

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Education, Science
and Research

Perspectives on national strategies to promote learning and teaching

Austria

Peer Learning Activity, 3 and 4 November 2021

Principles of governance of different higher education sectors in Austria

Table 1.1: Organisational framework for higher education sectors

	Public universities	Universities of applied sciences	Private universities	University colleges of teacher education
Legal basis	Universities Act 2002 (UG)	University of Applied Sciences Act (FHG)	Private Higher Education Act (PrivHG)	Teacher Education Act 2005 (HG)
Legal status	Independent legal entity governed by public law	Various legal entities mainly governed by private law	Various legal entities mainly governed by private law	Federal or private institutions
Steering mechanisms	Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (GUEP)	Development and funding plan for universities of applied sciences (FH-EF-Plan)	n/a	Funding plan for university colleges of teacher education (PH-EP)
Degree of autonomy	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous	Semi-autonomous
Supervision	Government supervision	Accreditation	Accreditation	Government supervision
Funding	Mainly government funding: "Universitätsfinanzierung NEU" model via performance agreements	Study places funded by federal government and other sources (e.g. states)	No institutional funding from federal government	Public and private funders
Current number	22	21	16	14

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), reporting date: 1 January 2021

“Austrian Higher Education Conference” (Hochschulkonferenz)

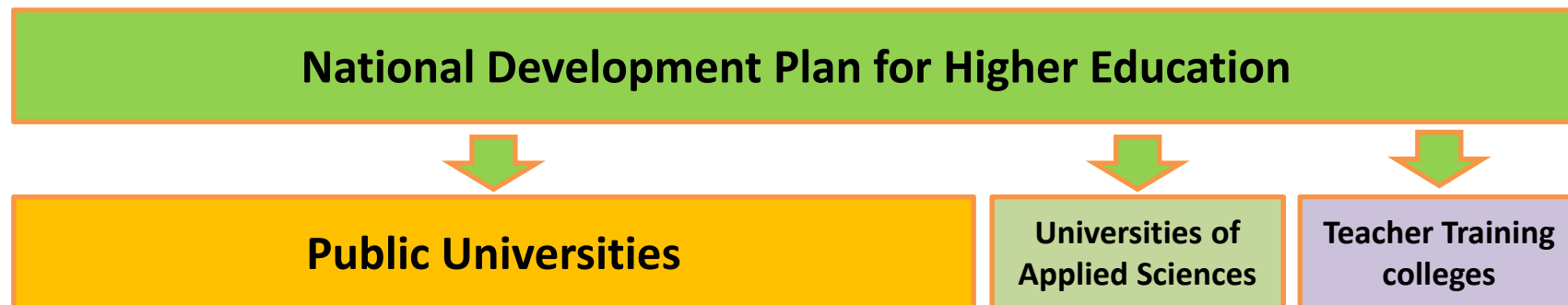
Core group of 13 members

- rectors conferences of the public universities, the universities of applied sciences, the university colleges of teacher education, the private universities
- national students union
- senates of public universities
- Austrian Science Council
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research

