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The Franco-German University (DFH)

MODEL FOR A NETWORK OF BILATERAL,
INTEGRATED, COOPERATIVE PROGRAMMES

Everybody is talking about dual degree programmes. It may be interesting, particularly in the context of the proposed new European University networks, to know more about an institution such as the German-French University (DFH). The main mission of DFH is to foster and promote dual degree programmes and transnational doctoral programmes within the framework of a bicultural, bilingual and binational university network. DFH programmes are, to some extent, an internationalisation laboratory which should be studied carefully for purposes far beyond French-German cooperation. How exactly does the DFH work? The author attempts to give direct insight into the DFH workbench.

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1. Introduction

A unique position There is no overstating the fact that the Franco-German University (Deutsch-Französische Hochschule – DFH) is uniquely positioned in the area of university internationalisation. The DFH is an institution that belongs to two countries, and where neither has the ‘last word’. It has created a structure for establishing transnational degree programmes which is unrivalled in the world. With 180 integrated dual degree programmes, no other binational partnership comes close to what the DFH has achieved in recent years. For comparison, the DAAD finances 96 integrated double degree programmes worldwide.¹

A binational institution University policymakers in Germany and France have long striven to develop what has become a highly esteemed category of dual degree programmes, and the DFH, a binational institution, is responsible for creating a very large part of these. They are programmes in which teaching and learning are set in a dual language context—a context which does not include English, commonly regarded as the dominant academic language in both France and Germany. Clearly, not everything can function from the bottom up. The political decision to offer institutional funding to these programmes may not be enough to move mountains, but it evidently suffices to shape hilly landscapes. This article will describe in further detail how this works.

2. How It All Began – A Look Back

On 12 November 1987 the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the French Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond finalised an exchange of notes regarding the establishment of a so-called Deutsch-Französisches Hochschulkolleg (DFHK). It was the predecessor of the DFH, and one might say that the DFH is the direct descendant of the DFHK.

Establish integrated study programmes Politicians in both countries hoped that the DFHK would enhance cooperation between German and French universities and help increase the cross-border mobility of students, university teaching and research staff. One of its main tasks was to work toward establishing joint study programmes—in particular, integrated study programmes. These programmes—and this was revolutionary at the time—were to offer German and French professional, university-level qualifications. As far as was

¹ www.daad.de/medien/hochschulen/ww/studiengaenge/doppelabschlussprogramm/projektliste_2018-19_stand_06062018.pdf, last accessed on 26 November 2018.

possible, students were to form a Franco-German group for the entire duration of their academic programme.

Basically, three core ideas continue to live on in the DFH concept and certainly sound less esoteric in the Bologna era than in the 1980s. Put in simple terms, the plan called for: 1) a mixed student group, 2) an integrated curriculum and 3) a dual degree as a reward for the extra work required from students to achieve intercultural, thematic and linguistic proficiency in their subjects.

In 1997, Germany and France formalised an agreement which represented a quantum leap, or at least a new qualitative stage, in the organisation of the university's activities. Klaus Kinkel and Hubert Védrine, the foreign ministers of the two countries, signed the Weimar Agreement between the governments of Germany and the French Republic, establishing a Franco-German University (DFH).

Once again, an institution of higher education was founded as an alliance of German and French universities, i.e. without a campus or faculty of its own. However, the DFH was granted its own legal personality, or as the French put it so elegantly, "Elle est dotée de la personnalité morale." Even though the legal status of the DFH is not spelt out in the Weimar Agreement, the first article explicitly states that the DFH is an international institution entitled to all the privileges granted to "UN specialist institutions".²

The DFH commenced its activities in 1999. After a period of debate, all parties agreed to establish the Administrative Office of the DFH in the border city of Saarbrücken.³ Naturally there were other options (for example, establishing two headquarters, one in each capital), but the single-headquarter solution reflects the spirit of the DFH quite well, since the administrative staff do not regard themselves as representatives of their own country, but as part of a completely conjoined DFH.

