

Session 3: Rethinking research excellence in an era of sustainability transformation

Key points from the discussion

1. Research should support societal transformations towards sustainability. Therefore, research processes, the definition and measurement of research quality/excellence and research impact as well as science system framework conditions have to be modified accordingly to consider societal responsibility more systematically.
2. Societally responsible research is not a contradiction to freedom of research, but is part of the implementation of freedom. Ethical reflections on the foundations, goals, methods and consequences of research is a core element of scientific excellence.
3. The German FONA programme can be seen as an example of both, a modified defined excellent research and existing barriers to design and implement research processes more responsibly and to measure societal impacts beyond common bibliometric and scientometric methods. More money for programme funding is not enough; institutional and structural changes and a modified model of excellence have to be achieved.