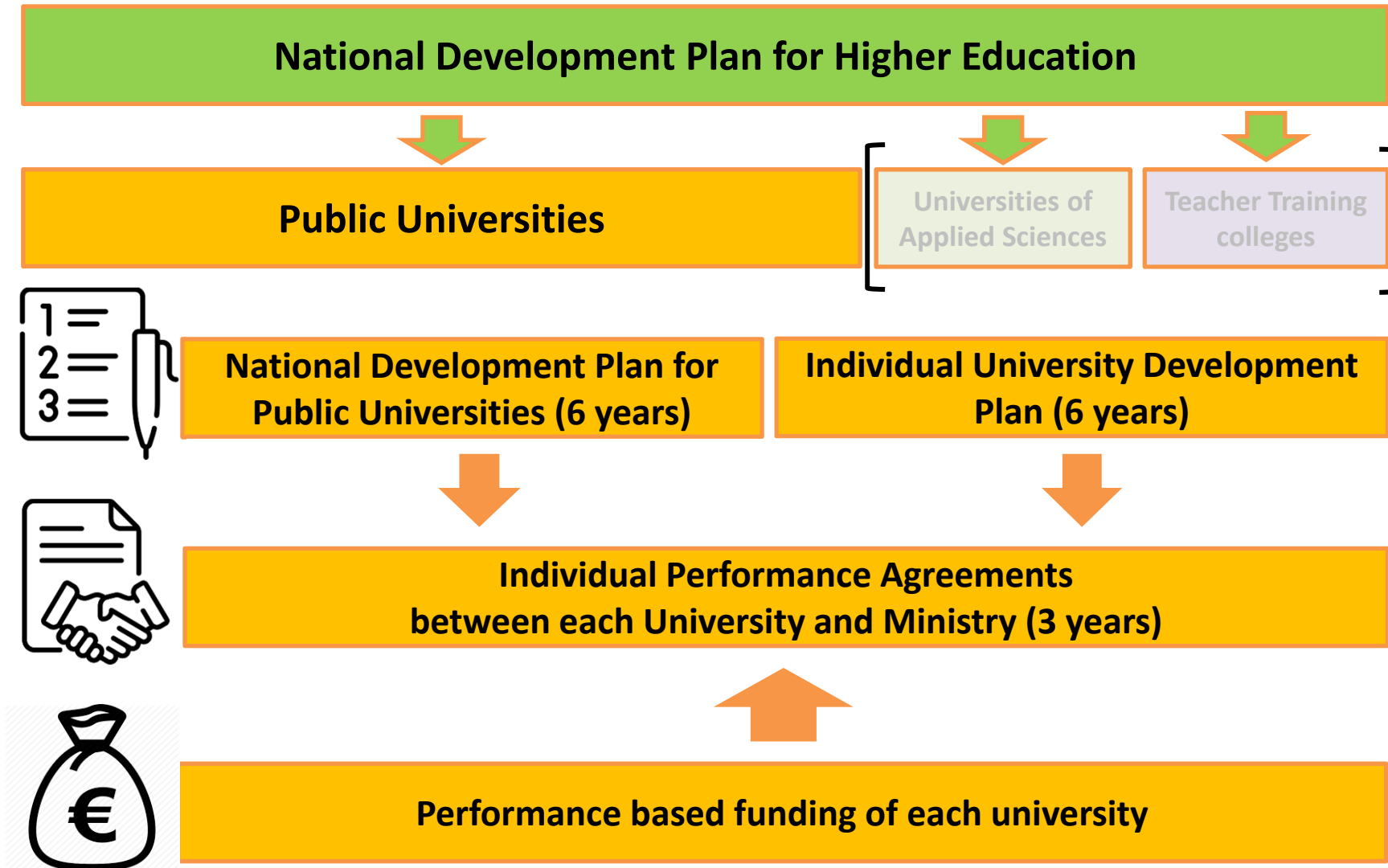
Members of the science community are directly involved, depending on treated topics. These include other Federal Ministries, Research Societies and Councils, Trade Unions, QA Agency as well as the Bologna Follow-up Group.

“Austrian Higher Education Conference” (Hochschulkonferenz)