Three core ideas

The Weimar Agreement

An international institution

Start of the activities

2 The DFH falls in the same category as the Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk, the legal standing of which was defined in detail in an evaluation published in 2004 by the Franco-German Working Group (Pierre Francois, Hans-Ulrich Müller, Jutta Müller-Stackebrandt): "The Jugendwerk is clearly not an 'international organisation' with all its international legal implications (i.e. a community of states with a common purpose divergent from that of each member). Rather it is a special institution with a specific purpose, formed on the basis of a bilateral agreement. This is also implied in Art. 3, par. 2 of the agreement which mandates the application of several stipulations contained in the United Nations General Assembly Agreement on the Privileges and Exemptions of Specialist Institutions of 21 November 1947. In addition to its legal personality, these stipulations primarily refer to the non-accountability before a court of law, tax exemptions and the obligation to follow special settlement procedures in contractual disputes. In this sense, the Jugendwerk has much in common with the regime of organisations in the UN system (UNESCO, WHO, FAO, etc.), despite the fact that the number of founding members is limited to two and committees are not only comprised of government representatives (although the ILO includes representatives from the private economic sector)." (p. 13).

3 The Administrative Office was originally located 'Am Staden' in downtown Saarbrücken, but as the number of staff increased, so did the need for larger premises. In 2006 the Administrative Office moved its headquarters to the beautiful 'Villa Europa' in the Rotenbühl district of Saarbrücken.

3. The DFH – University, Network or Funding Organisation?

- The right to confer own degrees** As a university, the DFH enjoys a privilege which is granted only to this class of institutions. Namely, it may “in cooperation with its member universities, confer its own degrees as long as its members are permitted to confer equivalent degrees at the national level, and the integration of the degree programme justifies the conferral of such a degree, and the degree can be recognised in both countries without difficulty” (Weimar Agreement, Art. 3, par. 2 [3]). Until now, the DFH has not exercised its right to confer its own degrees. In addition to conferring degrees awarded by the partner institutions, the DFH issues its own certificate confirming the special character of the dual degree.
- The category** In some ways, the DFH can be regarded as belonging to the category of scientific, intermediary and funding organisations. The DFH maintains an appropriated budget, organises calls for applications, develops and manages selection processes, initiates cooperative programmes, provides funding to selected projects and coordinates their quality assurance.
- A network organisation** The DFH is also a network. Its members are the participating universities with which it cooperates. The DFH maintains and intensifies this close-knit network, promotes exchange and communication between its members, functions as a forum and information platform, and encourages its members to see themselves as part of a special family.
- A structured funding organisation** Therefore, one could justifiably argue that the DFH is a network-like, structured funding organisation with the specific, but nevertheless rudimentary characteristics of a university. It remains to be seen whether these rudimentary characteristics will someday blossom into a full-fledged university in all its glory.

4. What Does the DFH Support?

The Weimar Agreement, which is basically the constitution of the DFH, specifies a series of activities which the DFH may pursue. The most important of these are

- initiate, fund and implement Franco-German degree programmes;
- fund long-term study visits in the partner country;
- make it possible for students in joint degree programmes to acquire two equivalent national degrees or binational degrees from the partner universities;
- fund cooperative programmes in the area of post-graduate education in both countries;
- participate in coordinating joint R&D projects; and
- fund bilateral university and research programmes and cooperative ventures with other German and French organisations.

Not all of these activities are pursued or successfully implemented to an equal degree. The DFH focuses instead on particular areas which have shaped its distinctive image.

Without a doubt, the most relevant project type is the Franco-German dual degree programme. The lion's share of the DFH budget, namely 0.2 million euros (with a total budget of 15.8 million euros) is appropriated for this type of cooperative endeavour. In addition to funding binational degree programmes, the DFH supports a series of trinational projects. In terms of its future strategy, however, the DFH intends to focus on third-party collaboration particularly if the third university can be integrated into a regional cooperation close to the Franco-German border (e.g. Switzerland, Luxembourg or Belgium) or if the third university uses German or French as an official language. In the 2017/18 academic year, the DFH funded 180 such programmes (trinational projects included).

Basically, all subjects and all accredited universities are eligible for DFH funding. The largest portion of funding is awarded to degree programmes in 1) economics, 2) engineering and 3) humanities and social sciences. These are followed to a lesser degree by law and teacher training programmes. In respect to their appeal, there exists an interesting disparity between French and German students. While roughly an equal number of German and French students choose economics (with 22% French enrolment and 25% German enrolment), more French students (25%) prefer engineering than Germans (14%).

