aim intelligently to integrate innovative technical systems in the body. The planned cluster is a joint initiative of the Universities of Stuttgart and Tübingen.

The **Critical Proximities** initiative examines various forms of coexistence and cooperation, using the innovative concept of critical proximity. The aim is to answer the question of how, and under what conditions, proximity is 'critical'; why coexistence sometimes takes the form of peaceful coexistence, cooperation and a willingness to compromise - but can also lead to conflict and confrontation. This approach also enables a rethinking of the content and theory of the fundamental notions of difference that have long dominated the humanities and social sciences.

### **Existing clusters also continue to compete for excellence funding**

University President Pollmann emphasized that all the existing Tübingen research clusters will also submit a follow-up application in order to secure funding for a further seven years: "Thanks to the successful work of the researchers involved, I am sure that all three clusters in the fields of infection research, cancer research and machine learning have excellent chances of receiving future funding." If this were confirmed by the international reviewers, the University of Tübingen would also be able to apply for further funding as a University of Excellence.

In this first selection round, a total of 41 cluster initiatives across Germany were invited to submit a full proposal. In 2018, the University of Tübingen was awarded excellence funding for the three research clusters "Controlling Microbes to Fight Infections" (CMFI), "Image-guided and Functionally Instructed Tumor Therapies" (iFIT) and "Machine Learning: New Perspectives for Science". The funding currently runs until 2025 and could be extended until 2032. Each university needs at least two clusters in the future funding phase in order to be able to apply for institutional funding as a University of Excellence. The final decision on the clusters will be announced on May 22, 2025, while the decision on the Universities of Excellence will be made in September 2026.

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