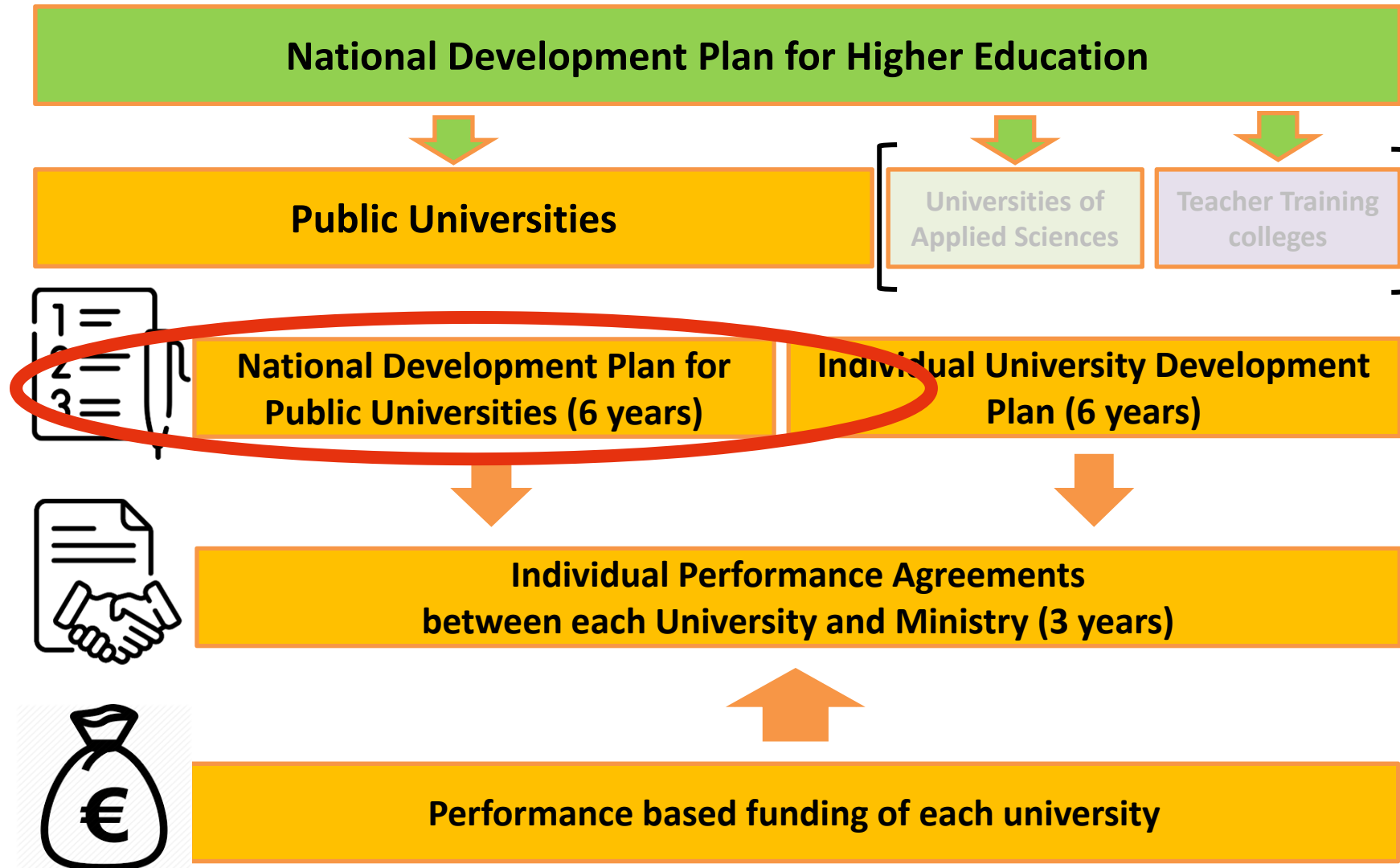
- **“Recommendations to improve the quality of HE teaching” (2015)**
The recommendations resulted from debates between stakeholders and addressed **four quality dimensions of teaching** (teaching competence, curricular design, organisation of teaching and learning, resources and output).
- Emphasis on the **responsibility of higher education institutions** and the **need to display cases of good practice**.