As a rule, the DFH covers three types of expenses for the selected degree programmes listed in its funding catalogue:

A series of activities

The dual degree programme

DFH funding

Three types of expenses

- For each student enrolled in a DFH-funded degree programme, the DFH pays a monthly mobility allowance of 300 euros for the entire period during which the student studies at the partner institution.
- The DFH provides infrastructural funding to the involved university partners to cover expenses incurred as a direct result of the dual degree programme; in most cases the funding is equally divided between the respective partners. These include costs for hourly compensation, student counselling, translation, development of teaching or promotional materials, as well as travel and administration costs. Depending on the size of the degree programme in question, the DFH pays a total of 3,000 to 8,000 euros per year and per degree programme.
- The DFH enables all enrolled students to participate in online language courses at no cost in cooperation with Deutsch-Uni Online DUO. DUO provides assisted self-learning modules at different levels of proficiency. In addition, the DFH supports their degree programmes through a special funding programme which specifically finances language courses that do not necessarily take place in Saarbrücken but on the respective partner campus.

A mobility allowance

The DFH not only provides funding to dual degree programmes but also to binational post-graduate programmes. At present, the DFH funds 26 Franco-German doctoral programmes, in which approximately 150 doctoral candidates are enrolled. Funding is awarded in the form of a mobility allowance—currently 600 euros per month—for the entire period during which the doctoral candidates work on their research projects in the partner country. In 2017, the DFH provided 750,000 euros to such doctoral programmes.

Joint summer schools

Doctoral candidates who wish to write a thesis under a ‘co-tutelle de thèse’ arrangement, i.e. a Franco-German dual doctorate, can apply directly for funding from the DFH.

It is worth mentioning that the DFH offers German and French students and young researchers the opportunity to meet one another at jointly organised summer schools. Experience shows that such low-level cooperative projects, which can be applied for and carried out in a largely non-bureaucratic manner, often lead to more ambitious projects, e.g. application to a dual-degree or doctoral programme. The DFH regards these summer schools as a kind of trial offer that may eventually expand its network.

Improving professional perspectives

Finally, the DFH actively endeavours to improve the professional perspectives of its graduates, functioning as a relay station between students, young researchers, universities and companies. For twenty years now, the DFH has intensively participated and cooperated in the Franco-German Forum in Strasbourg every autumn, a major information fair for Franco-German degree programmes. Participants share their experience with one another, internships are offered, alumni associations hold their annual meeting and a couple of organised debates take place.

The DFH offers intercultural application training, particularly successful graduates are rewarded with company-sponsored prizes and former graduates receive support by means of funds for DFH alumni

associations. In addition, the DFH and the Association Bernard Gregory (ABG) cooperate in helping young post-docs find their way into the workforce.

5. How It Works – From the Call for Applications to Quality Assurance

In order to understand how funding decisions are made in concrete terms, it is best to outline the entire decision-making process step by step, using the example of binational dual degree programmes.

The call for applications

The DFH university management regularly analyses the results of previous rounds of applications and then, sometime in March each year, submits the first draft of a call for applications to the Academic Advisory Committee, which oversees quality matters at the DFH. When the call for applications has been approved by the Academic Advisory Committee, it is presented to the highest supervisory committee at the DFH, the University Council, for deliberation and final approval. The call for applications is published in April or May. Universities planning on submitting applications are asked to notify the DFH of their intent by 30 June. This allows the Administrative Office to clarify any misunderstandings, provide ongoing consulting to applicants, plan organisational matters, and above all, recruit suitable assessors at an early stage.

The next major deadline is 31 October, which marks the end of the application period. By this year's deadline of 31 October 2018, the DFH has received 45 funding applications for various types of academic programmes (bachelor's, master's, PhD tracks). It should be noted that 19 of these are applications for funding extensions, i.e. degree programmes which have received funding but which, because the funding period has concluded, require re-evaluation for continued funding, and only 26 are 'new' applications.

