

**16 November 2021****COVID-19 situation: HRK calls for greater political consideration of universities  
Clear legal framework, but scope needed for flexible solutions**

The situation of the universities against the background of sharply rising infection figures was discussed by the General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) in Stuttgart today. Above all, it called for consideration of the issues specific to universities and sufficient scope for flexible regulations adapted to the situation at the respective locations. A clear legal framework is necessary; on the other hand, it is counter-productive and superfluous to include automatic mechanisms, including university closures, in the Infection Protection Act. The General Assembly referred to the highly successful management of universities during the pandemic thus far and called for the trust of politicians.

There were no indications that there had been any major rise in infections at universities so far. "We certainly owe this to the strong planning and organisational skills of the universities and the far above-average willingness of students and teachers to be vaccinated. To safeguard this positive finding, sufficient offers of booster vaccinations for students may also be important in the medium term," said HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt. The concepts of the universities would be further reviewed and flexibly adapted to local requirements. "We expect," Alt continued, "that politicians will provide us with the appropriate legal instruments and financial resources to do so."

The HRK warns politicians against further marginalising the education sector in its COVID-19 policy. "Universities have a central educational and training mandate for the future of our country. They have been fulfilling this mandate for almost two years now under difficult pandemic conditions with great prudence and a strong sense of responsibility," said HRK President Alt. "An integral part of this mission is to preserve and protect the universities as well as possible as a space for encounters, social exchange and shared learning. Face-to-face teaching is a valuable asset and the psycho-social consequences of semesters under COVID-19 conditions are well known. However, concerns about Christmas markets and football stadiums are dominating the political discussion. University members consider this to be inappropriate in view of the great importance of the education and research for which they are responsible."