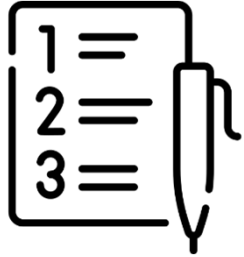


Instruments for the governance of Public Universities in Austria



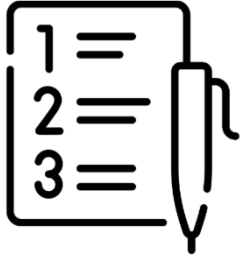
Instruments for the governance of Public Universities in Austria





National Development Plan for Public Universities

- Linking **strategic planning** and the **governance** of universities
- Transparent presentation of **priorities** and objectives for the upcoming **two performance agreements periods** (2x3 years): currently 2022 - 2027
- Objectives must be **addressed by the universities** in their **performance agreements**



National Development Plan for Public Universities

Objective 1: Further development and strengthening of the **higher education system**

Objective 2: Strengthening of basic **research**

Objective 3: Improve the quality of teaching

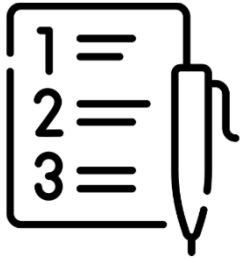
Objective 4: Improvement of relevant key performance indicators in teaching (**impact-oriented indicators**)

Objective 5: **Career development** for young academics

Objective 6: Improvement of **knowledge** and **innovation transfer**

Objective 7: Increase of **internationalisation** and **mobility**

Objective 8: **Social responsibility** of universities



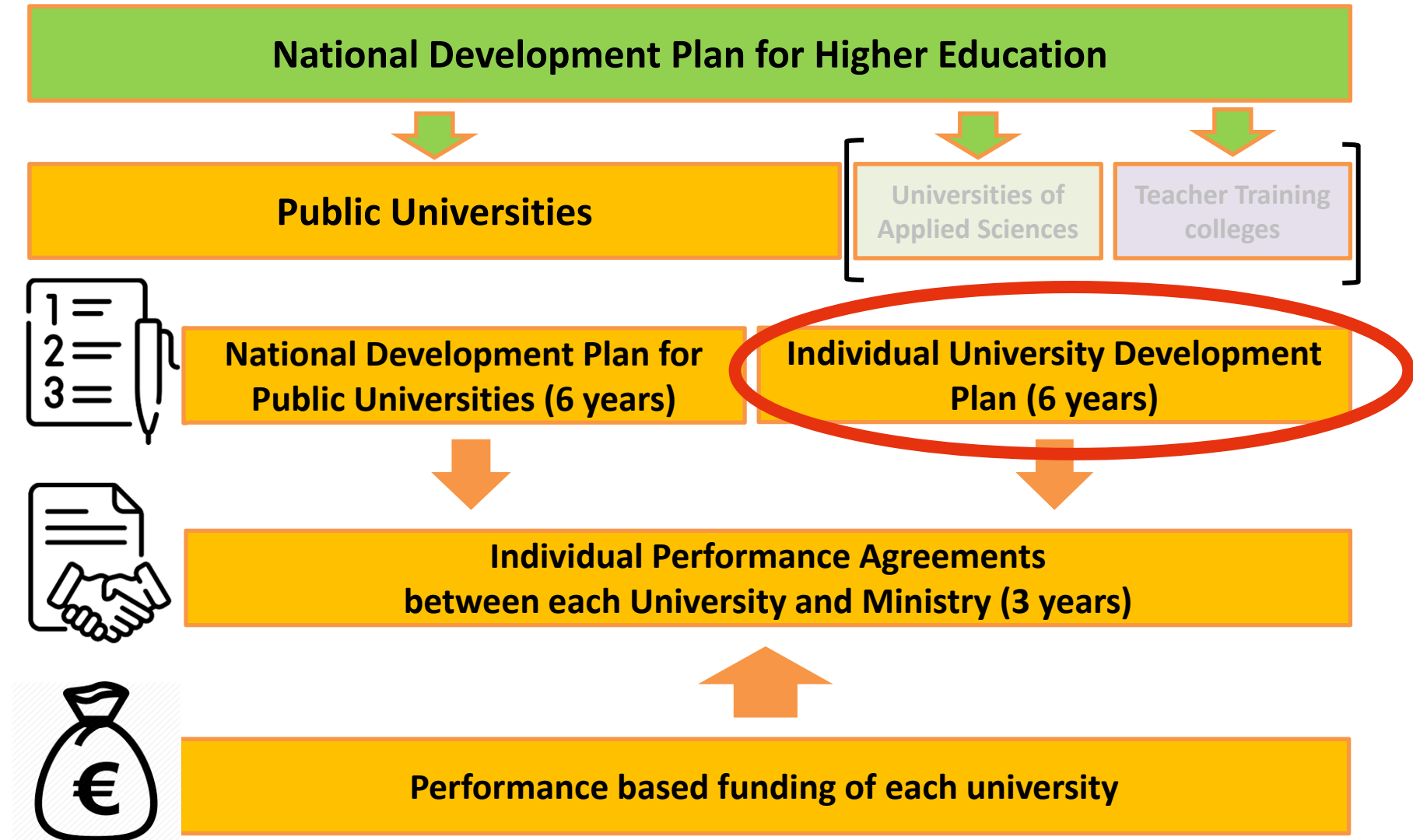
National Development Plan for Public Universities

