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**Abstract**

National research systems face an increasingly competitive environment for ideas, talent and funds, and governments have shifted from institutional core funding to project funding, often on a competitive basis, or reward success in raising third-party funds in performance-based funding schemes. It is in this context that 'research excellence initiatives' (REIs) have emerged. These instruments are designed to encourage outstanding research by providing large-scale, long-term funding to designated research units. They provide funds for research and related measures, such as the improvement or extension of physical infrastructure, the recruitment of outstanding researchers from abroad, and researcher training. This report presents new evidence on how governments steer and fund public research in higher education and public research institutions through REIs. It can help inform discussions on future government policy directions by providing information on how REIs work and on the functioning and characteristics of institutions that host centres of excellence. The findings show some of the benefits to be gained through REIs and note pitfalls to be avoided. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

**Signature**

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