Deadlines

The next step is an administrative pre-assessment that takes place in November. Has the applicant met all the formal prerequisites? Does the proposal meet the basic conditions for funding? Is the application complete and correctly filled out? Only when these conditions are confirmed is the rather extensive assortment of applications forwarded to the assessment 'tandems'. By 'tandems' we mean a German and a French expert who review the same application concurrently. Their assessments are based on points awarded for certain criteria and explanatory remarks as to why the points were awarded and how they came to their verdict. Sometime in February—the next important date in the cycle—all the assessors meet in Saarbrücken for a joint session, known at the

Pre-assessment

Evaluation DFH as ‘the evaluation’. In March—as the annual cycle concludes—the Academic Advisory Committee meets to examine the coherence of the proposed ranking once more, and in cases of contention, makes a final decision. Several weeks later, the University Council meets in joint session to grant final approval of the list in accordance with the available budget appropriations.

Funding decisions In April the applicants at the universities receive notification of the funding decisions. After the summer break—now one and a half years following the first preparations for the call for applications at the committee level—and as soon as the funding contracts are signed, the degree programme may commence or, in the case of a positive re-evaluation, continue with renewed élan.

6. Funding Criteria and Quality Standards

Quality criteria The integrated bi- and trinational degree programmes must meet the following quality criteria:

Two/three nationally recognised degrees

■ The programme concludes with the conferral of two (or in trinational degree programmes, three) nationally recognised university degrees of equal value. Alternatively, the universities may confer a single joint degree. Students should be able to attain this type of degree within the duration of study as prescribed in their country; the transnational character of the academic programme should not extend the duration of study.

Intercultural enrichment

■ The programme is embedded in two national educational systems along with their universities’ scientific and subject-related practices, and their specific working, teaching and learning methods. In the special case of trinational degree programmes, the programme must be carried out in all three educational systems. The DFH insists that these transnational academic programmes provide intercultural enrichment to their students. During their studies, participants should regard the opinions and methods of instruction of their home country in relative terms, constantly re-evaluating them in relation to those in other countries. In other words, the goal is to actively support the students’ interaction with a different scientific, professional and everyday culture.

■ The partner universities provide a jointly approved, balanced and complementary curriculum with joint study and examination regulations. This criterion illustrates most distinctly the difference between the DFH requirements and ERASMUS-type mobility formats. With all due respect to the important and admirable EU-funded programme, the DFH-type integrated degree programmes are conceived as an integrated whole. Study visits to the partner country do not merely take place in ‘windows of mobility’ but are didactically coordinated in detail by the participating universities.

■ The duration of study and academic achievement are equally divided between the partner universities:

For bachelor’s degree programmes, students must study for at least two semesters in the partner country. Preference is given to those with additional requirements, particularly mandatory internships in the partner country.

For long undergraduate degree programmes (e.g. state examination programmes lasting four to five years), students must spend at least three semesters in the partner country.

Master’s degree programmes are usually two years in length. The prescribed duration of study in each country should be one year. For three-semester master’s degree programmes, students must spend at least one semester in the partner country.

■ Students gain general language proficiency and professional competence in the partner languages, German and French. A key characteristic of the DFH-funded programmes is bilingual or trilingual language proficiency (see section 9) for all graduates.

■ Students complete the integrated degree programme in a cohesive group. This requirement is not met by a mere student exchange (e.g. “in the second semester of the three-semester master’s degree programme, German students study in France and the French participants study in Germany”). It is the personal contact between students in both countries which engenders the desired intercultural enrichment.

■ The programme includes an internship (preferably mandatory) in the partner country if such an internship is practical for the subject in question.

■ Universities prepare students for the academic, language and organisational-practical challenges of studying in the partner country. This entails that the applicant confirms that students are not simply ‘thrown into cold water’ but are adequately prepared for their study visit. Of course, students should also receive assistance during their stay in the partner country.

A jointly approved and complementary curriculum

Duration

Language proficiency

A cohesive group

Internship

- Professional prospects**
- Both students and graduates are given assistance with continuing their academic career and entering the French, German and international labour markets. The DFH requires that even those degree programmes, which do not directly qualify graduates for a profession, conclude with a professionally qualifying degree—something which incidentally is mandated by the Bologna reform process as well. Even the humanities can no longer afford to abide strictly by the principle of *l'art pour l'art*. Consequently, the DFH requires that all funded degree programmes reflect and improve the professional prospects of their graduates.