Objective 3: Improve the quality of university teaching

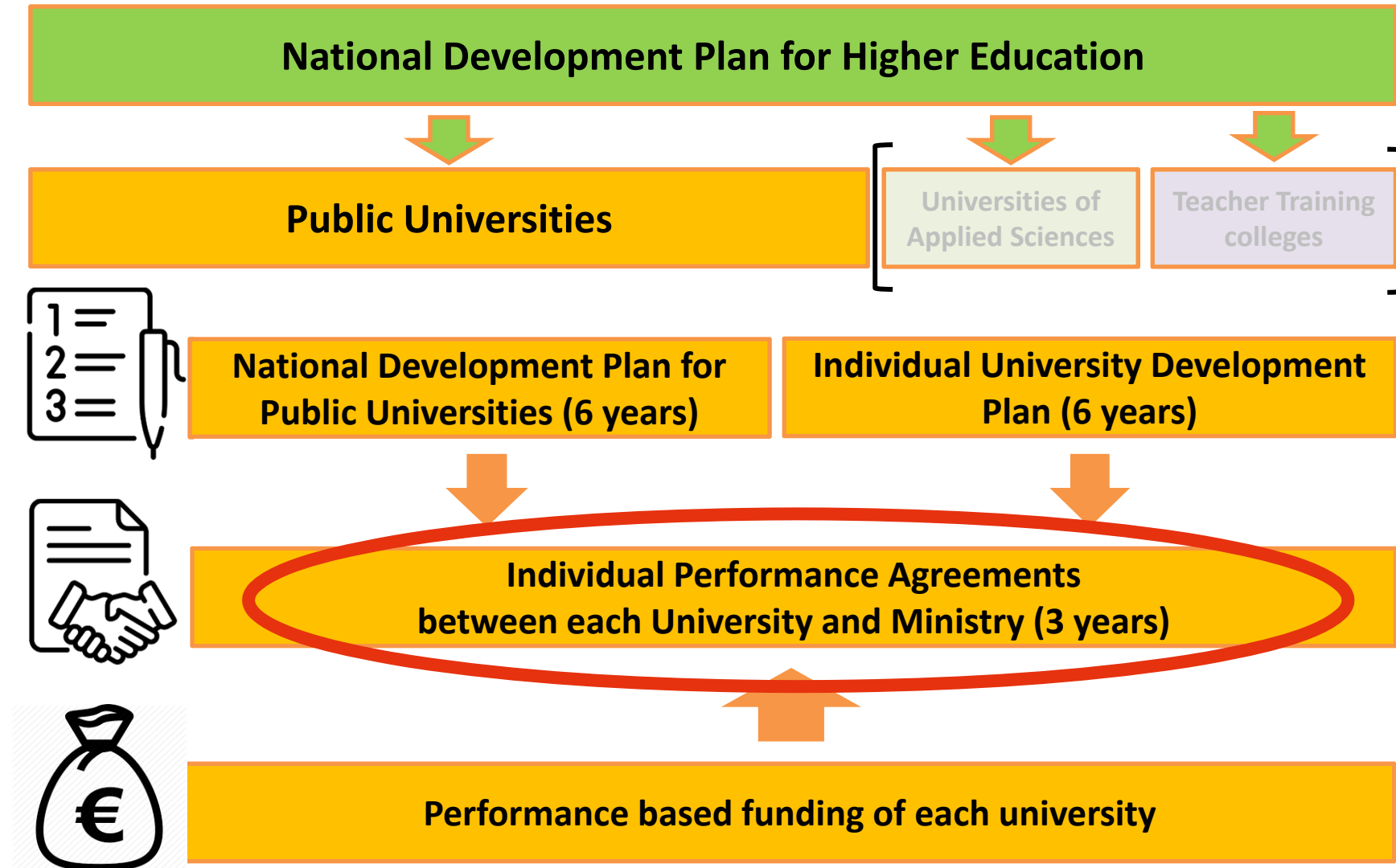
areas for strategic action

- **curricular development**
- **digital competences** and computational thinking in all studies
- consideration of **humanities and ethics** as well as **technology assessment** in all studies
- improvement of **teaching methods, didactics** and **organisation of studies**
- **research connotation** for all studies (esp. MA studies)
- matching of the **profile of studies** and the **profile of the university**
- display of **quality cycles** for **quality-driven development of teaching**
- integration of less demanded offers into **inter-institutional** and **inter-regional co-operative offers**

Instruments for the governance of Public Universities in Austria



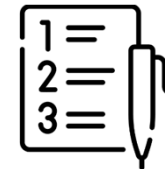
Instruments for the governance of Public Universities in Austria





Characteristics of performance agreements

- **negotiated between each university** and the **Federal Ministry** for a period of **three years**
- relates to the **parameters of the National Development Plan** for Public Universities
- agreement on **objectives** (qualitative and quantitative) and **action** (including time schedule) for **each performance area**
- the university receives a **global budget** to finance its operations
- the university **bi-annually reports** on the **progress of implementation** and the **achievements**
- the university does **not report on specific expenses**, unless in case of financial audits (e.g. by the Federal Court of Audit)
- **non-achievement** of agreed objectives and action leads to **budget reduction**