With regard to integrated degree programmes, i.e. programmes with a jointly elaborated and complimentary curriculum, bi- and trinational university cooperative programmes should also ensure that

- gaining intercultural competence is not merely regarded as a side effect that happens automatically, but is actively supported;
- students are not charged multiple tuition fees;
- students are issued a Diploma Supplement in accordance with the Bologna standards which explicitly certifies their bi- or trinational academic achievement; and
- the group of students is as international as possible, i.e. in addition to German and French participants, students from other countries should also have the opportunity to participate in the programme.

Work toward attaining the degrees

The DFH also requires that all DFH-funded students work toward attaining the degrees prescribed in the joint study and examination regulations issued by the university partners. Collaborative programmes, in which students can spontaneously decide whether they wish to pursue the prescribed degree, are not eligible for DFH funding. The same applies to collaborative programmes in which universities decide on whether to recognise a student's achievement at the partner university only after he or she returns to their home university.

Collaborative research ventures

Similar criteria apply to research related ventures, the formation of Franco-German doctoral programmes and funding for doctoral candidates preparing for their co-tutelles de thèse. It would exceed the scope of this article to go into detail on the specific character of these project forms. When assessing collaborative doctoral programmes and research-related projects, intercultural enrichment always plays an integral role in the DFH's funding decision.

7. Principles of Application Assessment

The DFH attaches great importance to the quality and reliability of its application assessment process. The regulations stipulate, for example, how assessors are selected and what assessment methods are used:

Quality and reliability

- The assessors require special qualification: In addition to sufficient academic qualification, they require a profound knowledge of subject-related practices, the university system in both countries and a solid, working knowledge of the foreign language.
- The assessors must be independent and are not allowed to have any affiliation with the applicant institutions. They are obliged to use the same assessment criteria for each application.
- The assessors must undertake to meet the previously agreed deadlines, observe strict confidentiality, have no direct contact with the applicants, etc.

In view of the fact that the DFH pays its assessors only a small remuneration for their efforts, it is remarkable that we have never failed to find a sufficient number of assessors for this difficult, time-consuming task.

8. Two Cultures in One Organisation – How Does It Work?

Of course, the meeting and merging of two scientific and administrative cultures pose a special challenge to the daily activities at the DFH:

A special challenge

- The programme coordinators (i.e. the academics responsible for the degree or doctoral programmes at the respective partner universities) have to learn to correctly interpret the culturally specific curricular-didactic views of their partner, and when disagreement arises, to be prepared to compromise.
- Students and doctoral candidates sometimes painfully learn that presentation techniques, the traditions for structuring scientific papers and the modes of communication between those involved in the learning process are not the same everywhere. In other words, they have to be willing to adapt to the customs of their partner country.

- The mixed Franco-German staff at the DFH, responsible for administration and coordination of the programmes, are confronted every day with different styles of leadership, different working methods, different accounting principles and, like everyone else participating in the working processes at the DFH, varying terminology in two different languages.
- The DFH management must be highly sensitive to this carefully balanced system of parity and possess special intercultural dexterity and knowledge of the management cultures in both partner countries.
- The delegates, who represent the funding governments in committees and who are generally accustomed to managing purely national dossiers, are suddenly confronted with unfamiliar procedures and terminology.

Intercultural differences

At the same time, these difficulties are what make the DFH so exciting. Despite occasional moments of friction, almost everyone at the DFH regards these intercultural disparities not as a hindrance, but rather as an enhancement to the working process.

It is worth pointing out that when conflicts do arise, for example, in the Administrative Office, they are not usually the result of differences of nationality. Many years of cooperation have created a common identity within the organisation that transcends national boundaries.

An administrative opportunity

The intercultural differences within a supranational organisation not only represent a source of potential misunderstanding but also an administrative opportunity. Staff must always strive to 'pick and choose the best of both worlds', i.e. selectively apply the administrative methods best suited to the case in question. Because its headquarters are located in Saarland, Germany, the DFH Administrative Office orientates itself to German administrative practices for pragmatic reasons. However, it has also adopted a wide range of French conventions on account of their superior efficiency (cf Hamm, 2014).

9. Our Working Languages

Cause for concern

Although there is no cause for alarm, it is true that fewer schools in France teach German and fewer schools in Germany teach French nowadays than in years past. Today, 15% of all students in France learn German (Source: Eurostat).

It is also true that this percentage is of little consequence in reflecting the language proficiency of the school-leavers. Without going into further detail here, it is clear—and a sobering thought—that only a small number of those few pupils, who endeavour to learn the language their

neighbouring country ever comes close to achieving the level of proficiency that would enable them to study in the partner country.

Is the reservoir of future DFH participants drying up? There is no point in denying that this gives cause for concern. After all, mastery of the foreign language is a prerequisite for participating in the DFH degree programmes.

However, there are several encouraging developments taking place. For example, more than 80 German Gymnasien (college-preparatory secondary schools) and likewise more than 80 French lycées offer the AbiBac and more schools have applied to offer it in the future. The AbiBac is a special university entrance qualification which allows the holder to apply for admission to either a German or French university. The graduates of these Franco-German university-preparatory programmes represent the natural target group of the DFH undergraduate degree programmes. The same applies to the Franco-German Gymnasien in Saarbrücken, Freiburg and Buc, as well as the French schools in Germany and the German schools in France.

The most encouraging sign, however, can be found in another phenomenon. Most school-leavers and students understand that international experience during one's education is essential in today's highly competitive labour market. It is no wonder that dual degree programmes are regarded as the highest level of internationally oriented programmes available. However, despite calls to action and rousing speeches, universities have been extremely slow at creating programmes to meet this demand. And this particularly plays to the strength of the DFH; as an established institution with years of experience, its dual degree programmes in both participating countries comprise what marketing experts would call a significant market share. As for the language hurdle, both students and their future employers regard it not so much as a problem, but more as a measure of quality. Employers are more likely to take a chance on an applicant who has succeeded in attaining university-level proficiency in both German and French than on monolingual candidates.

This explains why so many students who are interested in enrolling, for example, in a Franco-German master's degree programme are willing to work on improving their language proficiency in order to meet the requirements of participation. Erasmus exchanges and other low-level study-visit formats can serve as building blocks toward achieving the necessary language proficiency. Motivation is always the best language teacher! Frequently students improve their language skills to gain admission to an integrated international programme only to discover their love of French or German along the way. In this regard, the DFH contributes strongly to stabilising German and French as academic languages (Hellmann, 2015).

Although the promotion of French and German is certainly a positive linguistic and cultural-political side effect, the DFH does not see its primary role as a guardian of threatened academic languages. And by no means does it wish to lead a linguistic and political crusade against English as the globally dominant academic language.

Encouraging developments

A significant 'market share'

Language proficiency

No linguistic and political crusade

Most university instructors who coordinate the DFH degree and doctoral programmes and other activities know quite well that English is indispensable in the academic world and by no means regard their Franco-German projects as a bastion against Anglo-Saxon influence.

English indispensable in the academic world

In the DFH degree programmes (and more so in research situations), instructors use English-language teaching materials when it makes pedagogical sense. Guest lecturers from other countries often give their lectures in English and meetings with young researchers and students from around the world are commonly held in English as well.

Graduates of the DFH programmes leave as interculturally experienced, trilingual academics. As young professionals with a particularly strong Franco-German profile, they are not only prepared language-wise to enter the franco-allemand sector, but also to meet the demands of the globalised labour market.

10. What is the Financial Situation?

Five public funding institutions

The DFH finances most of its activities with funding provided each year by five public funding institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic.

In 2018 the DFH expects to receive a total of 13.628 million Euros from both governments—6.814 million Euros each from Germany and France.