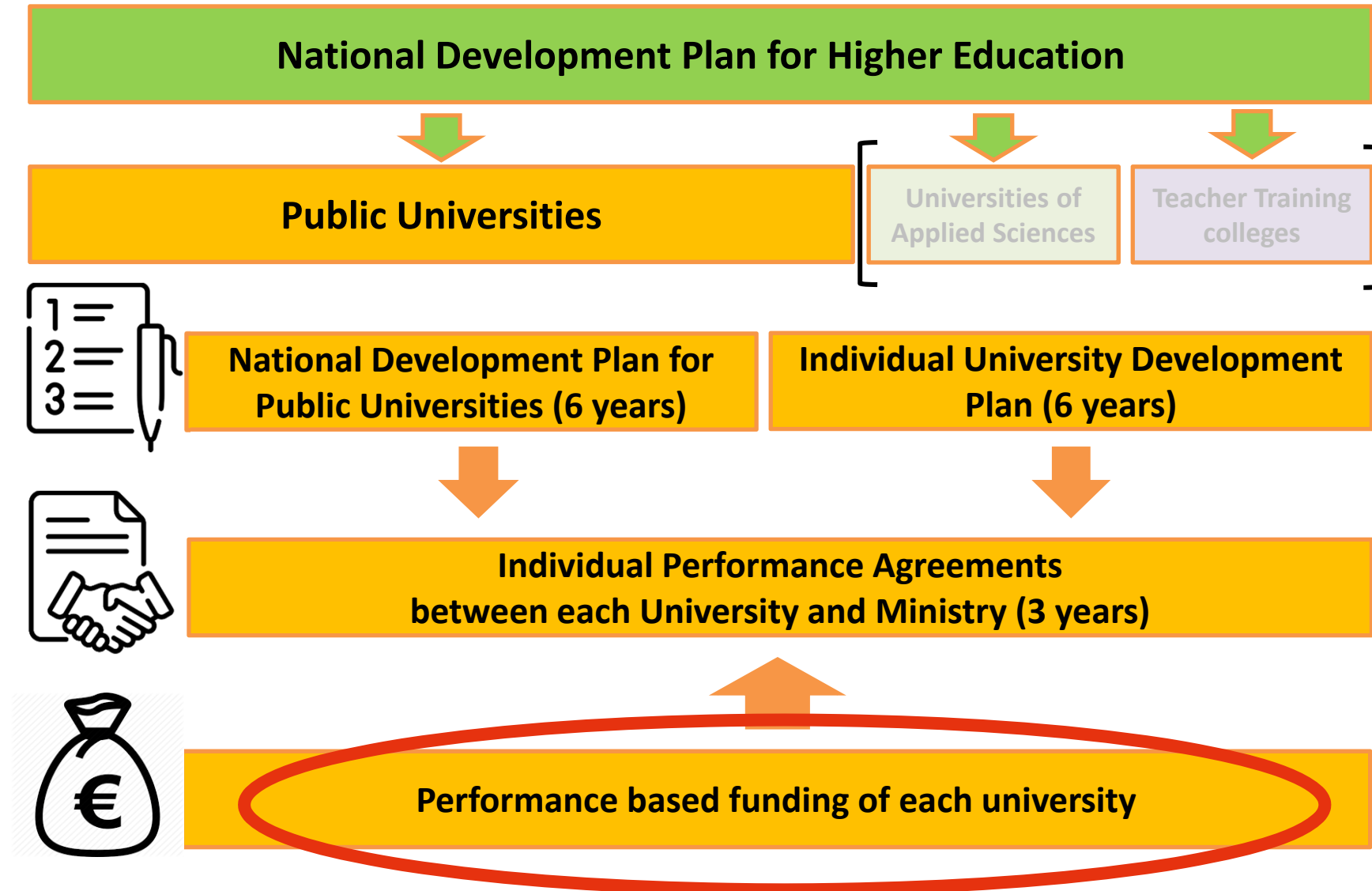




Thematic chapters of performance agreements

- (1) **Strategic objectives**, academic profiles, development of the university and its human resources, internal quality assurance
- (2) **Research**, strengths and excellence, research infrastructure, knowledge transfer and innovation, European research area
- (3) **Study programmes**, implementation and abandon, organisation of teaching and learning, internationalisation, teacher education, continuing education
- (4) **Further areas**: co-operation, infrastructural development such as libraries, international offices, administration