With regard to the French contribution, funding is provided in two equal parts by two government ministries, the Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères (MEAE), the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, and the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation (MESRI), the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

A Franco-German budget

It is important to the DFH that it oversees a joint Franco-German budget as stipulated in Article 3 of its budgetary guidelines. The University Council is responsible for approving the DFH budget. Furthermore, the DFH has the right to invest any operating surplus from which it can gain a return on its investment (Art. 11 of the DFH budgetary guidelines). For those familiar with the pitfalls of appropriated budget practice, it is interesting to note that the DFH can also carry over unspent funding to the next year (Art. 12, par. 5 of the budgetary guidelines). The German contribution of 6.814 million Euros is provided by three sources. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is the largest German contributor to the DFH with 4.28 million Euros.

In terms of expenditure, the DFH budget for 2018 totals 15.36 million Euros, although it receives an annual subsidy of only 13.6 million euros. This discrepancy is mainly the result of the two budgetary guidelines mentioned above. By investing any temporarily remaining liquidity, the DFH can earn interest to supplement its budget. However, these earnings have a limited impact especially now, when interest rates are low. What is more significant is the fact the DFH can draw on remaining income carried over from past years for its current budget. But even here, we should not be overly optimistic. Since the DFH is now running a budget which exceeds its annual income, its reserves may shrink in the coming years to such an extent that the DFH will be faced with budget constraints and will not be able to approve all the excellent applications to come.

With regard to how its expenditures are distributed, the DFH intends to spend 12.5 million Euros this year to finance its projects. The budget appropriates 2.9 million Euros for organisational expenditure (personnel, administration, committees, travel expenses, leasing, etc.). Without naming names, comparable institutions have much higher overheads in relation to programme-related expenditures than the DFH.

Total expenditure

Organisational expenditure

11. Steering Committees and Organisational Structure

The work of the DFH is supported by various entities. The five most important are

- the Executive Board and the Administrative Office;
- the University Council;
- the Assembly of Member Universities;
- the Academic Advisory Committee; and
- Student representatives.

The members of the Executive Board (President and Vice President) are nominated by the University Council and elected to a four-year term by the Assembly of Member Universities. If the president is French, then the vice president must be a German, and vice versa. After two years, the president and vice president swap positions. The president is responsible for implementing DFH policies in accordance with the resolutions passed by the University Council. He or she represents the DFH

The Executive Board

externally. The vice president supports the president in carrying out his/her tasks. The vice president also manages the Franco-German Forum association, which organises the event of the same name in Strasbourg.

The University Council

The University Council sets DFH policy guidelines, passes the budget, approves funding for programmes of cooperation, approves the year-end financial statement and determines the conditions of eligibility which universities must meet to gain admission. The Academic Advisory Committee oversees all evaluation procedures. It advises the University Council especially in matters regarding academic and research programmes and the conferral of academic degrees.

The Administrative Office

The Secretary General heads the Administrative Office. He or she is supported by the Deputy Secretary General. There are currently 40 staff members who work at the Administrative Office and manage the entire spectrum of Franco-German degree and research programmes. The Administrative Office also works in a coordinating function with the steering committees; in other words, it serves as the administrative hub for the extensive DFH network.

Assembly of Member Universities

The assembly of member universities elects the president and vice president, appoints four representatives from the member universities to the University Council, accepts the annual activity report and makes recommendations to the University Council on all university-related affairs. The student representatives are chosen by the spokespersons of the degree programmes. They participate as advisors in the evaluation process, act as intermediaries between the DFH and its students, and present their report to the assembly.

12. What Does the Future Hold?

DFH at a crossroads

There is no denying the fact that the DFH finds itself at a crossroads. Since it was founded twenty years ago—and as political dignitaries emphatically acknowledged at the 20th anniversary of the Weimar Agreement in 2017—the DFH has accomplished a great deal and gained a reputation as a model institution of university political cooperation that extends far beyond the borders of both funding countries.

At the end of 2017, the French and German governments, or more accurately, the responsible ministries took a crucial step toward placing the DFH on a sustainable path. For the first time in the history of the DFH, the stakeholders signed a five-year target and performance agreement which will guarantee the DFH budgetary planning security in the medium term.

The target- and performance agreement is based on four primary objectives:

- The integrated degree programmes are to be continued, expanded and thematically updated as the core activities of the DFH.
- The DFH is to work even harder to ensure the mobility of German and French junior researchers, and if possible, generate greater public awareness of their achievements in the scientific community.
- The DFH is to increase its own visibility by advertising its services and programmes even more efficiently using all available media and to enhance its profile beyond Germany and France.
- The governments and the DFH agree to medium-term financial and resource-planning security to enable the DFH management and its administrative bodies to plan several years in advance and engage in future commitments.

With its many years of experience in developing fully integrated transnational degree programmes, the DFH has offered to help develop and oversee the establishment of European Universities (a goal which the European higher education sector has followed with great interest since French President Emanuel Macron's speech at the Sorbonne in September 2017).

The DFH will create models for integrated German-French programmes in the developing area of dual higher education (i.e. the possibility of gaining vocational training parallel to earning a university degree) and qualitatively monitor these projects going forward.

In order to promote flexibility in the teaching profession and greater cross-border permeability between the partner countries, the DFH will take steps to encourage Germany and France to further improve the integration of their respective teacher training systems. The DFH is also committed to ensuring that graduates leave university with a sufficient degree of language proficiency, not only in English but also in German and French. Furthermore, the DFH is expected to academically accompany issues relevant to all of society (e.g. digitalisation, environmental protection and integration) in a German-French context.

13. The DFH – An Agency of Internationalisation

On the basis of the discussion so far, it is evident that the DFH is not content with operating simply as a university exchange service in a Franco-German alliance.

The basic identity

The basic identity of the DFH undoubtedly represents the special character of Franco-German relations, which grew from a shared, fateful and sometimes problematic history between the neighbouring countries and which ultimately became a unique relationship of cooperation. On 22 January 1963, German chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French president Charles de Gaulle signed the Elysée Treaty in Paris. This 'Treaty of Friendship' obligated both partners to consult with one another at regular intervals and to coordinate rotating conferences with the goal of jointly shaping numerous political fields of significance. Political leaders in both countries have recently proposed renewing and even expanding the treaty ('Elysée 2.0'). This special identity does not automatically apply to any partner country constellation.

Expanding the influence

However, the DFH does not conceive its image as a solely traditional franco-allemand university group. In view of its success at integrating university internationalisation unlike any other university in the world, the DFH recognises a unique opportunity to expand its influence beyond the Franco-German sphere. By this we mean sharing our experience of bilateral cooperation to benefit the internationalisation efforts of university education throughout Europe, thereby offering other institutions a model worthy of emulation.

The DFH (along with its predecessor institution) has developed a series of quality criteria which are now generally acknowledged with the implementation of the Bologna Process (although not all of them have been introduced everywhere in the manner that DFH recommends) and are expected to play an important role in the process of creating the network of 'European Universities':

- The focus on students, or doctoral candidates, and the special regard to learning outcomes played a central role in the DFH programmes long before anyone had ever heard of learning outcomes.
- The Franco-German degree programmes have been refining the requirement of obligatory mobility as an integral part of joint degree programmes since the 1980s.
- The dual degrees—a distinctive characteristic of the academic programmes funded by the DFH—were being awarded to students at a time when most university legal advisors were asking themselves whether 'such a thing' was even permitted.
- Significantly, the French word *co-tutelle* is now an established term, while most terminology of university internationalisation in Europe is based on English, the language Brussels chose when it invented and designed the EU mobility programmes.

Based on these considerations, the DFH believes it can significantly contribute to the continuing efforts to Europeanise and internationalise university activities, even beyond the two core countries of Germany and France. The DFH is giving serious consideration to providing additional incentives to its partners to open their degree programmes even more to students from non-European countries. Such an internationalisation strategy could strengthen Europe's standing as a place of academic study in the long term. While these non-European students might only have considered studying abroad in English-speaking countries in the past, they will now have, if they are able to cope with the linguistic requirements, a true alternative—namely, to pursue a degree in Continental Europe that combines professional qualification with its corresponding 'European competence'.

The DFH has shown that it is possible to carry out integrated programmes successfully over decades. In the past, these programmes could have been discontinued when the committed university academics, who actively implemented them on a daily basis, retired or left their positions. Yet even generational changes can be handled efficiently as long as the coordinating university anchors the programmes to its institutional policies well in advance.

From this point of view, the DFH has long been a Bologna laboratory and a European University *avant la lettre*.

A contribution to internationalisation

Institutional policies

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