Instruments for the governance of Public Universities in Austria





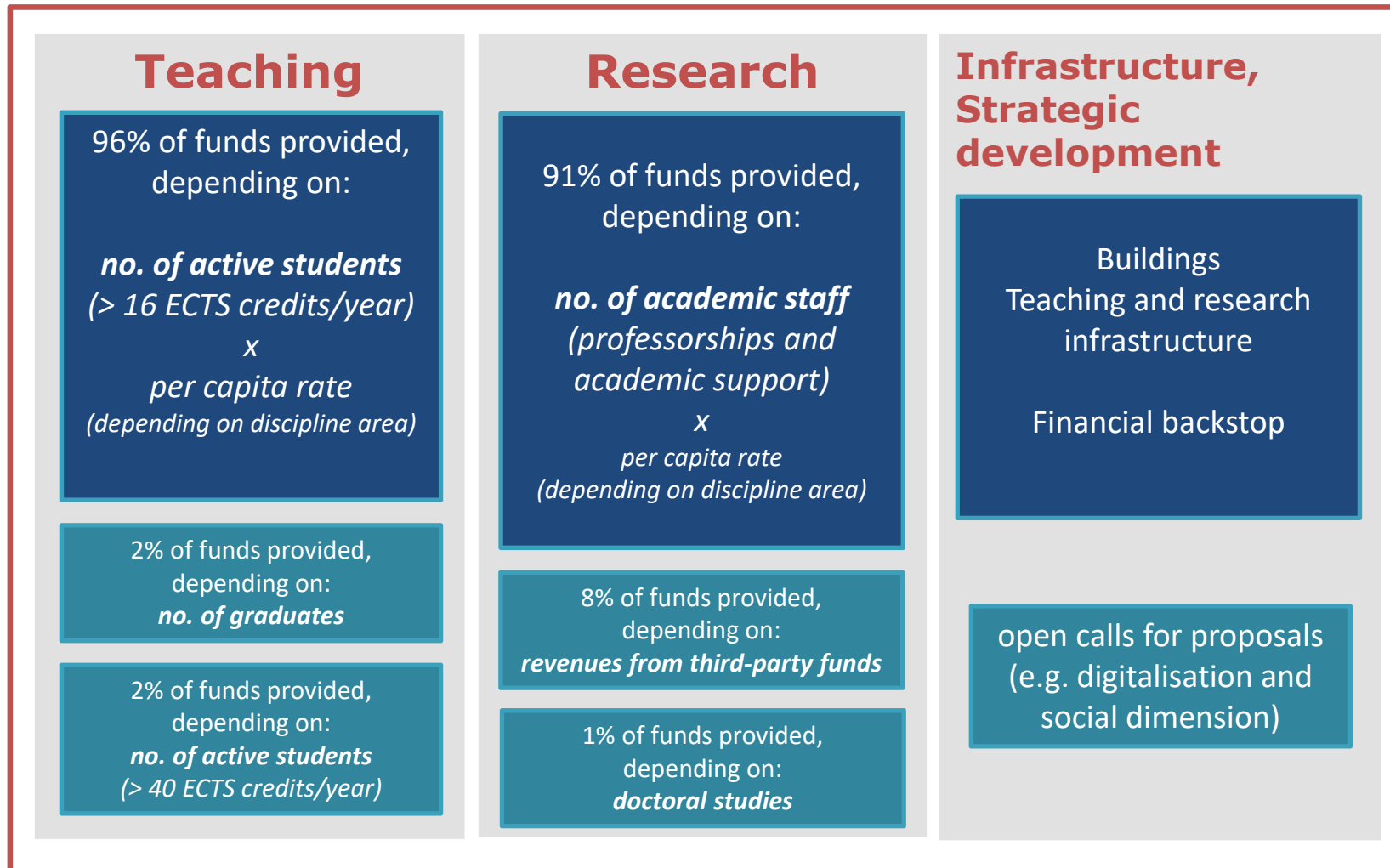
Current model of performance based funding of Public Universities – main intentions

Earlier years (before 2019): fixed global budget + competitive budget (formula based or calls for projects)

Since 2019:

- more attention to **teaching quality**
- favourable **student/professor ratios**
- focussed **academic profiles** and **visibility** (esp. in research)
- incentives to contribute to **socio-economic governmental targets**

The three pillars of global budgeting



 ... basic funds  ... competitive funds

further explanation on competitive and sanctionary elements

- **competitive funds:** available upon **proof of quality assurance measures** (e.g. internal and external evaluation, monitoring)
- **under-performance:** > 2% deviation from agreed target values leads to budget reduction (but not inferior to current budget)
- **budget retained:** part of budget provided upon proof of measures to support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

Monitoring of performance of public universities

- **Bi-annual meetings** between the University Rectorates and the BMBWF
- **Knowledge balance reports** including key indicators on “intellectual property”, “key processes”, “key outputs and effects”. The design of the reports are regulated through a ministerial by-law.
- **Reports of universities on the achievement of target values**, as agreed in the performance agreements. In the area of teaching these include the number of “active” students and the number of graduates.
- **External audits of the internal quality management systems of universities**

Exchange of good practice in teaching and learning

- inter-university fora for exchange (sector specific, discipline specific, regional).
- “dialogues on teaching and learning”
- conferences on quality assurance (AQ Austria, university networks)
- national teaching award “Ars Docendi”
- international teaching award “Profformance”